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Mr. Steven Blaney

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•(0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Good morning one and all and welcome to this 21st meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The subject of today's meeting is broadcasting and services in French of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games.

We are pleased this morning to welcome the representatives of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Allow me to introduce them: Mr. Hubert Lacroix, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and Mr. Sylvain Lafrance, Executive Vice-President responsible for French Services. Welcome to the Committee. We are very pleased to see you here today.

I believe you have a request to make to the Committee regarding certain documents.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix (President and Chief Executive Officer, CBC/Radio-Canada): Yes, we would like to table some documents with you this morning.

The Chair: According to Committee policy, documents normally have to be tabled in both official languages and, if it is correspondence, we need unanimous consent for them to be distributed in one official language only.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Could we be told what these documents are?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: It is correspondence between CTV and ourselves on the subject under discussion this morning. It is quite relevant.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: We will make an exception.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to distribute this correspondence between the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and CTV regarding television coverage of the Olympic Games?

We will ensure that it is translated very quickly.

Mr. Godin, please.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chairman, when the representatives of CTV appeared before us, they provided us with correspondence in English.

The Chair: It had been translated.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In that case, Mr. Chairman, I suggest that we have this correspondence translated.

The Chair: That is what we are going to do. Our service will provide a translation, Mr. Godin.

We will now proceed with distribution of the documents.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Are they confidential documents?

The Chair: That question is for our witnesses to answer.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: They can be made public.

The Chair: Without any further ado, Mr. Lacroix, I would ask that you proceed with your opening comments.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting me to appear today to talk about the upcoming Vancouver Olympics.

As you know, with me today is Mr. Sylvain Lafrance, Executive Vice-President, French Services, for Radio-Canada.

As you also know, CBC/Radio-Canada has been the official Canadian broadcaster of the Olympic Games for the past seven Olympics. Olympic coverage for us has been the culmination of our ongoing commitment to showcasing Canadian amateur athletes, and we are very proud of the calibre of coverage we have provided to Canadians.

In 2005, we submitted a bid to the International Olympic Committee to try and secure the broadcast rights for the 2010 Vancouver and 2012 London Olympics. That bid proposed a partnership between CBC/Radio-Canada, CanWest Global Communications Corporation, The Score specialty sports channel, La Presse and Telus.

We offered the IOC \$93 million US, which was \$25 million more than what we had bid for the rights to the Turin and Beijing Olympics. Unfortunately, the IOC rejected our bid and accepted a bid of \$153 million US, submitted by what was then known as Bell Globemedia.

We were disappointed, of course, that our bid to broadcast the Olympics was rejected, but we were particularly surprised when, immediately after winning the broadcast rights in Lausanne on February 11, 2005, Bell Globemedia announced that it would solve its problem of providing service to Francophones by having Radio-Canada carry its signal. The fact is, however, that BellGlobemedia had never discussed that with us.

As my predecessor, Robert Rabinovitch, explained at the time, CBC/Radio-Canada has specific obligations to Francophones and Anglophones in Canada under the Broadcasting Act. We simply cannot allow another broadcaster to replace our programming with their own to fix deficiencies in their coverage. That fact has not changed.

We are aware of the Committee's concerns about Olympic coverage reaching Francophones who do not subscribe to cable or satellite. In fact, it was Mr. Lafrance who told the Senate Official Languages Committee, back in December of 2006, that we would be open to being part of the solution, provided that any arrangement met four key conditions.

First of all, that we produce and broadcast our own programming for television, radio and the Internet, or be involved in some co-production and co-broadcasting partnership. Second, we want the specific programming needs of Francophone and Anglophone audiences to be met through two independent program offerings. Third, we would like our broadcast to treat all Francophone audiences in Canada equally. And, fourth, we want to be compensated for the costs associated with becoming an Olympic partner.

In December of 2007, we discussed the situation with RDS, but there was no interest on their part.

