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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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• (1905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Welcome to meeting 61 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

We're very pleased to be in St. John's, Newfoundland, and in this great facility this evening. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are doing a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

From the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, we have John Doyle; from the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation, Chris Bonnell; and from St. John's.... Well, we don't have that one yet.

We also have Doug Engbrecht and Dorian Rowe, who are with...?

Mr. Dorian Rowe (Professional Development Administrator, Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation): We're both with the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Doyle, you can start your presentation, sir. We only have about an hour, so please try to keep it somewhere reasonable.

Mr. John Doyle (Chair, Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council): We will. Thank you.

First of all, welcome to St. John's. Thank you for coming here, and thank you for inviting us to appear and speak to you.

I'll briefly describe the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. It's a non-profit provincial crown agency, with the main mandate of fostering and promoting the arts in Newfoundland and Labrador. We do this by providing grants to artists and to arts organizations, and by encouraging public awareness of and participation in the arts. We believe the arts bring a wide range of benefits to the whole community, and that government investment in the arts is in the best interest of everyone in Canada.

By way of personal disclosure, just because we're talking about the CBC, I have myself worked frequently for CBC Radio in the past. As a filmmaker, I frequently work on projects that are underwritten by the CBC.

In our submission today, we're going to focus on the CBC's mandate in the area of arts and culture as seen from a regional point of view.

The CBC provides two very important services to the arts in Canada: it promotes public awareness and understanding of the arts, which leads to greater participation, and it underwrites the creation of art. The CBC has had a huge impact in both these areas for many years. No other broadcaster in Canada has even come close. We believe it's vitally important for this country that the CBC maintain this aspect of its mandate and fulfill it with renewed vigour.

In this region of Newfoundland and Labrador, CBC radio and television have both played a major role in creating public awareness of the arts. This is especially true in radio, where the weekend morning show has for many years been an arts magazine. This provides a public forum for discussion of the arts, and of course it's a highly effective tool for promoting new works of art and cultural events. Unfortunately, in recent years the program has suffered from a serious lack of resources, which has reduced its effectiveness.

Television has also played an important role in arts promotion. For more than 20 years, the CBC has partnered with our organization, the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, to produce the annual Newfoundland and Labrador arts awards. However, as in radio, CBC television's arts coverage has suffered in recent years from a lack of resources.

As well as promoting arts awareness within the region, both radio and television have played a vital role in making other Canadians aware of artists working in this province. The CBC stands head and shoulders above the other broadcast media in this region in producing and supporting work in the performing arts. There is a strong tradition here of radio drama, music, and literary programming, and of television drama, comedy, and music series. Some of these have been produced for regional broadcast, others have been aired on the national network. These programs have been highly effective in reflecting this part of Canada to the nation and to our own region. They've also helped to foster the local film and television industries.

Unfortunately, there has been a steady decline in local production in recent years. There is now almost no local radio drama. Music programs that used to feature original performances have now become disc-spin shows.

Television once proudly boasted local shows like *All Around the Circle*, *Up at Ours*, *The Root Cellar*, and *Wonderful Grand Band*. Local producers created programming for the national network, such as *Dooley Gardens*, *Hatching, Matching & Dispatching*, and the two miniseries *Random Passage* and *Above & Beyond*.

At this moment, there are no local drama or comedy shows on CBC television in this region. In fact, not a single minute of the national radio or television schedule is produced in this region. Whether that's the result of budget constraints or management decisions, the result is the same. It has a profound negative impact on fulfilling the CBC's mandate.

CBC/Radio-Canada has had a huge positive impact on arts and culture in Canada, and we urge your committee to recommend that this aspect of the corporation's mandate be retained and reinforced. To sum up, we believe the arts are good for Canada and the CBC is good for the arts.

Thank you, and best wishes in your important work.

The Chair: Thank you for that presentation.

Now we'll move to Mr. Bonnell.

Mr. Chris Bonnell (Executive Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation): Thank you.

On behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation, I welcome the opportunity to offer our thoughts on the role of the public broadcaster in the 21st century to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. We are pleased that you have come to our province for these hearings. The process of this review is extremely important. As the provincial funding agency for Newfoundland and Labrador independent film and television production, the NLFDC hopes and believes that this study by the standing committee will be an important component in the CRTC's process of considering the licence renewal application for the CBC/SRC in 2008.

My comments this evening will focus on CBC's English-language television.

The NLFDC, like its counterparts in the other Canadian provinces and territories, provides production incentives that are a necessary portion of the investments that independent producers use to create projects. Within the regulations, policies, and mandates of the various organizations comprising the Canadian broadcasting system, independent producers play a vital role. Independent producers are the entrepreneurial and creative lifeblood of our industry, and create the high-quality programming that the CRTC calls priority programming, upon which the CBC relies.

Since its inception in 1997, the NLFDC, through equity investments, labour tax credits, and many industrial development initiatives, has been an essential pillar in this region. Motion picture activity is labour-intensive, well-paid, knowledge-based employment. The Newfoundland and Labrador industry is highly beneficial to rural areas and to other cultural industries. The independent production community creates large economic spinoffs. It brings into this region investments that would not otherwise be made here, and it allows us to present our stories and our creativity to the nation and to the world. These are the reasons the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and its people support the existence of the Film Development Corporation.

In our best year to date, fiscal year 2005-06, the Newfoundland and Labrador film and television industry had \$27 million in production activity, which resulted in an estimated 340 new full-time

employment equivalents—not an insignificant amount of economic activity in a region of this size. But in the last year and a half, the changes to the management policies of the CBC have combined with the centralization of production, which has resulted from the transition to the broadcaster envelope system of the Canadian Television Fund. Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, the result has been a very significant economic impact on the independent production sector and its workers.

In the face of mass media bombardment from outside Canada, there is a national consensus that we want distinctive Canadian voices to be heard, and of course it is the CBC's purpose to make this goal a reality. As a result, throughout Canada a vital creative industry with great potential is interwoven with national aims and CBC's decision-making. The Canadian television industry has grown and is interlocked with fulfilling the greater social and cultural aims of our nation. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there is no National Film Board office, and the local CBC television presence has been drastically reduced in its production capacity over the last 15 years. There is no provincial educational TV network, and local private broadcasters are only able and tasked to do so much.

Who is going to fulfill, in Newfoundland and Labrador, the clearly mandated goals of the Canadian broadcasting policy as put forth by the Department of Canadian Heritage and its agencies? On the ground here are the independent producers, the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation, and other key industry organizations that are, quite frankly, doing to heavy lifting of fulfilling the mandate of the Canadian broadcasting policy. While partnerships with the national CBC remain essential for Newfoundland and Labrador producers, local producers have, over the years, enjoyed strong relationships with the public broadcasters, and this must continue.

