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—
Chair

Mr. Steven Blaney

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•(0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): I would ask all the committee members to take their seats so that we can begin.

Good morning, and welcome, everyone, to the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will begin our study of the broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation of the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame Gala.

I would like to begin by telling the committee members that I received the letter from the president of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, Ms. Raymonde Boulay LeBlanc, who would like me to give you the following message:

We at the FCCF were saddened to learn that the wording of his statement, on the occasion of the departure of the Honourable Mauril Bélanger from his position as critic for Heritage Canada, Official Languages and the Francophonie, caused discomfort amongst the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, because this was never his intention. While paying tribute to the political work undertaken by the federal Liberal member for Ottawa-Vanier as critic, the FCCF remains fully aware of the unwavering commitment and political work of each member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages in advocating for the artistic and cultural sectors of the Canadian Francophonie, within the framework of the upcoming strategy of the federal government for official languages. The FCCF thanks them sincerely. It is essential that together we continue to collaborate to create a Canadian cultural and artistic space and to encourage holistic cultural action within the francophone minority of Canada in order to meet the challenges of the XXIst century within a context of globalization.

We will now proceed with our witness, Mr. Richard Stursberg.

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. As you know, our committee mandate is to promote linguistic duality and it is within this context that we have invited you to give us a 10-minute presentation, followed by a round of questions from the committee members.

Mr. Stursberg, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Richard Stursberg (Executive Vice-President, English Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Thank you very much.

My name is Richard Stursberg. I am the head of English services for the CBC, including television, radio, websites, and so on.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come and talk with you today. I understand that you've invited me here as head of CBC's English services to discuss

our March broadcast of this year's Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame gala.

In order to do that, I think it's important to provide you with some context about how we at English services contribute to Canada's shared national identity.

First, as you know, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is an arms'-length crown corporation. Its mandate, as well as the independence of its programming decisions, is spelled out in law in the Broadcasting Act.

[Translation]

I want you to know that, as Canada's public broadcaster, I believe we have a special role to play providing opportunities for French- and English-speaking Canadians to share their culture, their views, and their experiences. No other broadcaster in this country does this. At CBC we do it every day.

•(0910)

[English]

I'm not talking about symbolic or token gestures to put one culture in front of the other. I'm talking about sharing cultures in a meaningful way. I'm talking about taking creative ideas from one culture and adapting them for the other in a way that works for the audience and in a way that respects both cultures and the broadcast medium.

[Translation]

That why CBC and Radio-Canada work together in joint projects of deep cultural significance to both cultures: Documentaries like *Hockey*, *a People's History*, or the mini-series on *Trudeau*, and *Lévesque*. These are not some cheap translation of another language's programs. They are created together, from inception to broadcast.

When we produced the sitcom *Ciao Bella!*, a lighthearted look at the experiences of an Italian-Canadian woman living in Montreal, we shot every episode twice: Once in English, once in French. The completed series run on both CBC Television and la télévision de Radio-Canada.

Every day our foreign correspondents give a Canadian perspective on international events—filing their reports in English and French. No one else does that. On election nights, and for significant nation-building events, CBC and Radio-Canada work together to offer the best national perspective Canadians can get. In the last two years alone, we have jointly produced over 200 specials.

[English]

At CBC English services, we continually look for new ways to bring French culture to English Canadians in a way that will resonate with our audiences. In 2004 we launched the half-hour weekly show *Au Courant*, with Mitsou Gélina. This show is dedicated to telling English-Canadian audiences about what French Canadians were talking about that week.

[Translation]

In fact, I had the pleasure of being President of Telefilm Canada and when we produced Denis Arcand's feature film, *Les invasions barbares*, Mitsou was part of the film cast. That is how I ended up having the pleasure of meeting her. It was therefore my idea to invite Mitsou to be the moderator of this show.

[English]

We chose Mitsou because she is an artist some English Canadians are at least a little familiar with from her career as an actress and as a pop star.

[Translation]

On CBC television in the past three years alone, we have broadcast French-language hits like *Les Boys*, *Grande Ourse*, and *Seducing Dr. Louis (La grande séduction)*, as well as 36 other French-language titles representing almost 70 hours of programming.

Since 2002, our Newsworld documentary stream, *The Lens*, has commissioned and broadcast more than 30 documentaries with our colleagues at RDI or with other French-language broadcasters. We co-produced the award winning *Culture-choc/Culture Shock*, where emerging anglophone and francophone journalists share their perceptions of the experiences of other Canadians as they travel across the country.

[English]

On our English web radio service and on Sirius Satellite Radio we offer a segment called *The French Connection*. On this show our host, Craig Norris, holds a music exchange with our colleagues at *Bande à part* at Radio-Canada; they introduce new music to each other and to our audiences.

Several times a year, CBC Radio 3 and *Bande à part* host live events together, bilingual concerts with musicians performing in French and English. We did this last month during Canadian Music Week.

● (0915)

[Translation]

On CBC English radio, the successful *C'est la vie* continues to offer English Canadians a window into the lives of French-speaking Canadians from across the country. It has celebrated the career of diva Diane Dufresne, talked to a new wave of young, political filmmakers, traced the origin of poutine, and celebrated French love songs. One of its most popular segments is *Word of the Week*, which introduces anglophones to distinctly Canadian French words and phrases. The English radio program *À propos* broadcasts nothing but French music and French artists from Canada and around the world.

Last fall, CBC Regina and Radio-Canada put together *Mon pays, My country*, a bilingual evening of country music featuring Brad Johner, Donny Parenteau, Véronique L'Abbé and Louis Bérubé.

[English]

We have broadcast Marco Calliari performing at Festival du Bois in British Columbia; Brigitte Poulin and Silvia Mandolini, two of Montreal's hottest new artists, performing the Canadian premiere of *Le souvenir de l'oubli* by Montreal composer François Rose; and Terez Montcalm singing in French and English at the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre. The list is extensive.

Canada Live broadcasts live concerts from every region of the country; one-third of that content features French artists. It was *Canada Live*, in fact, that broadcast the entire Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame gala.

[Translation]

Now let me say a few things about the songwriters' gala. CBC has hosted the gala for the past three years. The actual program is long—over three hours. Every year, we have broadcast the entire three and a half hour program on CBC Radio 2—you can do that on radio. It was also broadcast on CBC Radio One. Every year, we also take an edited version of the show—cut from three and a half hours down to 44 minutes—to broadcast on CBC Television. That edited program features artists that are popular with our audience. That's what we did this year.

Now, I understand that songwriter Claude Dubois was upset that he was honoured at the gala but was not part of the broadcast on CBC English television. I'm sorry he feels that way. And I'm sorry for the perception in the Quebec media that we at CBC English services were insulting French artists. That was not our intention. For all of that, I am really sorry.

But frankly, to call us racists and anti-French is outrageous, and I am a little surprised that members of Parliament, who were quick to express their desire to investigate our broadcast, did not speak out against that kind of attack. It is beneath us as a country; it is insulting to the people across CBC's English services who work in all the ways I have described, to try and find ways to showcase the Quebec culture to our English audiences in a way that works. That's not an easy task, and to call them racists is wrong and unfair.

[English]

Remember, we at CBC English services are making programs that are by definition for English-speaking audiences. If they don't understand our programs or can't relate to them, they won't watch them. It's as simple as that.

So we find ways to adapt French culture in ways that they will watch: stories like *Rumours*, our version of the French hit comedy *Rumeurs*; or our current hit *Sophie*, set in Toronto instead of Montreal, as is *Les hauts et les bas de Sophie Paquin*.

We will continue to look for those kinds of stories, for ways to showcase French artists, for ways to tell English Canadians about what's going on in French-language communities, for ways that CBC and Radio-Canada can work together to bring the best to Canadians. We do it because we believe in it.

Now I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stursberg.