Similar conversations also took place in May of 2008, and I repeated at the time that we would be prepared to negotiate a partnership agreement with CTV, provided that the four conditions outlined by Sylvain Lafrance were met. However, CTV was still not interested.

● (0910)

[English]

Then earlier this year, the CRTC chairman wrote to me requesting that CBC/Radio-Canada look again into the possibility of offering its assistance to CTV in order to provide greater broadcast coverage of the games. In my February 3 response—which you have in front of you under tab 4—we told CTV that consistent with the chairman's suggestions, we would consider broadcasting the international television signal pool feed of a few key events from the Vancouver Olympics across our network. This is the unedited feed, the signal without commentary that is made available to all international broadcasters.

In this correspondence, we stated that we would not seek compensation from CTV for providing this service, but we would offset our costs of providing this service to Canadians through the sale of commercials on our own broadcast. Again, CTV replied that it had no need for our assistance.

Then, out of the blue, Rick Brace announced to this committee that CTV was now prepared to provide us with the feeds, but they would keep all of the advertising revenue. Frankly, I'm surprised by this announcement, because they didn't even inform us of the offer. I still have not heard directly from CTV.

However, yesterday, we went after the information. So Sylvain Lafrance contacted the head of RDS, and he was told that CTV had several conditions on their offer, some of which were not mentioned to you by Mr. Brace on Tuesday. For example, we must give up our advertising space and carry their advertising as is, we must shut off the broadcast to francophones living in Quebec, no CBC/Radio-Canada personnel are to be allowed on the premises of the Olympics that we are supposed to cover, we cannot shoot any of our own material, and we must pay for all of the costs associated with the broadcast.

Now I'll leave you to decide if you think their offer is indeed generous and to wonder why these conditions were not shared with you on Tuesday.

● (0915)

[Translation]

You know what our current financial situation is. We have had to cut \$171 million from our budget this year and eliminate 800 jobs. Also, we have just found out that we will be subject to the government's Strategic Review Initiative, which will target an additional 5% of our appropriation.

I can tell you right now that CBC/Radio-Canada is not prepared to defray any costs to provide a service that CTV undertook to deliver when it paid \$163 million to secure the broadcasting rights, as that would be tantamount to allowing CTV to generate a profit for its own shareholders at a time when we are being forced to lay off our employees. That kind of bailout for CTV is completely irresponsible, and we will not be part of it.

In order for CBC/Radio-Canada to be involved in these Olympics, we must be appropriately compensated, either directly by CTV, or by selling advertising on our own airwaves during the Olympics, and CTV must obviously lift its ridiculous conditions.

However, I would ask Committee members to think about all of this for a moment. A private broadcaster secures the broadcast rights to the Olympics by bidding \$60 million US more than we did, and when it is unable to provide the level of service it committed to, the public broadcaster is expected to come to its rescue and assume the costs of a bailout. Is this really a wise use of public resources?

For our part, we remain committed to amateur sports and to the Olympics, and will continue bidding for the Canadian broadcast rights to future Olympic Games at the appropriate time.

I hope that commitment will receive the support it deserves from your Committee, but it is important for you to know that we will not do that at any cost—not in the future, not now.

We would now be pleased to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

We will begin with Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lacroix, Mr. Lafrance, welcome to the Committee. I am very pleased that you are able to be with us today. I would have preferred that we have a chance to meet in better circumstances, when things were going a little better for you. We are going to see what can be done to make that happen.

Is Olympic coverage a paying proposition? You have provided it in the past; does it bring in a lot of money?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: For most of the Olympic coverage we have provided on our airwaves, CBC/Radio-Canada has not made any profit. The costs associated with covering the last five Games were very extensive.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So, CTV could say the same thing. I asked them that question. I gave you the example of Bell “freesat”, which would cost \$5 million altogether. I asked them if they could not invest that \$5 million in providing access to people who do not have cable or satellite.