Many of CBC's current woes can simply be attributed to funding that is lower than traditional Canadian levels, or than that in support of public broadcasters in other western nations, particularly given the affluence of the national government. This is not good enough. For Canadian production companies, there's a very difficult reality at present. Productions green-lit by national broadcasters have been centralized away from this region, where traditionally many of the best and most popular national shows have originated. Resources are stretched too thin. Too much content is expected to fill too many hours and programming for not enough money. The business model for independent production companies is marginal, yet the system devised by policy-makers is dependent upon the product they create. The current state of affairs of the national public broadcaster has not helped matters.

● (1910)

In a constantly changing media environment and policy landscape, the CBC must be a beacon of consistency and fairness. The CBC ought to set a standard for all Canadian broadcasters on issues around terms of trade with independent production companies. The CBC should pay adequate licence fees, not require unduly lengthy licence agreements, and share equitably in rights.

As well, the recent changes in the types of programs being done by the CBC nationally are a major concern to us. The NLFDC believes that the CBC is uniquely able to have the courage of its convictions and to focus as much as possible on providing excellent content.

Recently the CBC has moved away from movie of the week and miniseries production. Also, in the past, regional CBC had been supportive of project development, but this has dried up. Furthermore, the numbers of documentaries being made has been reduced significantly due to CBC's policies favouring the creation of more lifestyle and reality content shows, which many see as pale imitations of the American TV already clogging the bandwidth. In an atmosphere of the CBC's trying to provide programming that emulates what private Canadian and U.S. broadcasters are doing more successfully, it appears that regional and distinctively Canadian programming is the first to disappear from our TV screens.

The CBC has lost its way. The role for the CBC in the 21st century should be to remain different from commercial private broadcasters. The CBC should focus on programs that are under-represented on other Canadian channels and should be a much-needed outlet for Canadian feature films. The CBC should be a bastion of high-quality, uniquely Canadian material of all genres; otherwise, what is the CBC's purpose? It seems, at present, that the mandate of the CBC within the Department of Canadian Heritage's own mandate is increasingly at odds with the corporation's fiscal decision-making.

The focus should be on excellence. Newfoundland production companies and creators welcome the challenge to compete nationally on that basis. This is an era of rapid, sweeping changes in worldwide media. Some confusion and painful readjustments are bound to happen, but we are not afraid of change. We are confident that we have the talent, creativity, and entrepreneurial energy needed to continue to succeed on a national level if the playing field for Canadian policy is not sloped uphill against us.

In the Newfoundland and Labrador film community, we just want to have fair and equal access to the nation's broadcasters and the resources that they are compelled by federal policies and regulations to spend on Canadian programming. An official mandate review of CBC is essential now, and future reviews must occur regularly as the national media environment evolves.

In conclusion, the Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation recommends that the CBC renew and strengthen its relationship with the independent production sector, produce more local and regional programming, reassess its current national programming philosophy, and receive increased, adequate long-term funding.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our thoughts on behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador film and video industry.

• (1915)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Is Noreen here yet?

A voice: She's on her way, actually.

The Chair: When she arrives, we will get her to make her presentation.

We will start with some questions, if we could.

Mr. Scott.

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you very much.

As the only Atlantic Canadian member of this committee, I would like to welcome to the region my colleagues, the chair, and the staff.

I mean the only one on the permanent committee, Scott.

I'd like your reaction to a few things.

First of all, I'd like each of you to elaborate on the Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic experience of having very few alternatives to CBC. You've said it, but I think you really need to say it loud and clear, because it's very difficult for the rest of the country to understand. That's not just in the context of what you get on television and radio and so on, but even in terms of the industry. If it weren't for the CBC presence and infrastructure—I've said this in Fredericton—if we didn't have the local station, all I would get is the Halifax legislature, notwithstanding the fact that I live in the capital, Fredericton.

Do you want me to stop, Mr. Chair? You're going to give me my time back, I'm sure.

• (1920)

The Chair: Yes, I'll give you part of your time back.

Welcome, Ms. Golfman. I would ask you to make your presentation, please.

Ms. Noreen Golfman (Chair of the Board of Directors, St. John's International Women's Film and Video Festival): Okay, but I'm still digesting my supper. I got the call that you were racing through this.

We—and I say “we”—were invited and, on behalf of the St. John's International Women's Film Festival, submitted a short brief. You should have a copy.

Some of you know this—probably quite well—but others might not know, so of course I need to disclose that I am also chair of the steering committee of Friends of Canadian Broadcasting. I'm not wearing that hat officially today, but the issues overlap considerably. I'm also president of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. So I represent, in some ways, some 50,000 academics of the social sciences and humanities. I feel as if I'm speaking on behalf of a very large constituency across this country of academics, filmmakers, producers, scholars, and listeners.

I don't think I need to rehearse this whole brief for you, but it's really focused on two key issues. One has to do with our festival's reliance on, if you will, local product, local filmmaking. I'm sure, or I would assume, that you've just heard from the panellists about the need for CBC engagement in every way and about our history of dependence on CBC's contribution to film production and television production in this region.

We are going into our eighteenth year. Amazingly enough, we have a sizeably healthy budget, largely subsidized by public funding. But the big draw of our festival in this region—it's called an international film festival, but there's no secret that the real appeal is our exhibition and display of product to local audiences—is local product. Much of our programming has depended upon CBC investment in documentaries and in drama.

So we are concerned, I suppose understandably, and we have been over the last few years, not so much about the health of our festival, which I think has established itself as an important event for the region for all kinds of reasons, but about our mandate being undermined by the lack of available drama and comedy production in the region.

We've had a very healthy partnership with CBC television here in particular, but radio as well has helped to advertise our material over the years. We hope to continue to do so, but we would feel better if CBC national, if you will, were more attentive to the need to honour the kinds of events we have—not directly necessarily, but certainly indirectly through financing and providing resources for the region.

So that's one key point in our submission. I'd be happy to supply, if you want, our programs so that you can really see the range of Canadian content and significant local content that has highlighted our festival. A few years ago, for instance, we opened in the Arts and Culture Centre here with a locally produced series, heavily invested in by CBC, called *Random Passage*, based on a well-known novel by a local writer. We sold out 1,200 seats very quickly. It helped to keep us afloat for that year and subsequent years, and gave us a good foundation. That's evidence, of course, of how hungry local audiences are for local stories.

If you go to our website, you will see all of that. I've included the address in the brief. That's the easiest thing to do if you're interested in browsing. There are some good video downloads in there too.

I'm not here officially wearing the hat of Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, of course, but part of the brief speaks to the lack of general support for regional programming, particularly supper hour news and current events. Today I did quite a few interviews with the press across this country because Friends released a statement and four tables based on the history of the ratings over the last several years in Atlantic Canada, including, of course, New Brunswick. The tables detail quite graphically the decline in ratings since the initial cut of the 60-minute news show to 30 minutes, and then the subsequent halting attempts to restore that hour with virtually no significant input or increase of resources. Those ratings continue, if not to slide, then to hold at very low rates.