We will now proceed with MPs. We'll start with the official opposition, beginning with the Honourable Denis Coderre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Stursberg, thank you for coming today.

I have been working for the unity of this country for 25 years. For 25 years, modestly and humbly, I have been trying to build bridges between the communities. Your role is not to tell us that members are at fault because they were too quick in asking for an investigation. It is most certainly not our fault when an event has been held to celebrate singer-songwriters... Your job does not consist solely in pleasing an English audience. It is to demonstrate—and you'll probably talk about Mitsou and poutine again—that the purpose of this event was to celebrate what this country represents: two languages, several cultures, including francophone culture and anglophone culture, and the founding peoples of this country.

My citizenship is inclusive in that regard. You can talk to me about all the events that you hold, and we congratulate you on that. However, one specific event is a responsibility. When we ask for an investigation, it's because we want to know what is going on and we want to see the other side of the coin.

I am a fan of Claude Dubois. To be frank, I was insulted. There is also Raymond Lévesque. I am not a separatist, my culture is non-partisan. This is like me asking to take a photograph of us and asking you to stand in the background. That way I can cut it up and take what suits me.

I don't want to hold a cross-examination of CBC today; I want to understand what happened. Put yourself in our shoes. If we were to tell anglophone singer-songwriters that because we only had 44 minutes we were going to cut everything that was anglophone because we francophones only listen to music in French and didn't need it, what would you think? It's a little insulting, Mr. Stursberg.

You can produce a program that includes everyone. In 40 minutes you can give equal representation to the French segments because these performers did exceptional work. The idea is not to tell you that you didn't take your responsibilities in other areas. We're not dealing with a Don Cherry syndrome today. We're talking about this event because we want to understand what happened.

It took two days of people up in arms before you apologized. I wasn't a member of the committee but from what I understand it's because of this that an investigation was requested. I would simply like to know if next year you're going to do the same sort of dirty work. If there are singer-songwriters and a gala is being held, then you'll be able to tell us that... The idea is not to please the audience. Radio-Canada/CBC's mandate is to showcase what is happening in our country.

Next year, if there are francophones, will we still be treated as second-class citizens or are you going to make sure that, as your mandate dictates, francophones and anglophones will be on an equal footing?

● (0920)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Stursberg: You know, it's very interesting; just to put this in perspective, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the entire thing was on radio. When we cut it down to 44 minutes for television, what we were....

Obviously, when you cut three and a half hours down to 44 minutes, a lot of stuff has to go—a lot of stuff, good stuff. Our task this year was made particularly difficult by the fact that the great pianist Oscar Peterson had just died, and this was the first huge tribute to him.

So we cut it back. But I think it would be wrong to believe that we cut out only French-speaking singers. We did not. We also cut out English-speaking singers. Among those who were honoured at the gala, who were inducted into the hall of fame, were Les Emmerson, Alex Kramer, Dean Taylor, and none of them were—

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Stursberg, I understand that. That's not the issue here. The issue is that you had some people from the French-speaking culture, and none—zippo, nothing, nobody—were there.

My question is simple. If you're supposed to represent.... And if you want to talk about ratio, let's talk about ratio. But if you have some representatives and you want to put both cultures at the same level, don't you believe, with me, that...?

Of course you had to cut some, and some anglophones were cut, but as I read it, you're saying that you had to cut to please your watchers, who are anglophone.

Claude Dubois—

● (0925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Precisely. Our viewers are anglophone. As I said in my comments this morning, if I broadcast someone that nobody knows, then people will change the channel. It has to be said because this is very important.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Stursberg.

For the sake of the interpretation, I would ask that only one person speak at a time. Mr. Coderre, allow Mr. Stursberg to finish before continuing with your questions.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Stursberg, I'm very familiar with the world of communications and the media and I know how this business works.

From listening to you one would think that you're the saviour of the two solitudes. You had a golden opportunity to build a bridge, to send a message to the rest of the country, to Quebeckers, that there are people of different cultures. How do you think we will be able to learn about those people if we don't have an opportunity to hear them?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We have tried to build bridges by co-producing documentaries with our colleagues from RDI and Radio-Canada, by producing musical shows, shows for children, and many other initiatives.

The Chair: Mr. Coderre, your time is up. I will allow Mr. Stursberg to briefly respond to your question and then we will move on to the next member.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: The best way to build bridges is to respect both our audiences' tastes, customs and languages.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Stursberg.

We will now move on to Mr. Richard Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stursberg, thank you for coming today.

I would also like to thank my colleague, Daniel Petit, who put this topic on the committee's agenda. It was perfectly justified.

Mr. Stursberg, I'm going to try and analyze this issue as objectively as possible. From the perspective of identity and culture, I think that what I have heard you state is very harmful. Allow me to explain.

First, you say that your viewers were made up of anglophones and that you had to respect their culture and avoid offending them from that point of view. That was the issue. If I look at this from the other end of the lens, I see that Quebec pays 25% of the taxes provided to CBC, and francophones living outside Quebec also pay their share of the funding allocated to CBC. The issue is not viewers, the issue is respect on the part of a gala whose purpose is to showcase music, song, music composition and the performers who are the standard-bearers of that music.

You tell me that you produce documentaries, that's well and fine but this program was not a documentary. The purpose of this show was to present culture, Quebec, Franco-Canadian, Acadian, Anglo-Canadian cultures all together in order to show Canadian taxpayers, regardless of where they live, this extraordinary variety of artists.

Mr. Dubois stood up and banged his fist on the table. I don't think he was only doing it for himself, he was also doing it for the principle. You were surprised that the media reported this. Listen, the issue is not the media. This is striking! When we found out about this, we felt excluded.

I'm going to give you an example that will explain why I perceive CBC the way I do. It's unfortunate and it has to change. When the 1972 Summit Series was going to be produced, Foster Hewitt spent some time at the Soviet Union's embassy in order to learn how to pronounce the names of the Soviet players. It was a very good exercise. Yet, throughout his career, he never learned to pronounce the names of Jean-Guy Talbot, Yvan Courmoyer or even Jean Béliveau. *La Soirée du hockey* arrived in 1976 in Western Canada. Before then, we used to listen to CBC. We couldn't see ourselves in the "Djang-Gaille Tällboat" and "Djinn Ballâvô". CBC is still like that. We don't see ourselves in this machine, we don't see our culture, our points of reference. When there was going to be a Radio-Canada station in Saskatoon, everyone talked about "CBC French". I never, ever, saw CBC referred to in Quebec as "SRC anglaise".

You want to meet the needs of your public. Fine, but showcase reality. Why was the word "racist" used? Because we were excluded. Excluding individuals implies taking one group and not taking the

other. In this case, francophones felt excluded and we're pointing it out to you. Don't tell me that you do other programs; I know that and that's fine. But when you produce a show whose purpose is to showcase music, you must make the effort to ensure that a quarter of your 45 minutes of programming will reflect a quarter of Canadian taxpayers who are francophone and who have the right to be represented in these types of programs.

I read the articles. They appeared in the month of March, not so long ago. Have you started giving serious consideration to a better representation of the cultures throughout the Canadian territory during the next gala show?

• (0930)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Right now, we are thinking about what will happen at the gala.

But I must come back to the fact that, as I said to Mr. Coderre, we have made a real effort at the CBC to reflect the reality of our country and build bridges between the two cultures. Think about all the shows I mentioned and all the activities on TV and even on the radio. So focusing in on a single show and insisting that this or that has to be done on it is a bit limited, I think. I even have to come back...

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I understand what you are saying, but I do want you to be aware that the reason we are having this meeting this morning is to discuss the gala, which is national in scope. It is a one-evening show that showcases outstanding musicians and singers.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: The rules of the game were clear for everyone. We did the same show three years ago. We have focused each time on musicians and singers who are known in English Canada. There has been no change in policy. When we signed our contract with Mr. Dubois, we clearly indicated the broadcast conditions. I can quote the contract for you:

The Gala will be broadcast in its entirety on CBC Radio Two on Sunday, March 2nd, 2008 and selected excerpts will be broadcast on CBC Radio One on Monday, March 3rd. CBC Television will broadcast selected excerpts from the inductions of Paul Anka and Oscar Peterson, on Monday, March 3rd [...]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I understood the contract.