On the other hand, you are saying that it is not really profitable and that there may not necessarily be the needed flexibility in—

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I am talking mainly about what CBC/Radio-Canada has done in the past. Over the years, we have covered the Olympic Games. As you know, there is a cost associated with broadcast rights. We then try to recover an equivalent amount through the sale of advertising. We absorb the rest.

Sylvain, would you like to add anything?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance (Executive Vice-President, French Services, CBC/Radio-Canada): I just want to say that profitability is in relation to the cost of purchasing rights. That is the main expense. Because they paid a lot more than what we would have paid to secure those rights, it will not be easy for them to make a profit from coverage of the Games.

• (0920)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: They bid a lot more than you did.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Yes, their bid was \$63 million higher.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Without asking you to negotiate in public, what amount would you consider acceptable? What would prompt you to accept the offer?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Sylvain discussed this in front of the Senate Committee, saying that the important thing for us is that there be separate English and French programming as part of our coverage. CBC/Radio-Canada has always done that, because Francophone and Anglophone viewers are not interested in the same athletes.

Also, it would have to be CBC/Radio-Canada programming. We also wanted to be given assurances about a number of other things as part of the arrangement. We were even prepared to work with someone else. In the current context, however, we cannot afford to incur additional costs; therefore, adequate financial compensation has to be provided.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Also, I would like to explain what would happen to our programming if we accepted the offers that are on the table. The arithmetic is rather strange. We are being asked to exclude Quebec. There are one million Francophones outside Quebec. They have access to all of Radio-Canada's programming, including all the very popular series, such as *Providence*, *Tout sur moi*, *Les Parent*, *Tout le monde en parle* and the Radio-Canada newscasts. All of that is broadcast to Francophones throughout the country. They are telling us that one million Francophones, who now have access to this programming will have to go without because 12,000 people don't have either cable or satellite. If we were to conduct a survey and ask all the Francophones outside Quebec if they prefer to no longer have access to the programs available through public broadcasters, because 12,000 people don't have access to TQS on cable or satellite... That calculation makes absolutely no sense.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I understand. It would be a headache for you. The people who won will also have to figure it out on their own.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Rodriguez, when you read all these comments about CTV... It is difficult to negotiate with CTV because CTV does not need us. Its representatives told you that they cover all of Canada and that—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No, they did not say they covered all of Canada.

Should Olympic coverage in both official languages not be a precondition to securing the contract? I imagine your answer will be yes, since you are—

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: It is.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: But, if you are unable to reach 5, 6, 8 or 10 per cent of households in both official languages, there is a problem. Are you saying that the winner cannot meet those conditions?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I would just like to add that, in addition to Francophones outside Quebec, there are also Anglophones in Quebec who have neither cable nor satellite and do not receive certain signals.

Let me give you an example. Bell ExpressVu does not carry the Ottawa signal in the Ottawa region. That means that, even if the Ottawa signal were included, they would not be able to access it via satellite, even though they paid. A lot of Canadians will not have it, for all sorts of technical reasons.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: According to you, it was a condition...

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: It is a condition set out in the contract, Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That means they have to abide by it.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That is correct.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: However, for the time being, they are unable to do so. So, they are turning to you and asking the losing bidder to help them fulfill their own obligations. Is that right?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: We responded to their request, because we wanted to find a solution. We engaged in discussions with people at CTV and RDS to see what kind of arrangement we could make. That was two years ago, when it was still technically possible to do it. We could be co-producers. We set a number of conditions, which we referred to earlier. If we broadcast something on CBC/Radio-Canada, we want to be sure that broadcast abides by our own standards. We have to be sure that it is “cost-effective”. In this case, we would be broadcasting programming that is not cost-effective, but which jibes with our mandate. On the other hand, we do not generally do that in order to generate profits for a competitor. That would be quite odd: we would be doing this to generate profits for a competitor who outbid us. We would basically be using taxpayers' money to increase their profits.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: May I make a comment?