• (1925)

A big challenge, of course, for supper hour news, which has really been a staple of CBC programming and production here, is to reclaim the audiences that went to other stations. That's a story, I would think, that every Newfoundlander, not just a townie, can tell you, and knows quite well. That's the other key observation of this briefing.

If you like, I have those four tables with me, and I'd be happy to submit them to the committee. They are also widely available, but I'm happy to give them to you. They tell a significant story.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll go back to Mr. Scott, and we'll start from scratch.

Hon. Andy Scott: You should probably just hit on a couple of numbers for the purposes of the committee, so that people can appreciate just how profound a difference, in terms of the ratings here, particularly in terms of the supper hour.... Actually, it went from an hour to zero, back to 30, back to 60, if you recall. In any case, that's one.

We need to get a sense of the extent to which it is a resources issue. I think generally we believe it is, but every once in a while people will say, I don't know whether it's a resources issue or a management decision issue. When that happens, we're back to this dilemma that we have, because we could recommend to Parliament that the annual appropriation be increased significantly, but then come to find out after that happens that nothing—let's say in the regions in particular—has changed the way we wanted it to change. I'm not sure there's much that would be helpful that we could do about that. This is national public radio, not state radio or television.

Therefore, we have to come to terms with how to do that. Maybe there's something in the language of the mandate, although I think it's fair to say most of the people have proposed that the mandate did not need to be changed dramatically, but actually just lived up to. Please help us with that.

Regarding new media, are there any thoughts, or anything that you would offer about the opportunities? I think there's a big opportunity here. I think this is an historic moment for the national public broadcaster, and my sense is that they could seize this moment. We're already ahead in some areas. So I would like you to respond to that, and add.

There's also a discussion about whether there should be advertising or not. Could you each throw out your thoughts around that?

Mr. John Doyle: In terms of the first question you posed, Mr. Scott, about the dependence on CBC—of course we're always uneasy with saying that we're dependent on anything in this region, since we're always being accused of over-dependence—there's no question, with the current distribution techniques, whether it's satellite or digital cable or Internet television, that the dependence on the over-the-air CBC signal is not the same as it once was. I think now what we're looking at is dependence on the kind of programming that only the CBC seems to be willing to do.

I haven't studied the mandates of the other broadcasters. I kind of imagine they're supposed to be doing more regional programming, original programming, quality drama, and so on than they're actually doing. But the evidence for many years has been that it's the CBC that does that. Certainly in this region, the other broadcast media are doing very little in terms of original quality local programming or programming from this region going to the national networks. It is clear, I think, in a straightforward reading of the CBC's mandate, as it is in the act, that it's to reflect the regions to themselves, reflect the regions to the rest of the country, and reflect the rest of the country all over the place.

In response to the question about whether it's resources or management choices, I expect it's both. Having met on public occasions some of the current management of the CBC, and even going back for a few years, I would say there doesn't seem to be currently a really strong commitment to the regions. It's probably inevitable, when you're based in Toronto, that you hang around with the crowd in Toronto, and the television industry is basically based in Toronto.

I remember on one occasion sitting in a cafe across from the CBC building, the broadcasting centre, with a senior executive from the CBC, with our expensive appetizers and drinks, and realizing that the rest of the world, the rest of Canada could go away now and we wouldn't miss a thing. We were totally self-sufficient there. We had everything we needed. We were surrounded by the most talented people in the country and the best food and wine and the big building. So what do we need Newfoundland for? The fog could close in, the network could close down, and you wouldn't miss it. So as long as that attitude is there, it's going to be a problem.

As you say, obviously you can't order them not to think that way. But again, if you look at the mandate as it's stated, there is clearly a large regional component, and it's never been a mandate of any national organization in this country to forget about anything that is outside of the core around the CN Tower.

I'll just leave my comments at that.

• (1930)

Mr. Chris Bonnell: When the Film Development Corporation began back in 1997, production activity in this province was a little over \$1 million, and in our best year, 2005-06, as I said in my presentation, we reached \$27 million in production activity. Just to put that into perspective, with the exception of one \$4 million feature film, the rest of that was CBC productions. So it's huge for this industry in this province.

For a long time, we've been used to recognizing that for bigger productions the national CBC had to give that broadcast licence. What has happened in the past, with the TransCanada Development Fund, is that the local CBC has been a huge partner in developing our projects for pilots and so on. That seems to be gone of late, because there's a national focus now in CBC with more of a reality-based approach as opposed to one focusing on dramatic series and period pieces and so on. So that's very discouraging for us. We're not asking for an entitlement; we're asking for fair and equitable access to competition.

If you look at the past, most of our productions have done very well nationally and internationally. We recognize that a Newfound-

land story is no good if it's not of interest to the rest of Canada and also the rest of the world. But we'd like that process, so that can be determined.

I think back to 1998 or 1997 when the CBC's budget was drastically reduced. What has happened is that there's been a huge focus on raising revenue that they otherwise didn't have to raise. So there's a huge focus now on advertising, and then there's a huge focus on how you get that advertising. So I think we have to go back to thinking that CBC is a national broadcaster, and it should behave that way, and focus on what it's supposed to do for a distinctive Canadian voice. And that's the whole purpose.

The other thing that's problematic is the change in the Canadian Television Fund. Since they introduced performance envelopes, we've seen immediately the change to the centralization of productions, something that John just talked about in terms of that lovely little circle in Toronto.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Golfman.

Ms. Noreen Golfman: I'd like to add some figures—there are some very stark ones—for the purposes of this presentation.

In 1996, the audience share of CBC TV/CBNT was over 43%. It was among the market leaders in North America. As I said, every Newfoundlander can tell you that story. Everybody tuned in to see Rex Murphy, Ray Guy, and even me—I say with some modesty. For years, CBC supper hour *Here & Now* dominated. So you have to ask, what was the rationalization for cutting or breaking a successful operation in the first place? There has never really been a clear, coherent, rational answer to that question.

We tend to fall upon a kind of Toronto-centric view of the universe, because it just doesn't make sense, or perhaps following from that, the view that other supper hour news shows across the country, particularly in the urban areas, weren't drawing as much, so we took the fall for it. Of course, it was so shortsighted because the audience fell radically. As our table shows—this is based on very hard-core research by a Canadian media research company—in 2006 the audience share went down to 13.8%. So who's watching? I'm watching, probably everybody at this table is watching, and maybe everybody in this room. But people have gone to the other broadcaster, and it's very difficult to get them back.

There seems to be a strong correlation between the resources and the decline in ratings. We can at least say that. But to speak to the issue of management, it was a senior management decision and nobody here had any input into that. At the risk of using the language we're used to, everybody here was a victim of a decision made off-stage somewhere. Over the years from 1996, it went from 43%, to 37%, climbed a little to 40%, and then went back down—27%, 18%, 15%, and now it's 13.8%. That's a pretty staggering decline in a very short time.