Mr. Stursberg, I simply want to highlight something. I come from a teaching background. When I used to ask my students to give me the names of Canadian artists, actors, singers and composers, from both English Canada and French Canada or Quebec, they had a lot of trouble doing it. However, they had no problem naming stars from American culture.

If we do not showcase both Quebec culture and English-Canadian culture, if we do not make the effort to make both Quebec and English-Canadian artists known, the frame of reference for our young people and listeners will always be the big American machine, which will influence our teenagers.

Thank you.

• (0935)

The Chair: If we want all members of the committee to have an opportunity to speak, we will have to stay within our respective time.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome you to the committee on official languages, even though you feel that you should not be here this morning. I am surprised by your comments.

According to my information, this is not the first time that CBC has excluded francophones and broadcast anglophone artists from a gala. Is that true?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: It is not the first time that we have broadcast this gala. We only show it on television; it is not aired on radio. The musicians that the anglophone audience is most familiar with are anglophone.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If we adopted your attitude, a good Acadian singer named Jean-François Breau would never have become known, even in Quebec. Radio-Canada could say that Jean-François Breau comes from Tracadie-Sheila and will not be given air time because people in Quebec do not know him.

There are 7 million Quebecers and 250,000 Acadians. The Acadian Peninsula has a population of 60,000. Not all these people would be familiar with this singer. They would never have heard of Johnny Cash or Hank Williams, either, since they did not sing in French.

I have a lot of trouble with that idea, Mr. Stursberg. It is not as if it were a program where someone was saying things that the audience would not be able to understand. After all, this is a gala, which means singing and music. It is different.

I have been invited to performances of aboriginal singers. With all due respect, I have to say that I did not understand any of the lyrics, but I loved the sound and the music. There are three cultures. In fact, there are more than three cultures in Canada, but I will mention the first nations, who were the first inhabitants, and the two peoples, the English and the French, who came from Europe. I would be just as critical of Radio-Canada if it started to exclude certain singers. If people do not know Claude Dubois, maybe it is time to help them do so. It is a learning opportunity.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Is that a question?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you want me to ask more?

[English]

Mr. Richard Stursberg: You know, we can go through this three or four different times, and I'm sorry if you don't like my answer to the question, but I think you have to grant one simple premise—well, two. One is that we actually know something about how to program radio and television networks in a way that works best for our audiences, and two is that in the context of attempting to actually build bridges between French and English Canada, we want to do so in a way that is going to be most effective.

I really don't believe there's much point in making programs that people are going to turn off. People don't learn anything in that way. So as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we have made enormous efforts—enormous efforts—to be able to do this, whether it's through dramas, documentaries, musical events, it doesn't matter.

Why we single out this one program, I frankly do not understand.

[Translation]

And if you are saying that all the rest does not count, then I am totally confused. I have the impression that the members of the committee think that the CBC and I are anti-francophone.

● (0940)

Hon. Denis Coderre: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chairman, even if this is a political debate, I find this totally unacceptable. There are no anti-francophones here. So I would ask the witness to withdraw his comments. He is appearing before us because he is part of a public institution and he is accountable to taxpayers. Mr. Stursberg, I do not accept your remark that you and your organization are being treated as anti-francophone. We want the truth. The arrogance that you are displaying here today is clear evidence that we were right to call you before the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coderre.

I think that this is a delicate issue and it is more a matter of debate or interpretation. I think it is now clear that all members of the committee are keenly interested in our linguistic duality and the advancement of both communities. I would ask Mr. Stursberg to continue. We may at least be able to correct certain perceptions that I am convinced are wrong.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I do not want that to be taken off my time.

The Chair: Very well, Mr. Godin, we will be generous.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: What should I do now: continue with Mr. Godin or respond to Mr. Coderre?

The Chair: You can continue with Mr. Godin, Mr. Stursberg.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: That is my answer, actually.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is your answer, but I have a problem with it. This is a particular case, but it focuses on singing. Does it mean that if an English-speaking singer appears on a Radio-Canada program or any other TV channel, we will change channels? What kind of attitude does the CBC have?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I have to say that—

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is what you said, sir.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: My colleagues at Radio-Canada have exactly the same policy, which is that anglophone musicians and singers are not presented on TV in French. That is the truth. My colleagues at Radio-Canada decided not to broadcast the gala, and I respect their decision.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You said Radio-Canada wasn't there because it was a feature program in English in Toronto that some francophones had been invited to. I'm pretty sure that when Radio-Canada does that kind of show—and it's not because I'm particularly interested in defending them; that's not my inclination—if someone sings in English, they're not going to cut out that performance just because it's sung in English.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We also have shows with francophone musicians, as I said a bit earlier. As for this show, it was all about the gala and the hall of fame. That's my reasoning.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You think anglophones wouldn't want to listen to a song in French if they didn't know the singer. They turn the TV off or change the channel.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes, that is what we think. The danger, if you have someone who's a total unknown in English Canada—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Who is going to make them known?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We have many responsibilities. We made a decision. You are free to agree or disagree, but that was our position.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you still take that position today?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: After all that's happened?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes.

The Chair: We're going to go to another member.

Mr. Chong.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Stursberg, for appearing today. I wanted you to come today, to have the CBC here today, not to rehash the events concerning the songwriters gala and singer Claude Dubois, but rather to take the opportunity that issue highlighted to talk about how you're fulfilling two mandate items of the 1991 Broadcasting Act.

Before we go on to that discussion, I think something needs to be responded to, and that is that you can't have it both ways. You can't say on the one hand that your programming decisions are independent and then demand that members of Parliament respond to criticisms that some third party made about your independent programming decisions.

You stated earlier on that you're independent in your programming decisions, but then you also stated that you were surprised we didn't speak out against Mr. Claude Dubois's remarks. If your programming decisions are independent, then people's comments on them aren't really our responsibility, especially if they're not parliamentarians and are simply citizens.

That being said, the reason I wanted you here today is to talk about how you're fulfilling two items in the 1991 Broadcasting Act. In particular, subparagraph 3(1)(m)(iv) reads that your programming should include “the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities”, while subparagraph (vi) reads that your programming should “contribute to shared national consciousness and identity”.

In light of that, I think you've highlighted some of the things the corporation has been doing to fulfill that part of the act—the television show *Sophie*, and some of the other initiatives you've undertaken in recent years—but I think there are a lot of people who often wonder whether there isn't more that can be done.

I think about things such as newsgathering. I can't tell you how many nights I've watched the national news on the CBC's main television network, and then I watch the same national news on Radio-Canada, and they could be from two different countries, frankly: the topics, the focuses, are completely different. I think that while there have been some efforts to gather the news jointly, and I have seen that, in many cases it doesn't happen. That's one area in which I think the corporation could do a better job of fulfilling its mandate.

The other thing I've often been aware of is this. Radio services are fairly efficient, fairly cheap—they're not incredibly expensive—but in many parts of, for example, Ontario, you can't get the main French-language radio station. If you do, it's on the AM band, and the reception is awful. There's another example of how there's a cheap, efficient, effective way to deliver French-language services on radio that isn't happening right now. In my part of southwestern Ontario, it's almost impossible to get French-language services on a radio station from Radio-Canada.

Those are just two things I would point out where a better job could be done in fulfilling subparagraphs 3(1)(m)(iv) and (vi) within the 1991 Broadcasting Act.

Maybe you could respond to those two issues.