Mr. Rodriguez, I did not say that CTV was not meeting the conditions. What I am saying is that CTV was well aware of the contract and tender call conditions. I presume the people at CTV convinced the IOC that they would be able to broadcast the Olympics in French and in English equally, by unscrambling the RDS signal and adding the TQS signal. We were not a party to that negotiation. We made the best bid we could with the money at our disposal. We did not interfere in that.

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

Mr. Nadeau, please.

• (0925)

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

First, one of the two people representing the CRTC told us that they could cover all of Canada. After that, we were told that they could not cover all of Canada. We pointed out to them that if even 2.5% of the Canadian market is not covered, that is the equivalent of New Brunswick or Saskatchewan. When people say that is fine, because it is still 98%, they are being irresponsible. That essentially means taking away the right of Francophones—in Quebec or elsewhere—to see the Games. I am from Gatineau. We do not have access to the Radio-Canada signal. I am in Gatineau, just on the other side of the river. If people do not have cable, they do not receive Radio-Canada. But it is not as though we are light-years away; we are right next door.

I hope the government intends to respect Canadian federalism. But I am not sure, because it is not showing us that it will in this case. I hope it will ensure that all Canadians, Quebecers, Acadians, French-speakers in the North and others in remote areas, in every province, have access to Olympic television coverage in French, wherever they live, whether they happen to be at home or visiting someone else. We will see what its real commitment is in that respect.

If CTV or the consortium are able to look beyond their profits and show some respect for Canadian taxpayers, our Olympians and the athletes in Vancouver, if they are anxious for everyone to see the Games and if they agree to make a deal with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, will you have time to set everything up and ensure that coverage is excellent? I would not like to see something just cobbled together, with people being left out.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: The answer is yes, but only on certain conditions. Let me outline some of the requirements I was told about yesterday on the phone with respect to Tuesday's offer. CBC/Radio-Canada would have to set aside its entire commercial inventory and forego all its revenue. It would not be entitled to any form of accreditation on the Vancouver site. Radio-Canada could only broadcast outside of Quebec, and that generally includes the Greater Ottawa area. Radio-Canada could not shoot on site, because they have paid for the rights at the Olympic site. We would have to defray all the costs. We would also have to carry their advertising in its entirety. If we cannot be on the site and are not allowed to do anything, we cannot provide coverage of the Games.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: If the government has any respect for Canadians and Quebecers—and we will see that soon enough, since

the Olympics are not that far off—would you be in a position to provide the service?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: If the consortium gives us access to the site, and a business plan is put in place that makes sense and reflects the conditions set previously, the answer would be that time is of the essence. As a general rule, it takes two years to plan coverage of the Olympic Games, and there is the whole matter of preparation.

Having said that, I want to make one very important point. CBC/Radio-Canada will have a very strong presence in Vancouver, in any case, because it is the public broadcaster and what happens in Vancouver next winter will be huge. We have lined up a whole range of programming, within the limits of what we are able to do, given that we do not own the rights. On radio, for example, you can actually do a lot of things without owning the rights, because you don't have to buy pictures. So, we will be carrying all the results from Vancouver on radio. We will also be providing significant daily television coverage from Vancouver, with programs that discuss the cultural life and everything associated with the Games. We will broadcast any pictures we are entitled to carry, and there will be some interviews. There are certain things we are entitled to do.

So, in any case, we will have a very strong presence in Vancouver. It will be a Vancouver winter—there is no doubt about that. Of course, we cannot carry the competitions; that's the reason you buy the rights. I understand that this is a problem. However, to answer your question, if we enter into an agreement whereby our employees can be there, and a proper business model can be negotiated by the two corporations, it would likely be possible, because we have the necessary sports crews and skills and a lot of people who could organize quickly to provide Olympic coverage.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Godin, please.

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

I would like to thank our witnesses, Mr. Lacroix and Mr. Lafrance, for appearing today on behalf of CBC/Radio-Canada.

To be perfectly frank, I hardly know where to begin. You are concerned about the fact that there will be no television coverage in Quebec! I am proud to hear you say that. I don't often hear you say that you are concerned about no television coverage in the rest of Canada. You know my views; I have made them known in recent weeks. It is still making the headlines in the rest of Canada. I see that you are looking out for Quebec's interests and that this is a concern for you. Congratulations!