There's a kind of tragedy here. Not to overstate it, but a lot of the goodwill was undermined by those cuts and by a quite recognizably different supper hour show, or supper 30-minute show, if you will.

• (1935)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am very happy to be here with you.

First, you will understand that apart from our Chair, who is a Conservative Party M.P., the opposition parties are the only ones here today. I would like to think that this does not reflect what the Conservatives think of Newfoundland.

Second, when people talk to me about culture, it resonates with me tremendously, for the simple reason that the people of Quebec are trying to preserve their culture. Think how the problems you are having today, we had them perhaps 25 or 30 years ago. We went off on something of a detour. You are going to have to take that same detour too. That is how I see it. You are going to have to make an abrupt about-face, because this federation, this confederation, is not going to help you. Think seriously about how you are going to drown in this great big country.

Having said that, I will ask Mr. Doyle my first question. Mr. Doyle, I do not think that a price can be put on culture. I reject that premise. You said that the CBC's mandate should be retained. Do you not believe that we could amend it by adding specific requirements?

Mr. John Doyle: Such as what, for example?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: It seems that in your view, the Corporation's mandate is clear. Nonetheless, you are asking for things in terms of culture. Mr. Bonnell is asking for equitable agreements, and so on. Ms. Golfman is asking for other kinds of things. Do you not think that we, as legislators, could promote an extension of the mandate or specific requirements?

[*English*]

Mr. John Doyle: Yes, I'm sure you're right. Obviously with the mandate as it exists, we're not getting the results that we're looking for. Do we simply say, enforce the mandate, require it to be fulfilled. Or as you're suggesting, do we need to make it crystal clear in the mandate that...? When I read the mandate, I say yes, it says it all there. But what you're saying is that we need to make it absolutely explicit that reflecting the regions to themselves means you have to

put in adequate resources. You can't just say, well, Newfoundland is 1.9% of the population, so you get 1.9% of the budget, or something like that. We all know smaller areas may need a higher percentage than an urban area.

Of course, that touches on the whole question of the concentration of Canadians in urban areas and what that's doing for those of us who choose to live—or are forced to, or whatever—outside the core urban areas.

Yes, I would absolutely support you, and I'm sure our organization would, if you found a way to make the mandate sharper and more precise and harder to work around. Sure.

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We would have to receive your briefs, for that. In fact I want to remind you about that. I do not have them, myself. I do like to prepare in advance and go and look things up. Ms. Golfman has a website, however. We will look at that site.

Before moving on to Mr. Bonnell, I want to address Ms. Golfman.

Ms. Golfman, I am very pleased to see women putting on an annual festival of films and videos produced by women, for the simple reason that these men here have to be told that when women touch something, they are agents of change. Women change the family, because they pass on values, they look after the children who grow up to be mature men and women, and they also change men. So I think it is wonderful to see that women are agents of change here in Newfoundland. I congratulate you.

You said that you had partnered with CBC radio in the past. Your organization needs local funding. If it did not have funding, could your organization be satisfied with better partnerships with the CBC?

[*English*]

Ms. Noreen Golfman: Absolutely. We have made as many attempts as possible to draw in a particularly francophone audience, to build that audience here, and to partner with CBC Radio and Radio-Canada. Films from Quebec have very much been a part of our programming over the years, particularly for the reasons you outlined at the outset, because you understand the distinctiveness of the cultural heritage that our programming showcases.

We're open for business, if you will, with all parts of Canada, but we have had a particular affinity with CBC because of its public mandate, and certainly with Quebec films and Quebec productions and Quebec radio and television as well.

Just to go back to your initial comments about the committee's perhaps not reflecting fully the government's issues because of the constitution of the committee or its presence here tonight, I would just put in a good word—and he sure needs one—for Loyola Hearn, who has been a champion of local programming and regional production for us over the years and has unfailingly come out, since he was first elected, to all meetings having to do with the kind of subjects we're covering here today.

I should say that's true of Norm Doyle as well. Scott would probably agree, I think.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I have one short question to ask, Mr. Chair.

I know Mr. Hearn. He is indeed a wonderful man, a wonderful gentleman, but unfortunately he is not the one who is a member of the committee. He will not have to make a decision. I would therefore have liked the other Conservative members of the committee to be here. I find it appalling that they are not here. You pay your taxes like any other Canadian citizen, even if you live far away.

Mr. Bonnell, my question is very specific. You talked about equity, about equitable access. Can you tell me what you mean by equitable access? Be frank and honest. Is the CBC equitable in its dealings with independent producers at present?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bonnell: That's a loaded question.

No, I think that under the current system, certainly in the English CBC side there is a preference given to Toronto producers in getting their productions licensed. It's clear now. I mentioned earlier the performance envelopes with the CTF. They've done that in the development component as well. We're seeing now that our counterparts and I, as provincial funders, are no longer involved in the development stage. CBC decides what they want in development, and that leads into production.

We've found that it has a huge impact. Right now it's very difficult to get anything in development in CBC if it's not blessed at the first stage. So it's a huge component.

To me, CBC has always been a rite of passage, and under the new management they've rather changed the focus to 18- to 25-year-olds. This sounds somewhat like "You know you're getting old when you like the look of a Volvo", but when you become a certain age in Canada you start to listen to CBC radio, you start to watch CBC television more. There has been a loyal audience there for many years; they are gone now. We're starting to lose them now because of this different reality programming. They're searching for their good documentaries, their good miniseries, their good period pieces in different places now.

• (1945)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you very much for this discussion this evening.

I'm going to begin with a question to Mr. Bonnell about the dramatic drop you've described in programs produced here. Just over the last few years that has dropped. You talked about the shift to reality-based programming. Is that because it's cheap to produce?

Mr. Chris Bonnell: Absolutely. It is much cheaper to produce. The development side is not the same, and developing a script is quite easy. The production is not as costly, there's no question.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have to say, Mr. Chairman, that I'm certainly glad my dear old granny is not alive to watch reality TV every night. She would have been shaking her head. I mention that because my family are from the Maritimes. They were Cape Breton

gold miners, and we lived in exile until our new exile became our home. Variety television was a big part of our sense of belonging someplace: the John Allan Cameron shows, Don Messer. We set our clocks to those shows.

I don't see that ever on television. It came to me the other day, because I was in Rouyn-Noranda, in my neighbouring riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and I saw two variety shows at one time, on prime time, on two different stations, giving the kind of programming we used to take for granted up to, I'd say, the seventies and the eighties. I never see that.

Do you think the loss of that kind of programming—I'm not just saying a regional maritime voice, but actual variety, showing music and Canadian stories in a variety format—has affected the ability of Newfoundland artists to be seen in the rest of this country?