● (0945)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Sure, we would like to extend our radio services in both French and English. We were asked, actually, to make a proposal as to how to do this by, I think, if memory serves, originally the heritage committee. And we did; we tabled a report with them two years ago proposing exactly some means of doing that. So we totally agree.

I totally agree with you as well—as I agree with every member of the committee, which is why I'm a little bit struck by it—that the CBC has a fundamental responsibility to reflect and interpret both great cultures to each other. I totally agree with that. I totally agree with the premise of every single question here. I totally agree. And that's why, as I mentioned, we put such a long effort into figuring out how to do these things together and how to make this interpretation, but in a way, as I was saying earlier on, that actually works, given our different audiences and our different cultures.

I say this personally; I wanted a show called *Au Courant*, and I wanted Mitsou to do the show, because I wanted a show that was going to actually provide a window into French culture every single week. It was my idea to redo *Rumeurs* and to do it as *Rumours*; and the same thing with *Les hauts et les bas de Sophie Paquin*.

When it comes to journalists, we also agree with you. Many, many of our international journalists actually now report in both languages. I have to tell you, though, that finding people who can work in both languages is a challenge because it presupposes a level of fluency that's rare. But we completely agree with that. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we've done over 200 different pieces together in the last little while.

My colleague Sylvain Lafrance and I are jointly responsible for a fund within the organization that is dedicated to this very purpose, which is to make things that will work well in both French and English. So I completely agree.

My only point in all this, and I think it's an important point, is that we have to do this in a way that is congenial from the point of view of the audiences. If we do things that the audiences don't like or don't understand, we're not making any progress. They'll just say, "I don't know what that's about", and they'll turn it off.

So how that actually helps the situation, I don't know. What I think helps the situation are programs that people find interesting, entertaining, and stimulating, that they want to watch, but explore these issues in a way that is—

● (0950)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong and Mr. Stursberg.

We're now going to start our second round. This time, members will have five minutes, and we're going to start off with Mr. Pablo Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stursberg, the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame gala includes all songwriters. It also includes francophones and the entire country. So there's no equivalent of this program in French. It is the program for the entire country, and it has to reflect Canadian reality, anglophone and francophone.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Can you tell me why the executive director of the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame, Mr. Martin Duchesne, stepped down in January?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I have no idea.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You have no idea. It was our understanding that it was actually related to the fact that—

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Are you talking about Mr. Frank Davies?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No, I'm talking about Mr. Martin Duchesne.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No, I don't know.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It was our understanding that he was against the idea of taking francophones out of the media showcase.

In other years, when you organized the same event, were there any francophones in those 44 minutes?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Never?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Were those who were there this year aware of that?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I assume so, that was our policy.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Did you make it known? Was Claude Dubois aware of that?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes, I even quoted from Claude Dubois' contract.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I understand the contract, but you can't—

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I wasn't party to the conversations between Claude Dubois and the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. As far as I know, his contract indicated clearly what we were planning to do on TV.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: If I follow your logic, you've been doing the same thing for three years, reducing the show to 44 minutes, without francophones. So the format is known and understood.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: The format is known full well.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You're saying you won't broadcast music that people can't understand. So it's known in advance that there won't be any francophones.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I should point out that it depends on the platform. We did broadcast three and a half hours of the show on Radio 2, including all of the francophones.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: And on Radio One?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: If I recall correctly, there was one hour of francophones. It's different on television, because we had only 44 minutes. Oscar Peterson died, and we decided to focus on Paul Anka and Oscar Peterson. We also decided not to include other anglophones, whose names I already mentioned.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It's not even a pattern any more, it's a fact. Every year, you invite francophones and you cut them every time. I assume you're going to do the same thing next year, since you told Mr. Godin that you still stood by that reasoning.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So you're going to do the same thing next year.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We are currently—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Could you, out of respect for francophones, tell them in advance that they're going to be cut?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: The thing that struck me is that this is quite an interesting conversation. I was quite impressed by the whole country's reaction to our decision. So we are currently thinking about what we're going to do in the future. We haven't decided yet what we're going to do about this event, but—

● (0955)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: If you stick to the same pattern, Mr. Stursberg, if you condense a 3-hour show into 44 minutes... Going by your philosophy, you have to broadcast things that anglophones understand and appreciate. You say that you stand by your past decision. I don't see any change in direction; you're going to do exactly the same thing next year.

Out of respect for francophone artists from Quebec or outside Quebec, I'm asking you to tell them that they won't be broadcast.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I reject the notion that we have no respect for Quebec artists. That's not true. We have even gone to considerable lengths to reflect the reality, to build bridges between the two cultures. It's one of the CBC's main goals. It is my impression that we've done a very good job. Frankly, I find that talking about this one show in isolation—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It's because it is the Canadian gala. I asked you initially if there was a francophone equivalent, a francophone music hall of fame gala. There isn't. There's just one gala for all Canadian music, including francophone music. Canadian music includes Quebec artists and francophone artists outside Quebec. That's my country, my culture and the music I listen to. It includes everyone.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

Do you wish to comment briefly, Mr. Stursberg?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: At the risk of repeating myself, yes, that's very important, but we made some decisions. Our colleagues from Radio-Canada chose not to broadcast the show.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stursberg.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: That was their decision.

The Chair: We're going to go to the government side now.

Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you.

Good morning, Mr. Stursberg.

We asked you to appear here today to try to determine what happened at the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame gala. Naturally, you saw that there was quite an uproar, that a lot of people were complaining in the newspapers of Quebec and the rest of the country. Questions were raised about this show.

I think you've understood our questioning. It's because it is the hall of fame gala, the height of Canadian culture, and you are under an obligation, as an institution, to respect linguistic duality and multiculturalism. You have to; it is part of your mandate. Personally, I don't think you lived up to your mandate as far as this particular show was concerned. When you invited all of the artists to participate in those 44 minutes, you could at least have had the decency to broadcast the francophone artists.

You say your audience didn't want to see francophone artists on TV, but I don't agree with you. Personally, I am able to watch TV in English. How do Americans convey their culture to us? Through their music, through their culture, which is constantly being broadcast. How can we influence anglophones? Through our culture. It's a two-way street. You say that in Toronto, people only wanted to see anglophone artists, but that's not true. You can't get inside the heads of all Canadians. Some English Canadians want to hear our artists. You're dividing everyone into two camps. Those responsible for the gala decided not to give us a single minute out of 44 minutes. That is really insulting. It is for that reason alone that you are here today.

You also say you broadcast the full three hours of the gala on Radio 2 and an hour or two of it on Radio One. If you come to the Quebec City area, you'll see that no one listens to Radio-Canada radio, even in French. So don't try to tell me that was the right medium. What I want is television. It's the most important because it's modern. I don't mean to say that radio isn't, but television is important. I want to see my artists dancing, singing and expressing themselves, and I want the other cultures to be represented too.

My question is straightforward. In answer to a colleague's question, you seemed to be saying earlier that you were going to repeat the same format at the next hall of fame gala. Are you going to cut our artists' performances again, or are you going to hold some meetings with a view to a change in attitude? I am criticizing you, but I don't mean to criticize you personally, it's the CBC. I want to know if, of those 44 minutes, you're going to give us at least one minute. That's the minimum we're entitled to, given that we provide 33% of your budget.

Thank you.

• (1000)

The Chair: One minute, that's all you have left too, Mr. Stursberg.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I can repeat myself again. We are currently considering what we're going to do in the future with the hall of fame gala. I'm here to listen to you and to have this conversation. I've tried to explain my reasoning in relation to this show, but I can clearly see that you reject it. I hear you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to continue our second round with Mr. Gravel.

Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ): I won't do a long preamble. I'd like to know whether Claude Dubois would have been part of the show if he had sung in English.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Probably not, since he's not very well known among anglophones. There was also the problem of Oscar Peterson's death. The time was incredibly limited. You may reject that reasoning, but we decided not to include Claude Dubois' performance in the show because he's not very well known in English Canada and we were afraid people would change the channel.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: How would you suggest that francophone singers from Quebec or elsewhere in Canada be made known? How can they be made known to anglophones if they are never shown because the anglophone audience doesn't want to listen to them? Give me a recipe.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We've done many exchanges, but on radio. We have done programs that are—

Mr. Raymond Gravel: I'm talking about TV, sir.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes, I understand. The best medium for music is radio, not television. We have created a number of radio programs that broadcast francophones. That's no problem.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: If it's true that francophone singers are broadcast on English radio, why, now that they are known to the English audience, can't they be included in an anglophone television show?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I believe I explained my reasoning a number of times. The best medium for music remains radio.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: In that case, for the next hall of fame gala, don't invite francophones. Why would francophones participate if they're going to be cut from the show? It's even offensive to them. Stop inviting them, tell them they're not invited. Do a gala in English only.

•(1005)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: There's more than one gala show. It's no problem having francophones and anglophones at the gala. The full three and a half hours of the gala were broadcast on Radio 2.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: That's the third time you've said that.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I understand, but we decided, given that there were 44 minutes available for television—

Mr. Raymond Gravel: By the way, sir, it's not true that there are no anglophone singers on Radio-Canada.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No. I said that Radio-Canada had decided not to broadcast the gala on television. That's all I said. I respect the decision of my colleagues from Radio-Canada.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Had they broadcast the gala and cut out all of the anglophones and kept only the francophones, I'm not sure people would have accepted that.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I would have had no problem with that. I respect the fact that they know the francophone audience better than I do.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Sir, that's one of the reasons why there's a sovereigntist movement in Quebec. Personally, I'm a sovereigntist precisely because of behaviour like yours coming from anglophones. You aren't helping to bring the two cultures together.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I fully agree with the premise of your questions. Building a bridge between the two cultures is one of the CBC's main goals. I gave you a lot of examples of what we've done in the past and what we're doing now. All I'm saying is that we made some decisions about those 44 minutes. As for building a bridge, I fully agree on that.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: You mentioned Mitsou earlier, who was a popular Quebec singer. For your information, it wasn't her voice that made her popular in Quebec.

The Chair: We'll continue with Mr. Yvon Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Was the audience at the gala anglophone and francophone?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: In the theatre?

Mr. Yvon Godin: At the gala.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I don't know, I did not attend the gala.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Well since you have a—

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I assume that there were francophones in attendance at the gala because francophones were also being honoured.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's what I am having a hard time understanding. Why invite an artist who is unknown to those who are attending a gala to recognize English-speaking artists? Are you not afraid that the audience will leave the theatre to have a smoke while the artist is singing?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I am not the one who wrote the hall of fame's policies.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We are talking about singers.

Do you not realize that many of Canada's CBC listeners are exogamous couples, where the husband is French-speaking and the wife is English-speaking, or vice versa?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes, so?

Mr. Yvon Godin: For example, in northern Ontario, in White River, one of my brothers is married to an anglophone, and they listen to the CBC. If they happen to hear a song in French on the CBC, I doubt that they would find another station to listen to.

Concerns have been expressed about an English-speaking audience deciding to change the channel. Everything that you have boasted about doing directly contradicts what you are now saying: one three-minute song can cause the whole audience to tune out; however, you seem ready to use 45 minutes' worth of programming to promote the culture.

Are you not afraid that you might lose your audience once and for all?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I can repeat my—

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, I don't want you to repeat it.

You have apologized. Why did you apologize in that way? Apologies were extended. Why did you do so?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: In the letter that I wrote?

•(1010)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I will quote from the letter. For the sake of accuracy, it is important to quote exactly what has been written.

May I have a minute, please?

Mr. Yvon Godin: You have admitted that you could have done a better job in reflecting the diversity of all of the participants.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: One moment please. Here is a copy of the letter.

[English]

I'll just read it back, if you don't mind:

On behalf of CBC Television, I would like to express our concern and regret over the reaction to last Monday's broadcast of performances which took place during the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame Gala. The broadcast, in trying to represent in 44 minutes activities which took place over three hours, did not include performances from all inductees and specifically there were no Francophone artists included. The entire musical presentation of all participants was made available on CBC English Radio 2 on Sunday evening.

It was our view that the broadcast, on CBC's English language network and directed at an anglophone audience, should focus on music and musicians most familiar to that audience.

That's what we've been talking about all morning. I know you disagree with that view, but that was our view; I'm just saying.

Upon reflection and based upon the negative reaction to the television broadcast, we acknowledge that we could have done a better job of reflecting the full diversity of the participants.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So how could you do that then? If you disagree with us this morning, how could you do that? Can you explain what you will do in the future? You said you could have done a better job.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: As I said, we're thinking about what to do under the circumstances. We have not made up our minds at this point. As I said earlier on, we've come down here to talk about it, to listen to you, to hear your concerns about it. Once we've had a chance to reflect on what everybody has said to us, then we'll figure out what to do.

Can I cite the last paragraph?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Sure.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I think it's really important: Certainly, there was no intent to offend any particular artists by excluding them, although we recognize how this perception could exist. For that, we offer our apologies.

This is why I come back to it over and over. I don't think any of the members of this committee or the management of the CBC disagree about our profound responsibility to actually do this.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You've talked about the death of the one person—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We will continue with Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stursberg, thank you for appearing before the Senate committee this morning. This is an extremely important meeting. I represent a riding in northern New Brunswick, which includes a large number of anglophones and exogamous families made up of anglophones and francophones living under the same roof.

I would like to take two seconds to discuss your letter of apology. You read it in English. I hope that you also have a French version.

Truth be told, Mr. Stursberg, the anglophones are not terribly concerned about the fact that francophones may have been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. It is the francophones who are extremely annoyed with you.

Therefore, I hope that the letter of apology was first written in French, as well as in English so that anglophones can understand that the CBC had made a very bad decision in shutting every francophone artist out of the gala.

Is that the case? Was the letter of apology also initially written in French for the francophone audience?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Unfortunately, I don't have the French version with me, but there were two versions of the letter: one was written in French and the other one in English.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Would you please provide the committee members with copies of these letters?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I will be happy to do that. I will ask Shaun about them.

Do we have a copy of the French version with us here today?

[*English*]

A voice: It will be tabled.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Okay.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stursberg, I note that you will submit the French and English copies of the letter. You can submit them to our clerk. Thank you very much.

Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I trust you will give me a little more time, Mr. Chairman, to make up for the time that you used.

Mr. Stursberg did CBC film the gala?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No, it was an independent production.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Did CBC request that the show be recorded?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Can you explain to me, then why you didn't ask them to cut out the French parts from the beginning? You knew that you didn't want the French parts to be broadcast on CBC television.

Why didn't you simply save money, since you weren't interested in showing the francophones in your show? Did you simply do this to save face and to give people the impression that perhaps they might have the opportunity to show their talent to the anglophones and the rest of Canada? Did you simply film everything to save face?

At least the francophones being filmed would have known clearly that they had no chance of breaking into the anglophone world. That's what we see.

That is the reality of many families in my riding where one parent is francophone and the other is anglophone. If one member of the family watches a show in French, the other does too. Another time, they might both watch an English show. Is it not exaggerating a little bit to say that your audience could change the channel? Your audience is also made up of families where one person is francophone and the other is anglophone. Furthermore, in some cases, anglophones want to learn more about this.

How do you expect this country's cultural diversity to be reflected if you start from the premise that anglophones will change their channel? Anglophones might be interested in watching prize-winning artists. These aren't new artists who just happen to be there. We are talking about the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Don't you think that anglophones would be interested in this, just as francophones are interested in learning about anglophone artists? Don't you think that Canadians, be they anglophones or francophones, might be interested in learning and knowing about something else, even if the CBC and you might be less open?

● (1015)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I agree and I have no problem with that.