Mr. Lacroix, you made one comment earlier that interested me. You said, if I understood you correctly, that under the legislation, coverage of the Games must be available in both official languages.

• (0930)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I did not refer to legislation; I talked about our specific mandate.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I see.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Our mandate is to develop and deliver similar programming to Anglophones and Francophones. In the tender call we responded to, Mr. Godin, the conditions were clear: you had to meet the objectives set out by the IOC, which involved delivering coverage of the Olympic Games in Canada, in French and English.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to come back to the contract. It was clear for Radio-Canada/CBC that coverage had to be delivered in both official languages of Canada.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, it was one of the conditions set out in the call for tenders.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That means that it is the same contract for CTV.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, we presume that to be true, but we are not a party to the contract that CTV signed. I presume that the answer is yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Some time ago, the President of the CRTC asked you if you would like him to intervene and force the two of you to negotiate, with him imposing a solution. That does not seem to have scared you much, because he said when he appeared before the Committee that he has no power.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: The President of the CRTC does not have the power to force us to do anything in that area. We are talking about a business agreement between two parties.

I would like to come back to one point. The people at CTV are big boys. It is a serious network that I have a great deal of respect for, even though we sometimes clash because we are competitors, so that makes sense. But they are serious people who have made significant efforts. They paid a great deal of money to secure the rights to the Vancouver and London Games. They told you about everything they had done to reach agreements with local cable operators to have the signals unscrambled. I believe they told you that they are able to cover 98 or 99% of Canada. That is why CTV must be wondering why there is any need to do more. They have honoured their obligations. It is difficult to explain to CTV or interest CTV in reaching an agreement with us, because it believes it has fulfilled its obligations under the contract.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In a way, there was a proposal made, and they spoke of the last one here, when they appeared before the Committee, rather than telling you about it first and talking to us afterwards. I have negotiated lots of collective agreements in my time, but I never liked hearing about deals on television. If someone has something to say to me, I prefer he say it to my face. I found that to be a little bit much.

If I am not mistaken, one of their proposals was to have the CTV or RDS signal carried by Radio-Canada/CBC, and they would pay all the losses...

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Sylvain, could you address that? That was one of their first proposals, back in 2005, and one we responded to on many occasions.

Mr. Yvon Godin: This week, they repeated to the Committee that this offer was still on the table. They said that, if they were in Radio-Canada's shoes, they would accept that first offer.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Sylvain, could you take that question?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: There are many different things to be considered. It is important to understand how things work on television. This is the prime TV broadcasting season. Major Canadian dramas series are ready, and we have newscasts and major variety programs as well. Everything is ready. We will have to pay for them because, in any case, they have already been developed. For two weeks, we would have to stop broadcasting our cultural and news programs, simply because TQS does not have a transmitter outside Quebec. In other words, because 12,000 people outside Quebec would not be able to receive their programming, we would have to put everything on hold at CBC/Radio-Canada for two weeks. We would give those two weeks to TQS, which would pocket all the revenues.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Sylvain, I would like you to comment on revenues from outside Quebec—please explain what that represents.

Even Mr. Frappier explained that the amount of money that part represents is insignificant. However, we would be losing a lot of money, because advertisers do a media buy for the entire network. They do not just buy a certain amount for the regions outside of the major urban centres.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Major advertisers will be buying time on RDS and TQS, because they are the ones that own the broadcast rights for the Olympic Games. Our status would be that of a third broadcaster and we would lose the commercial revenues that normally flow from our major drama series, series we have already paid for.

Now, these people are telling us that we would have access to some assistance in the form of revenues from outside Quebec. However, revenues from outside Quebec represent about 3%. The fact is that these revenues are based on population. Naturally, most of the revenues come from Quebec. So, that is a business model that makes no sense for us, and they are perfectly aware of that.