Mr. John Doyle: Yes, absolutely. As I touched on briefly, the opportunity for artists in this area to be exposed to a national audience is tremendously important, whether you're in film or visual arts or are a writer, and the CBC has been able to provide that. But it has been doing it less and less in recent times because of the programming not originating in the area.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm going to throw this open for discussion.

I've always been fascinated by the importance of the distinctiveness of place. There is an argument that runs through commercial entertainment.... I come from the music business, and there's certainly a commercial argument that you strip from your voice all local dialect, all local place names, and make it "Bayside". These people are sort of bland, and that can sell to everybody. Of course, it's bland in a very American way. There's a sense that you'll sell more by not coming from any one place.

I've always felt very clearly that people are actually dying for distinctiveness. They want place, they want the reality of a place. Toronto can be Bayside. Toronto can be Toronto and be anywhere. Newfoundland really can't hide what Newfoundland is: you're in Newfoundland.

So in a world where you're having to compete for commercial television production, if CBC isn't picking up the ball, what chance do you have with the private broadcasters, the CTVs and the Globals of the world, to have your stories told, not just regionally but in the place they deserve, which is a national television network?

Mr. Chris Bonnell: I think you're speaking to the converted.

Yes, there's no question, and that's their mandate. That's what a public broadcaster is.

Again, it's not just because there are Newfoundland stories; they have to be Newfoundland stories that want to be heard, not only by Newfoundlanders but by the rest of Canada and internationally. We've seen *Above and Beyond*. It did well nationally; it sold in Europe. These are projects that are Newfoundland stories, but they have interest everywhere.

● (1950)

Mr. Charlie Angus: I want to ask about one of the issues in terms of the CBC's being advertising-free or being distinctive. What role do our private broadcasters have to carry their share of the weight? I ask because, from simultaneous substitution to the Income Tax Act, they live in a very protected universe.

Our numbers show that per capita spending on domestic television in Canada is the lowest—much lower than Australia, much lower than...well, we're not even going to mention England—yet our spending on foreign television is higher than that of any of our main competitors. I'm not breaking numbers down between CBC and private broadcast; these are just the overall numbers. What role do you think the private broadcasters have to pick up the slack as well, to make sure we have a competitive domestic market and we have the CBC voice, but we also have good drama and comedy being shown on the private broadcasters?

Ms. Noreen Golfman: I hope in a way that you're answering your own question, but you're certainly leading us, I think, to say that the commercial broadcasters have to follow the mandate of CRTC legislation. If their feet were held to the fire, they would look quite different from the way they look now.

The whole notion, of course, of simultaneous simulcast is bizarre. It privileges, as people have said already, the private broadcasters beyond belief. It really gives a very skewed notion of what Canadian prime-time programming is. Any Martian surfing the dials in this country would be astonished at how American our prime-time television is, certainly in English Canada.

A thriving, competitive broadcasting environment is what we would want. That is the ideal—not an all-state, if you will, or all-public system. In fact, in many ways we have the potential for an ideal system, a model for the rest of the world, but we have let ourselves down—or the broadcasters, certainly—for greed and reasons of privilege. Self-entitlement has gotten away with a hell of a lot at the expense of the listening and viewing public.

A good healthy commercial set of broadcasters, of course, would only increase the field, increase the production, increase the talent, and keep people in Canada working. It's not just what's in front of the camera; it's also what reality television and the diminishment of production and Canadian content do. When we can't tell our own stories in the regions or elsewhere, you force the talent behind the camera to go somewhere else, so they'll go to the States or they'll go to England or they'll go another province or they'll go to Toronto or they'll go to Vancouver—

Mr. Dorian Rowe: Or they'll go to a different industry altogether.

Ms. Noreen Golfman: They'll go to a different industry altogether—quite right—one in which the skills they've acquired can perhaps be harnessed differently.

I think there's a big social story, and we need to recognize it. I don't think any of us would deny the private broadcasters their right to exist or to flourish, but they have to flourish in the service of what the CRTC regulations direct them to do. If we're not doing that, then we really have to question both the teeth of the CRTC, or all the teeth of the CRTC, and what they're empowered to do, and our own government's willingness to let this happen.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Before I go to Mr. Simms, I have a couple of comments and a couple of questions I might ask.

I sat on this committee back when the \$60 million for the CBC was put forward. It's been carried forward over the past number of years, and the Minister of Canadian Heritage this past year gave two-year funding of \$60 million for each of those two years. It was my understanding that the \$60 million was to try to move that supper half-hour back to the hour situation. Is that not the case?

● (1955)

Ms. Noreen Golfman: No, I don't believe that is the case. The case, as far as we understand it, is that the move to 60 minutes was meant to be done with virtually the same resources that the 30 minutes had been able to access or utilize. That was very clearly stated in a memo by senior management to CBC at large, that the move to 60 minutes was not to be done at the expense of national programming.

If you look across the country at what has happened to those 60 minutes, at what they're being filled with, the evidence is there. There's lots of weather—lots of weather, repeated every 10 minutes—and not many, if any, new faces in front of the camera.

So there's not a lot of difference. You really have 30 minutes extended. There's not really evidence of that infusion of money.

The Chair: The arts are very important to me. I come from a little place called Sebringville, right outside of Stratford, Ontario. I remember the tents, and I remember Stratford growing. I know how important those stars are, and keeping those people around. Again, you need the business to keep it going.

I know one thing that's happened with us in Canada is that our dollar has changed. Now, it shouldn't necessarily affect producers and directors and production people working maybe for the CBC, but it might explain some of the reason why there might be more people out there and it might be a little more competitive.

Would I be right in saying that? Over the years, with the 60¢ or 65¢ dollar, there were production companies, and everybody was growing. Now there's been a slide backward. It could even get worse in that scenario of the dollar going up.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: Yes, there's no question that with the change in the dollar....

In the larger production service centres such as Vancouver and Toronto in English Canada, producers who otherwise worked in that industry more as service producers for L.A. productions have now realized that they have to go after some of the more indigenous Canadian productions. That's certainly a result. But still it's a competitive process.

Being 700 miles in the middle of the ocean, we really don't have a lot of service productions. Most of our stuff is indigenous or co-produced. While these producers who were usually service providers are now competing for the same broadcast licences, it still should be a competitive process. The best projects should get through the gate.

The Chair: My last question may be more of a statement. I do know how much it meant to various areas, including Newfoundland, to have that program change from an hour at suppertime. Windsor was cut at the same time. I've been to Windsor at various times, and I do know the difference it made. So I'm not ignorant of the facts there.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for allowing me to pinch-hit. It's nice to be back on the heritage committee, albeit for a brief moment. It's good to see you again, and Mr. Lahaie as well.

And Charlie, you're the apple of my eye, what can I tell you.

I want to talk about local production, but first I have a comment about the news hour. If you remember, about a year and a half ago we had the president of the CBC here, and I brought up that issue with him about the ill effects of going back to 30 minutes, about the detrimental situation. I wish I'd had numbers that Ms. Golfman had, because that would have illustrated my point much better.