When we talk about New Brunswick, we are talking about probably the most bilingual and bicultural region in our country that you can imagine. I can assure you that it is not the same thing in Toronto or even in western Canada, and—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Stursberg, I want to give you an example. Some of my close family members live in Manitoba. One member of the family is francophone, the other is anglophone. The children watch TV in both languages. Don't you think that this would have brought some additional culture to them and that this would have shown them that francophones are also doing good work throughout the country?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: That is not the issue. We provide two services: one service in English and one service in French. We're not offering bilingual service. I understand full well that people are perfectly fluent in French and English, in New Brunswick, Quebec and in eastern Ontario, but, unfortunately, the reality of our country is that many people don't understand a word of French. If you go to Toronto, it's sad but true. I am from Toronto, and I—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stursberg. You will be able to further develop that idea if...

The members have now been able to speak. Mr. Lebel would like to speak. Do any other members want to speak?

We will continue. Mr. Nadeau, do you have something to add? And you, Mr. Godin?

We will continue with Mr. Denis Lebel.

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Stursberg, for coming and for your presentation. You are well aware that I, like the others, disagree with the approach that you propose in this matter.

As parliamentarians, our duty is to promote our country's two official languages, and we do so with pleasure. It's not often that what we do is important. Kudos for the job you are doing and the many efforts you're making. However, the devil is in the details, as they say in Quebec. A mistake was made in how such an important event as a national gala to recognize Canadian music was dealt with. The annual gala has been held for the past four years and the same mistake has been made every year.

If there are any francophones at the gala, they should be shown on TV like the others. When your name is Claude Dubois, when you're one of the best francophone singers in the world and when you're told in a contract that the highlights of the gala that you're taking part in will be broadcast, you have reason to believe that your performance could be broadcast, no matter which language you perform in.

I understand that it's a matter of supply and demand. There is a demand for English, so the French content is not being supplied. It's a business decision. Is this the case, Mr. Stursberg?

• (1020)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: In fact, we made a decision based on the nature of our audience, and what will interest them. In that sense, yes, it's true.

Mr. Denis Lebel: I will eagerly await the corporation's financial results. I don't think that your mandate is necessarily a financial one. I understand that you have budgetary obligations, but cutting out one portion of the cultural content of a show broadcast throughout Canada which concerns francophones is, in my opinion, a strategic error.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: It wasn't for financial reasons.

Mr. Denis Lebel: No?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: As I said, we made a decision—

Mr. Denis Lebel: But, Mr. Stursberg—

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Time was short and we had to make a decision. We decided to focus on Paul Anka and Oscar Peterson. I am well aware that you believe that we made a mistake.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Since I am short on time, I'm going to ask another question.

Is it true that the members of the hall of fame insisted that Mr. Dubois' performance be broadcast during the show?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: The chairman of the hall of fame wrote to us to ask that we include Claude Dubois. We did so on the radio, but not on television.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Mr. Stursberg, when I hear you say today that you consulted with the hall of fame about who was coming and we know that the chairman asked you to include Claude Dubois, are we right in thinking that this might happen again in the future?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes. As I said, we are currently considering—

Mr. Denis Lebel: You said you consulted with the hall of fame. The chairman of the hall of fame asked you to include Claude Dubois last year, and you did not. You are telling me that you consulted the hall of fame with regard to your current decision. If that is the case, things are not going to change.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I spoke at length with the members of the hall of fame. I talked to Peter Steinmetz on several occasions with regard to what we had done.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Before I move on to the next question, Mr. Stursberg, I want you to know that I am extremely proud of a town in my riding, Roberval, which won the Kraft Hockeyville competition by CBC this year. I hope that you'll come to Roberval with Don Cherry. You will receive a very warm welcome and we will talk in a language to ensure that we can properly communicate with the people who come visit us. We will also make sure that we continue to promote both official languages in our beautiful country and in my riding of Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

In closing, I want to tell you that the CBC also has a mandate. I understand that things can be done in English and in French, but when there is an annual gala highlighting the cream in Canadian music, we must really ensure that all Canadians watching TV, and not just those listening to the radio, can be exposed to the francophone culture, be it from Quebec or elsewhere in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lebel.

I will come back to Mr. Nadeau then, Mr. Godin will end the third round of questions.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stursberg, here are my observations. First, you work for a public company. Francophones in Canada represent about 25% of the population. There is a critical mass in Quebec, but there are also francophones elsewhere throughout Canada. Consequently, they must see themselves reflected in a music hall of fame that reflects the entire country, Canada, 25% of the population of which speak a different language and have a different culture than that of English Canada. They must be included in a gala that wants to represent all of Canada.

It can't be any other way. It's as if we decided to show some goals in hockey because so and so scored them and not show other goals made by those who speak a different language or have a different culture. That wouldn't work.

Here, we're talking about songs; we're not talking about an English show where all the texts are in French. It's about songs, and a song can be in any language. When the band Kashtin or the Naskapis from the North Shore sang, they did so in their language, which is Montagnais. I saw them sing on the CBC and on the SRC. They weren't edited out because they didn't speak the language of the public station.

The message you're sending us—and I'm a sovereignist—is the rejection by English Canadians of Quebec francophone, Franco-Canadian, Acadian culture, and so on, during a gala of the Canadian music hall of fame. That message is wrong. I have English-speaking friends who are as interested in what is happening in French music, be it from Quebec or Acadie, as what is happening elsewhere in the world or in Canada in music.

As a result, there must not be such a barrier, please. Francophone Quebec taxpayers, just as much as anglophones, must see themselves reflected on television and on the radio, during a broadcast of the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame gala, which must reflect the two official languages communities in Canada: the Quebec nation and the Canadian nation.

Stop saying that people don't want to see it. It's not true. It's public television. If they want to watch private Canadian, Quebec, American or any other television station, that's their right. But if they stopped to watch the Songwriters Hall of Fame gala, they're entitled to see both the Eva Avilas of the world, who sing and talk Spanish, French and English, and the Claude Dubois, even if they are less well known, in your opinion. You have every interest in exposing people to all artists.

This is not a question, it's a comment. I hope that you are going to take note of it for the next gala. In any case, the minutes of this meeting will be available.

●(1025)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Godin, Mr. Coderre and Mr. Chong have indicated that they wish to speak.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Earlier, you referred to francophone communities in Quebec and Acadie. Were you aware of the fact that due to the oil industry job boom in Alberta, there were now many francophones in the province? There are a great number of them,

possibly in areas where francophone television is inaccessible. They may be listening to the CBC. You have to consider what is currently happening in our country. This committee is discussing our country's two official languages. Don't take this the wrong way, I am not trying to say that CBC should become a francophone television network. That is not our purpose here. We have a francophone television network, Radio-Canada.

We have some difficulty with the idea that a song could make viewers change channels. We're talking about singers and songs here. If Claude Dubois is unknown, then why was he invited to the hall of fame gala. That is not the type of event you would invite unknown artists to. Someone chose to invite him and asked whether it would be possible for him to be on the air.

You then used the passing of Oscar Peterson as an argument, stating that you needed to set aside a lot of time for him. But this has been ongoing for four years now. There has not been one death a year during that period, has there? Let's put our cards on the table. The CBC's attitude is the same as that of Radio-Canada. Radio-Canada believes that if things don't come from Montreal they are worthless even though there are 7 million people living in Quebec. Acadian artists do not have their rightful place on Radio-Canada television. We have the same problem: ratings.

But we cannot lose sight of the fact that CBC and Radio-Canada are publicly funded. Public television is able to broadcast culture throughout a country. That is what we want. I am not talking about a half-hour report in French that viewers would not understand a word of. I can understand CBC's position. But in this case the straw that broke the camel's back was the fact that we were talking about a song.