However, the president did shock me at the time and say that it was moving back to 60 minutes, but it was only a pilot project. I'm under the assumption that we are still under that status of being a pilot project—although a friend of mine there at the back shakes his head and says that's not the case.

I'm assuming that it's all systems go?

I get a nod from the audience, but—

• (2000)

Ms. Noreen Golfman: Such as the systems are, yes, they're a go.

Mr. Scott Simms: I have a nod from a friend of mine from the CBC there in the back. Thank you.

I also want to talk about local production, especially here in Newfoundland and Labrador, which has been sorely missing from days gone by. Growing up in this province, I can tell you when every other kid was watching *The Friendly Giant*, I was watching *Skipper*

and *Company*—poor old Skipper. For anybody who is not from Newfoundland, it was a kids' show that was legendary.

That being said, I always believe that regional broadcasting from the CBC has a purpose beyond its own borders. It has a story to be told along the three coasts. I personally like the fact that I can watch the CBC and learn about the history of church organ building in Quebec. That's fantastic. I also take solace in the fact that somebody in Saskatchewan can learn about Fogo Island, which is considered one of the four corners of the world.

Above and Beyond is a project near and dear to my heart, for two reasons. I think Paul Pope is an exceptional talent, but I also think it is a fantastic story for the world.

What was the process—and Chris, maybe this is for you; I wish Paul was here to talk about this—of putting that on the screen? How difficult was it for him, as an independent producer in this province, to bring that to the national broadcaster?

Mr. Chris Bonnell: I'm going to make a few comments, and then perhaps John could respond. John was actually one of the writers on *Above and Beyond*.

Mr. Scott Simms: My apologies.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: That's okay.

It was a difficult process. It's a long, drawn-out time to get something into production. I think it was three, almost four years, in development.

We had a champion at CBC. There was an individual in CBC who thought very highly of the project. He liked the story and fought for it all the way. We don't have that champion anymore.

Mr. John Doyle: It's always a tough battle in Canada for anything to get done. A television series, a feature film is a huge climb up a hill. When you see something that's good, you think how all the stars had to line up for that thing to happen. So it does take people like Paul Pope, who was a producer of that series. He's an exceptionally talented and driven person and, as Chris said, a champion within the organization.

There were times in the process of getting that show made where it looked that it was finished. At the highest levels, Slawko Klymkiw, wasn't particularly interested in it. He didn't see that it had any national interest for anybody or why it should be made. It was persistence and the fact that it was basically a good idea.... It was a good story.

Mr. Scott Simms: Can I touch on that for one minute?

I go back to *Random Passage*. Here was an example of a fantastic story, one of the highest-rated shows in Ireland in their history. If it wasn't for, I think, Ireland and Quebec, it would not have been done. Perhaps you can correct me on that.

Ms. Noreen Golfman: That's correct. It was a co-production.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: It was an interprovincial co-production with Newfoundland and Quebec, and an international co-production with Ireland.

Mr. Scott Simms: Right. I'm assuming we were not able to do it on our own—I'm not pinning this on Slawko Klymkiw in any way—because maybe someone said it doesn't have national importance, in much the same way as *Above and Beyond*.

My problem is that we can't wait around for something like *The Shipping News* to come by once every 10 years.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: As we said, when the corporation opened in 1997, we clearly realized that if we have to wait for service production we're not going to have a film industry in this province and we're not going to be able to tell our stories. That was quite clear. We've really focused on that.

Because *Random Passage* was a period piece with a high production value, we were very fortunate that RTÉ, which is the CBC equivalent in Ireland, had the same feel for the story. That's what made it work. More often than not with the bigger budgets, you have to go outside your province and outside your country to get these financing structures together.

Mr. Scott Simms: Chris, how hard is it to maintain a modicum of infrastructure to do this?

We have a centre in Corner Brook. Let's put that centre on the scale of where we are in the global scheme of things. In other words, if I'm doing a feature and I look at the coastline of Bonavista and I say that's perfect, that's just what I need, it would be a shame to say it's not technically feasible. Is it technically feasible? I'm asking how hard it is for us to maintain this type of industry in the absence of, say, a CBC.

• (2005)

Mr. Chris Bonnell: Oh, it's impossible without CBC.

Mr. Scott Simms: So we can't wait around for another *The Shipping News*.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: No, absolutely not.

The other thing that's important to mention is that if you look at *Above and Beyond*—I'll take that as an example—it was a miniseries. The intent of *Above and Beyond* down the road is to be a series, and that's huge, because every jurisdiction that has a mandate to develop the film industry knows that a TV series is the biggest thing for developing your crew, actors; everyone is working on a long-term period, and that's the way to give sustainability to your industry.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you. Great.

I have a quick question to John, and others can weigh in on this as well. In my years on this committee—because we did a film study years ago—I firmly believe that one of the biggest things lacking in this country is a public investment in script development. Script to screen is something we need to put more money in, and I guess you're probably a good one to answer that. What is required of a government to develop not just the script but the scriptwriters?

Mr. John Doyle: For sure. After all, I'm speaking as a writer, so I'm self-interested here. But there's no question that unless the

writing is there, the show will never be there. They can take a good script and make a bad movie out of it, but you're unlikely to make a good movie out of a bad script.

Telefilm Canada has been doing some development work. They have a program called Writers First, which allows writers to go directly to Telefilm without going through a producer, to allow for some development before getting to that stage. It's somewhat controversial because producers still feel that if they're not attached to a project it's probably not going to go anywhere, anyway. I think for sure, whether it's through CBC or through Telefilm, there has to be a willingness.

The point has been made before that in the United States, if you want to look at the success of their film and television market, there's a much, if you like, lower ratio of development to production. In other words, they'll develop 10 shows, they'll pre-plan and write scripts and shoot pilots for 10 shows for one that goes on the air. Then when it goes on the air, there'll be further attrition, to what actually ends up going to a full season or just a couple of seasons.

In Canada we have not had that luxury.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay, thank you.

A final point...I'm sorry, I'm rapid-fire here because I don't really have much time.

I think all of you have done great things and I would love to have a larger conversation, but on the record. The performance envelope in the Canadian Television Fund, how detrimental is that to us for someone like a Paul Pope and something like the next *Above and Beyond*, or even taking *Above and Beyond* and going to a series?

Mr. Chris Bonnell: The immediate results of the performance envelope really showed that all projects were out of Toronto, essentially, in English Canada. So the impact was immediate.

The bigger issue with Paul developing the series for *Above and Beyond* was not so much the performance envelope, it was CBC's shift in its mandate or its focus. They won't do period pieces anymore. They're looking at that 18 to 25 audience.

Mr. Scott Simms: Another *Survivor*.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Just a comment for the record.

The Chair: Very, very short.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Please, I have some questions to ask too. He has had 10 minutes.

[English]

The Chair: Everybody went on for 10 minutes...but very short, because then I'm going to give everyone else another short round.

Mr. Scott Simms: I feel as if I'm going to be in the middle of a battle.

I would like to say I honestly believe that to rectify some of this, for the record, we should model the CBC on the BBC, and that the government should seriously consider doing a five-year funding mandate, and not just one year or two years. I think that's probably necessary.

Madame.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to go—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: This round will be shorter.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I have 10 minutes, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: But you've had 10.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: That shows you how difficult it is for a woman to get recognized on a panel composed of men. It seems that women's issues are still not important.

I want to say that we are here to examine the mandate of the CBC. With the mandate goes funding. Obviously, the Government of Canada is currently giving this public institution \$1.3 billion. Everywhere we have gone, we have heard the same story you tell: the story of remoteness, of scarce services, of the failure to develop this culture you call Canadian. This is of enormous concern to me.

First, there is the whole Canadian culture which I think, for you, should be preserved. At present, there is a flood of American programming coming in, and I have the impression that if we do not soon help our Canadian and Quebec producers and artists — you are interdependent — you are going to lose this Canadian culture you hold so dear. Quebec culture is perhaps less endangered, since we have already enacted legislation there. It is still endangered, of course, but still we have a province that is more francophone. We have more ways of protecting ourselves. So Canadian culture is in serious danger.

Second, the producers, including you, and the private broadcasters in competition with you, and deregulation is taking place. This is of enormous concern to me. The people who create dramatic programming, or who create what are supposed to be local productions, this is of enormous concern to me.

So, and given that the Government of Canada is putting \$1.3 billion into this institution, out of your and my taxes, do you not think that we should expand the partnership as much as possible, so that the CBC becomes a force for development of the arts, of culture, and thus of employment in Canada?

I see you nodding your head: you agree with me. Except that as a legislator and a member of this committee, I do not have everything I need in order to talk about this. I am not familiar with your industries. I have a general picture. I am not the one doing business with the CBC.

Could I ask you to send me, and send the Chair, your comments about what a fair, equitable partnership that benefits everyone would be, but in detail, with specifics? That might make some work for our researcher, for Marion, but on the other hand it will help us to understand your experience. You and everyone like you have come here and told us, sometimes clearly and sometimes in veiled terms, that there were little things that were not working. We want to understand them, these little things that are not working. Understandably, you cannot tell us everything, put everything out on public display, but I want to know.

How could a genuine partnership be arranged, so that the CBC was not keeping all the money for itself, and could give you some of the benefit of it? For your part, you would be able to put your talent to work for Canadians and Quebecers who watch television, who watch dramatic programming, and for Canadian arts and culture, so that everyone would be a winner.

Can I ask you to do that? Am I dreaming?

• (2010)

Mr. John Doyle: It has to be done.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: It has to be done? I am dreaming on your behalf. I am defending Canadian culture.

[*English*]

Mr. John Doyle: Let me just address one small part of what Madam Bourgeois brings up. That's in terms of the CBC's involvement as a partner with arts organizations, so in other words, people doing theatre, symphony orchestras, publishers, all those people. There's a win-win possibility here, because recent statistics show that Canadians—in fact, North Americans generally—are increasing their participation in the arts. More people are attending symphony concerts. More people are going to the theatre. More people are reading books in Canada now than before, extraordinarily.

So when the CBC gets involved with the arts, not only are they helping to promote the arts, but they're getting involved in something that Canadians are already interested in. In other words, it's like doing sports broadcasting. If CBC does sports, then they pick up support, they pick up audience, because Canadians like sports. Well, increasingly Canadians are showing that they are interested in the arts and culture in the most general sense.

So it's a very win-win situation for the CBC to partner with arts organizations and to increase its participation that way. I completely agree with you.

• (2015)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I have a two-part question, and it concerns the fees that are paid out and how effective that is in terms of making production.

I've been looking at some numbers that suggest that over, say, the 10-year period leading up to the beginning of this decade, of the broadcast licence fees being paid out, CBC doubled theirs from \$9.6 million to about \$20.6 million in that period, but conventional broadcasters dropped their broadcast licensing fees by over 24%, and the difference was being picked up in foreign acquisitions.

So part one of the question would be the effect that has, again, on viability of productions and whether or not you see, actually on the ground, that those numbers do make sense, whether there has been a drop, because overall, the broadcast licence fees in Canada are much lower than anywhere else, as far as I've been able to see. So that's the first part of the question.

The second is this, and it's come up a number of times in this study. We have developed, based on a model that probably worked great in the 1970s, a number of funding silos: Telefilm, National Film Board, we have the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund, we have now the CTF—there are others as well—and we have a national broadcaster. There seems to be a major disconnect between all the money that we're spending to develop programming and the fact that it's not necessarily tied to being seen on our nation's broadcaster; and also how you see the role between being an independent producer, where you want to actually be able to shop your product, and whether or not there is a need to start bringing some of these together to say, we're creating a phenomenal amount of amazing product, but it's just not being seen, because that link between CBC and those various funding agencies seems to be getting weaker rather than stronger.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: Yes, I agree.

One of the things we have to do is not just look at the CBC in isolation. It's the whole of television in Canada. We really have to look at the Canadian Television Fund. You have to remember that with the Canadian Television Fund envelope, CBC is allotted 37% of that amount. You're quite right, the broadcast licences, while they've increased statistically, are still quite low. We're finding now that CBC and all broadcasters are looking for...there are lower broadcast licences, but they're looking for a lot more. In addition to the production itself, they're trying to keep all ancillary rights, there's a new mediation that we've talked about—these are huge concerns.

It's happening, I know, but there has to be an overall review about television in Canada, where it's going. It's changing, as I said earlier. The times are changing, the way people are looking at things is changing. So we really have to review it. Our kids are watching it on different formats. So we either jump on this or get lost in the dust.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Anyone else?

Ms. Noreen Golfman: I would echo what Chris has said and endorse your points. I think you're describing well the fragmented nature of our whole telecommunications system—and that's just a quick scan of it, as you've outlined.

Clearly, what's missing is coherence or some cohesiveness. There are many disconnects having to do with accountability, going back, of course, to the mandate and the various interests running counterintuitively or counterproductively. It behooves us to look at

the big picture and to see where CBC fits into all of that and what its role is in relation, again, as I said before, to a thriving industry. We have the potential to do that. We have the language. And we seem to have the will, the citizenship who want to do that, but we have not been able to bring that coherence into play and to realize it. It's slipping away from us in this increasingly fragmented world, and I think we all sense that.

There is a sense in which, I think, the average viewer feels helpless about it. That is a big fear we have about the CBC, of course, that its steady erosion and indications of lack of support are undermining it and its mandate, feeding resignation in citizens who say, well, let's just put it out of its misery, or who say the things that are commonly kicked around and circulated in public discourse. I think that would be tragic for all of us and—finally—also against our will.