●(1030)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Thank you for your comments. You may be surprised to hear about one aspect of CBC funding. As I told Mr. Lebel earlier, we did not take this decision for financial reasons, but at the end of the day we have very difficult financial challenges to deal with. It is true that English-language television is a public broadcaster, but over the course of this fiscal year, 55% of our budget will be coming from the private sector. So, in a way, we are as private as we are public. The pressure is on. I am not simply stating this to defend our decision on the show: it is reality.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is public television, and the government should invest more money into it, so that it may reflect reality. I agree on that.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We are under-funded. If you compare CBC and Radio-Canada to other public broadcasters throughout the world, aside from PBS, we receive the least funding. We know that Americans do not have the same cultural problems we have. The issue of francophones and anglophones is moot. If you compare CBC funding to that of the BBC, in proportion to the population, the BBC receives three times more money than we do, and that is to broadcast in English only.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We have already stated that the government has a responsibility towards the public broadcaster. That's already been said. But in this case, we're dealing with something else. We are strictly dealing with a singer.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I understand, but increased funding would certainly make decisions easier. That is obvious.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin and Mr. Stursberg.

Mr. Coderre you have the floor.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Stursberg, based on your attitude this morning, I understand why people are feeling insulted. The CBC is not a private corporation, it is public. That is the law. It is a corporation which has a very specific mandate to represent Canada. From the start, every time you've spoken, and I'm trying to hold back here, I felt I was listening to music from the *Titanic* because you seem to be sinking fast. I hope the president of CBC/Radio-Canada sees what your attitude is here today. If I were in his position, I would call you to my office and we would have a little chat, that is for sure.

Who made the final decision as to editing for this television show?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We did.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Ultimately, you are therefore responsible.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Do you know Pascale Picard?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No.

Hon. Denis Coderre: You should, because she sings in English. She is a beautiful Quebecker who won a Juno last weekend. Anglophones like her very much. Do you know why they like her more and more? Because she was seen on CBC. That is how things work.

Are there any marketing studies which demonstrate that anglophones change channels when they see francophone artists? What do you base that comment on? Is it because they do not come from Toronto? Have you listened to yourself speak?

Do you have any marketing studies which you could table before us today showing that that is how market segmentation works? When a francophone appears on English television people change channels, unless it's poutine or Mitsou. Do you have any of these studies? What are you basing this on?

I know that you used to work for Telefilm Canada. You know this country's cultural sensibilities. You have contributed to film financing, and you know the effect films can have, from a cultural standpoint in Canada and throughout the world. What was the basis for your stating that anglophones change channels when they see a francophone?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: My experience. As you know, I financed many French-language films when I was at Telefilm Canada and we had huge blockbusters. I mentioned some of these films to you this morning.

Hon. Denis Coderre: You did not finance them, that was taxpayers' money.

•(1035)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: There's something that is important here. There was *Seducing Dr. Louis*, *The Barbarian Invasions*, and a number of others. What I was struck by is that we had great success. We accessed 25% of the francophone market with these films when I was at Telefilm Canada and—

Hon. Denis Coderre: You are going off on a tangent. You are the witness and you are here to answer my questions.

On what basis did you make this decision? Do you have any studies which show that when there are francophones on CBC TV, people change channels?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: When we put out films with English subtitles, including the great Denys Arcand film which won the foreign language film Oscar, anglophones did not go see it. That is a problem—

Hon. Denis Coderre: Excuse me, Mr. Stursberg. So, if I'm understanding you correctly, at the end of the day, you edit because you don't believe anglophones will tune in.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: You asked me on what basis we made our decision, whether it was on marketing studies—

Hon. Denis Coderre: The answer is no.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: —or our judgment.

Hon. Denis Coderre: So it is based on your judgment.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I must say that it is based on our judgment and our experience.

Hon. Denis Coderre: It just so happens I am the critic for the official opposition in matters of heritage, official languages and the francophonie.

You have not passed your test here today. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage will call CBC/Radio-Canada and its president. My colleagues should make sure they go a little deeper. Indeed, if this is the way the vice-president views francophones, I would like to know what the president of the CBC/Radio-Canada thinks of this attitude.

That is the first point.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: It is not a—

Hon. Denis Coderre: It's my turn.

Mr. Chairman, I think today, CBC has not served Canada, and I can understand... I wouldn't go so far as to use extreme terminology like Claude Dubois did. I do not accept the word "racist".

One thing is for sure, sir, when I see your condescending and sanctimonious attitude and this attempt to divide our country, I would say you are fostering the concept of two solitudes in this country.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Let's continue with Mr. Chong.

Mr. Stursberg?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I totally reject Mr. Coderre's comments. I am obviously not anti-francophone or against French culture in Canada. That is not true.

As I've said, I have made major efforts to bridge these two cultures. For my part, I've stated it and I'll repeat it, this is a major goal for the corporation, including CBC English.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chong, go ahead.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Stursberg, as a corporation you have two broad responsibilities that you have to fulfill as part of your mandate. Certainly I think you've been underfunded in recent years, but that's not what we're talking about today. Today we're talking about your mandate and how you are fulfilling it.

Broadly speaking, you have a mandate to fulfill that reflects the diversity of the country—as it's stated in subparagraph 3(1)(m)(viii) of the Broadcasting Act, to “reflect the multiracial and multicultural nature of Canada”—but you also have a responsibility to reflect the linguistic duality of the country and to build a shared national consciousness and identity.

My view is that you're doing some of that well, but you're not doing other parts of it well. I'm a Toronto-area member of Parliament. I listen to CBC Radio One all the time and I watch the main television network all the time. I think especially in the last four or five years both those products, Radio One and the main television network, have really started to reflect the diversity of the greater Toronto area. I think CBC has done a very good job in that regard. But when I think about the other part of your mandate, which is to build this shared national consciousness and identity—an integral part of which is the linguistic duality of the country—I think in that regard, in the greater Toronto area, you've completely neglected that part of your mandate.

Other than the occasional program here and there, you would have no clue that Canada is an officially bilingual country, that its federal institutions are officially bilingual. You wouldn't have a clue of that if you were to listen to Radio One or to the main television network as a resident living in the greater Toronto area. The newscasts at the top of the hour on Radio One are in no way linked to the newscasts at the top of the hour on La Première Chaîne. *The National* on the main television network each night is pretty disconnected from *Le Téléjournal* on Radio-Canada.

I think in that regard, as I said before, you're doing some things well, but in terms of bridging the linguistic duality of the country, you're not.

If I look at Radio-Canada in Quebec, I think the opposite is true. Obviously you're fulfilling your mandate when it comes to delivering French-language programming there. I think arguably you're much more successful as a corporation there than in English-speaking Canada because of the fact that we're living on an English-speaking continent. But in terms of reflecting the diversity, the increasing diversity of the country, I don't get the sense that's happening in French-language programming to the extent that it's happening in English-language programming.

I do think there are big areas for improvement, and that's one of the reasons we have you here today. I think when we go on a tangent about other issues, then people start getting prickly about that stuff. But I do think it's important that the corporation look at this stuff in the longer term, because this is going to be the big challenge facing this country, and I would hope that CBC would have a big role to play in bridging those solitudes and in trying to meet its mandate.

• (1040)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: As I said throughout the course of the morning, I don't disagree with you at all. I completely agree with you, and I agree with all the members here, as to the nature of our responsibilities. But I'm a little bit surprised to hear you say this, because if at any time in the last two years you turned on CBC English television, you would have seen the remake of *Rumeurs*. You would have seen the remake of *Sophie Paquin*, you would have seen—

Hon. Michael Chong: No, I understand that. But why, for example, are the domestic news-gathering journalists...? Why is there very little crossover between the two organizations in terms of delivering the news? The stories you see on *The National* and the stories on *Le Téléjournal* are completely different when it comes to domestic news.