It is integration at every level that we're really missing in this country. There's opportunity to pull all these threads together—not to mandate a state system, necessarily, that doesn't allow people to breathe or compete, but clearly a more balanced system that allows the public broadcaster to be competitive with the privates, and vice versa.

● (2020)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Scott.

Hon. Andy Scott: This is interesting, and I'm glad we had the second round, because it's picked up some stuff.

I think a country as creative as ours on a whole bunch of fronts should be creative enough to seize this complicated, but necessary configuration. We're compelled to do so because of proximity, population, and the size of the country.

I think the government's heritage department, or the government generally, needs to step up. I think to some extent it been too easy for the government—and I say this about governments, as against any particular one—to push off responsibility to the CRTC or to the CBC and say, solve these things. So maybe the government has to step up and then, with that, the CBC will become stronger by association, by being part of something that is more coherent than is the case right now.

The other part of it—and I go back to what I said in my first intervention—is the problem of finding the right balance between having certain expectations for the investment, but not having any capacity to act on those expectations in some ways that are helpful. I know that when the \$60 million came up and it wasn't A-based but an annual thing.... And for the record, when I chaired the CBC caucus for my caucus when we were governing, it was in reaction to the announcement of.... I remember quite clearly Mr. Rabinovitch, as a guest at the heritage committee, speaking of the severed limb of the Atlantic Canada. And it was out of that. The reason it wasn't A-based, in my mind—I don't know this, as I wasn't in the room—is that there wasn't any confidence that if it did happen or it was A-based, we would get any difference. To some extent, it's been there now for three or four years, and it hasn't found its way into regional supper hour programming, or supper half-hour programming, or whatever it is now.

I think that's the struggle. Maybe we make a mistake in trying to place responsibility for solving that piece on the CBC itself. Maybe that is for the Government of Canada, of which the CBC is one of the most important instruments, but not the only one. That may be the answer.

The other part is that if we do mandate more investment in the CBC—and I think one of the recommendations is going to go some way in that direction—we may have to look at the mandate in terms of its clarity. Most of the people who have appeared before us seem satisfied that what the CBC needs to do is there. From listening to people talk about how they define the word “regional”, I can tell you that the word “regional” in Atlantic Canada has an entirely different meaning compared to the word “regional” in Toronto.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: I think it's Hamilton, isn't it, in Toronto?

Hon. Andy Scott: I think it's a critically important point. We all look at the mandate, and yes, it seems to work.

We may have to offer significantly more clarity if we want to make a large investment expecting a certain outcome and not wake up the next day shocked that we've made this investment and haven't seen the outcome we thought the investment would buy us.

I'm just looking for nodding heads. They're all nodding, so that seems to.... I just want to get a reaction, and I think I've gotten it.

Thanks.

• (2025)

Ms. Noreen Golfman: Can I say one quick thing to that? In terms of the last part of what you said, I think that's a provocative way of thinking about changing or focusing on the language of region itself. I would say that even in Atlantic Canada, of course, that word is loaded in all kinds of ways, as you know. Certainly sitting here it is.

To the first part of what you said, I think you're absolutely right in your description of investment in a renewed supper hour that hasn't proven to have gotten back on its legs. But we have to take the big picture. There's a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy here. In a way, it looks like a set-up. I don't mean that in some kind of malevolent way, but clearly decisions made by senior management have led to this mistake.

There is a part of me that worries about the argument that we should let others handle CBC or engage in the bigger problem of CBC. In part, I think that's true; everybody has to look at the whole system, or the people who are invested in it have to look at the whole system wisely. But CBC management has to take responsibility for its own mistakes. And that's a very serious part of all of this, as well. So long as the very top brass is appointed and there are patronage appointments—this is now becoming an old story in this country—we're going to have problems with senior management, and we have for quite some time. There's a real disconnect between that management and the regions, however you define them.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I have two things.

Hamilton was mentioned. We did have a presentation from Hamilton. They're not in the same region as Toronto. They have a disconnect. They don't have their radio station. Hopefully, this is coming. It's in the plans, or it's happening, to get a Hamilton radio station.

But there are differences in regions, and sometimes regions can be regions within regions. I just wanted to comment on that. And there is a difference. The people are going in a different direction. The streets and highways in Hamilton don't necessarily reflect what's happening in Toronto.

Mr. Chris Bonnell: Again, just to clarify my point, a lot of times Toronto has determined that some regional production is Hamilton.

The Chair: I know that too.

The other thing, as Mr. Simms said earlier, is long-term sustainable funding. I've been hearing about long-term sustainable funding ever since I have been sitting on this committee, whether it be from the CBC, whether it be from the CTF, or whether it be from the Canada Council for the Arts. Everyone looks for long-term funding.

So many times it went right up to the eleventh hour before that funding was agreed to for another year. It would be my hope that there could be long-term sustainable funding so it gives the corporation, whether it be the CBC or any of the other organizations, a way to plan forward. If you're only getting funding for another year, again, as I say, at the eleventh hour every year, you don't have much of a long-term plan. Hopefully, some of those things can be done as we go.

I thank you very much for your presentation and for your candid answers. We've totally enjoyed this part of it.

At this particular time, if I could, I will take a survey of the people in the audience. Is there anyone who has questions for our committee or for our witnesses? If you would like to make a comment or anything, we have a microphone. If we have no one jumping up to the microphone....

Sir, could you identify yourself?

• (2030)

Mr. David Benson (Fisheries Observer, As an Individual): My name is David Benson.

I always have been an avid CBC listener and defender of the CBC against many critics, but at this point you might as well put it all in the back and throw it overboard. It has gone downhill so badly. If you can imagine the concept of reruns in private television, CBC has reruns on the same day. Its news has degenerated to the point where it's propaganda, it's racist, it's inane. It's losing all of its listeners. It's supposedly going after a more immature audience, but my 16-year-old daughter has given up on it.

It almost seems as if there's a crowd of apparatchiks running the place who have no commitment to public broadcasting at all. The only time I hear anything half decently neutral politically in international news is when I hear the overnight broadcasts from England or Australia or somewhere like that.

It's time to either bury the thing and privatize—at least it then might not have such a vicious political agenda—or do something with it. Television is just so stupid and inane that there's no point in listening to it or watching it.

If I wanted the bullshit and the crime hysteria.... I used to work in the media; I know why that's done by the private broadcasters. It's

part of their policy, for their own commercial reasons. CBC doesn't have to do that. And if I wanted inane music, there are lots of stations to listen to.

On the technical, actual level of broadcast, I can't get English-language FM. I can get two French-language stations that boom into the house, and that's great because they generally have better music, but for CBC FM I have to chase the radio all around the room all day to pick up anything.

So as for long-term sustainable funding to give us more of what we're getting now, I don't see the point.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Is there anyone else?

Seeing no one else standing at the microphone, I adjourn this meeting.

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