Here's another example. There are 60,000 francophones living in the greater Toronto area—more than in many provinces. That's just in one city region. Yet we don't have proper coverage of La Première Chaîne. You can't really get CBC's La Première Chaîne, the French-language service, in any sort of quality in the greater Toronto area, even though there are 60,000 or more francophones living in that region—more than in many provinces, including Manitoba or British Columbia.

The point I'm making is that there's room for improvement. To so breezily dismiss the fact that there is room for improvement is... I think it's the reason why so many members of the committee are being prickly today.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Nobody disagrees that there's room for improvement. This is why I was saying that we've worked very hard in terms of the foreign bureaus to make sure they report in both French and English. We're working very hard to make sure the domestic bureaus are more bilingual.

We've been working very hard across all those sorts of things, but the truth of the matter is that if you ask people to broadcast in both languages, they have to have a level of bilingualism that is rare. That's all I'm saying. It's very difficult to do.

We would like to do more, absolutely. We're totally with you on this point.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stursberg.

Monsieur Gravel.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Mr. Stursberg: you said you were not anti-francophone, alright, and that you were in favour of bridging francophone and anglophone culture. It would seem to me the hall of fame gala was a great opportunity to do that. Why did you not build that bridge at that time?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I can repeat exactly what I've said several times this morning. We decided to broadcast the entire hall of fame gala on Radio One, but to only broadcast a 44-minute television special. That is the decision we made. Apart from that, I don't know what else to say exactly.

• (1045)

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Do you regret your decision?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I understand you believe it was a mistake on our part.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Do you regret your decision, sir?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We are currently reviewing what we will be doing in the future. It has not yet been decided. I am here this morning to hear what you have to say and to have this conversation.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: I believe that—

Mr. Richard Stursberg: It will give us food for thought as to what we should do in the future.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: If you make the same decision at the next gala, please do not invite francophones, out of respect. You cannot invite people and then tell them they will not be on the show. Do not invite them. Hold an anglophone-only gala and continue to uphold these two solitudes, as was stated earlier on. Do not invite francophones simply to have them end up on the cutting room floor. It's just common sense.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We do not invite people to the hall of fame. The hall of fame is not controlled by the CBC. It is a separate organization from the CBC.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: If the hall of fame invites francophones in the future, they should appear in the final cut. You have to respect both cultures, sir, otherwise, it just won't work.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gravel.

That completes the questioning.

I could give Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Petit a few minutes, because, after all, Mr. Petit is the one who asked that we invite this witness to appear before us. After that, I would like to make a few closing remarks.

Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Stursberg, you have heard my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois say that this is one of the reasons why they are sovereignists. You realize that by doing what you did, you were not being helpful to Canada, but rather to the sovereignist movement. You are helping perpetuate the two solitudes. You know that. You decided not to broadcast a francophone in English-speaking Canada. If francophones were to do the same thing, we will keep the two solitudes forever.

If the CBC does not bring francophones and anglophones together, who can do so, Mr. Stursberg?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Once again, I repeat that I could not agree more. We certainly understand that it is our responsibility to reflect the two main cultures in this country. However, we have to look at the decision regarding the Hall of Fame gala in the context of everything else that the corporation does.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No, because there is one main music event, and that is the gala. You blew it.

I have one last question, and I will be brief. One of my colleagues asked you whether Claude Dubois would have been broadcast if he had sung in English, and you said no, because he is not well-known.

If Céline Dion had sung in French, would she have been broadcast on CBC?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: She is very well-known in Canada.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So she would have been included in the show.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: With your permission, I will be sharing my time with Mr. Chong.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Just as a point of information, the CBC's mandate is not to reflect the cultural duality of the country; it's to reflect the multicultural nature of the country but the country's linguistic duality. There is a difference. I think it's very important for all members of the committee to know this. We are not a bicultural country, we are a multicultural country with two official languages; there is a difference.

So the CBC's mandate is to reflect our multicultural and multiracial nature and at the same time promote our linguistic duality with respect to the two official languages.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Please be quick, Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: I too would like to draw something to the witness's attention. Perhaps we did not invite the right person, perhaps we should have invited your president.

I was intrigued by something you said in replying to a question asked by my colleague, Mr. Lebel. You say that this was not a business decision, that you decided that francophones did not go over very well in Toronto, and so on, and that if you had had more money—because you say you only receive 55% of your funding requirements—this francophone performer might have been broadcast.

It sounds like you are saying that if we francophones give you some money, you will broadcast us, but if we do not give you any, you will not broadcast us on CBC. That is not right. That is the answer you gave. You said you had to work like a private corporation, and that for this reason, you had to pay attention to your ratings, and so on. Your mandate does not take money into account. Even if you do not have full funding, you must comply with your mandate, and that you did not do.

• (1050)

The Chair: Would you care to comment, Mr. Stursberg? No, alright.

Thank you, Mr. Petit.

I would like to thank you for coming in to meet with committee members this morning, Mr. Stursberg. You reminded us that the CBC, the public broadcaster, has a special mission—namely, to give English- and French-speaking Canadians a forum for expressing their culture, points of view and experiences to each other.

As I said at the outset, the purpose of our committee is also to promote linguistic duality. You said that Mr. Dubois, among others, had taken the trouble to talk about a possible rapprochement of francophone and anglophone artists at the gala. You also told us that you could have done a better job at reflecting the diversity of all the participants.

I think committee members have stated clearly that they would like the media coverage of a national cultural event to reflect Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Thank you very much for coming. We will keep you posted on the committee's work on this issue. Thank you.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I would like to thank committee members.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chairman, I have consulted my colleagues, and in light of the testimony we heard today, since we are talking about committee business, I would respectfully suggest that the Standing Committee on Official Languages call the president of Radio-Canada/CBC to appear before us to explain whether the attitudes we heard today are strictly personal in nature or whether they reflect what is going on at Radio-Canada/CBC.

At that time, we could ask all the questions we need to ask about what happened at this event, but also about CBC's activities generally. It could be quite interesting.

The Chair: Alright. I have checked with the clerk, who told me that the motion is in order because it has to do with the subject of today's study on the CBC—

Hon. Denis Coderre: I would like this to be done as quickly as possible.

The Chair: You are moving that the committee invite the president of CBC/Radio-Canada as soon as possible to discuss this matter.

Are there any questions or comments about Mr. Coderre's motion?

Mr. Chong.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Yes, I'll support that motion—but in the spirit that we're calling the president of the CBC to discuss how the CBC is fulfilling its mandate under the 1991 Broadcasting Act, focusing on that issue as opposed to the personalities involved, because I think that's more important, frankly.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: In any case, Mr. Chairman, this is my motion and I have the last word on it.

People can ask all the questions they like about the proper way to proceed with our work. Personally, I want to go a little further. I have been a member of Parliament for 11 years, and I want to avoid personal comments, but I think that today, we have seen that the francophone community is feeling rather left out. It might be interesting and important to hear what the person in charge at the corporation thinks about all this.

The Chair: If there are no other comments, we will now vote on the motion.

Do you wish to comment, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to go even further. I do not want to side with anyone here, but if we have the president of CBC/Radio-Canada appear before us, I will want to know whether ratings are what drive the corporation, or whether it is its mandate as a public broadcaster under the act. If we take the trouble to invite the president of CBC/Radio-Canada, I will take the opportunity to talk about francophone communities outside Montreal. This is Montreal television, not Radio-Canada.

The Chair: If the committee members want to pass the motion today, we will have to restrict the number of comments, because we are going to have to leave this room.

Mr. Lebel.

Mr. Denis Lebel: I would just like to remind the committee that the subject of today's meeting was the broadcast of the hall of fame gala. Mr. Stursberg answered our questions on this. Some people now want to broaden the debate. I would just ask that we do not confuse things too much, out of respect for our witness, who did agree to come here today.

●(1055)

The Chair: Okay. We will now move to the vote.

(Motion carried unanimously.)

The Chair: Thank you very much. We will meet again on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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