• (0935)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Frappier even made the following comment to you this week:

Francophone services outside Quebec do not make much money because the marketable value of advertising time, compared to the audience that is generated, is relatively low.

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

Ms. Glover, please.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Thank you very much.

Welcome. It is a pleasure to see you again.

[English]

I think I need to start by saying—and this is probably the tenth time I've said it—that we all believe in a strong Canadian broadcaster. We all believe that it is essential to try to reach every single francophone and anglophone in this wonderful country with an Olympic broadcast. I want to put this to bed. I do not understand why this is not clear on the other side of the table. We're committed to making sure that every single person in Canada, if possible, will get to see the Olympic Games. That is important to us. That is what's at the heart of this discussion.

So let's put partisanship aside. Let's lay it to bed. We want to help you and CTV and all the other broadcasters provide that. That's where I'm going with my questions, so please let this give you some insight into my questions as I ask them.

Apparently there was a hockey game for which CTV had the same contract. They offered the same original contract to you and you accepted it. It worked out fine, and this had previously been done as a practice. But now something has changed. What has changed?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: The economics of the situation have changed. It will be explained by Sylvain, who was part of that transaction. He'll tell you why this was not an ideal situation for us and why we are no longer in that contract.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I'm totally with you. There's nothing I would have liked more than to broadcast the Olympic Games. For our team, it's a great moment. For Canadians, it's a great moment. We all know that. The problem is that we lost the bid. We lost the bid to those guys who made a proposition—

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Can you go back to the question? Could you just tell me what happened with the hockey game?

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: About a year or a year and a half ago, we offered to enter into a co-production agreement, which would have allowed us to have a presence everywhere, but that did not work out.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: A few years ago, we used to broadcast the Saturday night hockey games, and that is the agreement Ms. Glover has asked us to comment on.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Oh, I understand.

At CTV, they felt the agreement had worked very well, and I fully agree that it was very profitable for them. Indeed, CTV provided the coverage via CBC/Radio-Canada and picked up all the profits. It was an extraordinary arrangement for CTV—I will give you that. But we had to end it after a year, because it made no sense for a public broadcaster to be directly participating in the profits generated by a private corporation. At the very least, there should have been a call for tenders where everyone interested in making money on hockey would have been asked to apply. From our standpoint, that agreement made no sense.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: So, it was the profits—

[English]

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's why we exited.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I would really like to focus on your mandate, which is to provide coverage to all Canadians of cultural and other important events here in Canada. That is the reason why we would really like to see these contractual arrangements work out between you and the people who will be providing Olympic coverage.

Also, I was wondering how it was that CTV had been able to get help from TQS, RDS and RIS. Do they not have problems—

[English]

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: No, but that's their bid, Madame Glover. Those are their partners. In the same way, as I told you a few seconds ago, we made a bid for \$93 million with our partners at that time,

which were CanWest Global, the Score, La Presse, and Telus. That was our consortium. We bid \$93 million U.S.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: But you forgot the first part of my question, Mr. Lacroix, which had to do with the social responsibility to provide. If I could afford to do it, I would make sure they all got to see it.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, but we lost the bid, madame. We don't own these rights.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I know you lost the bid. That's why I'm wanting to try to figure out how we can get the two of you working together so we can provide this to Canadians, all Canadians, and particularly francophones outside Quebec because they are going to be the ones who lose out here.

So I'm looking at both these offers and trying to figure out how we can move you both to a centre point where it's acceptable and start thinking about those Canadian who aren't going to get—

● (0940)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I care very, very deeply, madame, about delivering our service, the CBC/Radio-Canada service, to as many Canadians as we can at all times.

Ms. Shelly Glover: Good.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I care deeply about the francophones who are outside Quebec. I'm a francophone. I understand what that means.

We don't own the rights to the Games in 2010. CTV owns them and tells us, "We don't need you. We have met the conditions of the bid, which was—"

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I think they've said they need you. I think it's—

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Can I add something about the balance of needs? This is all a question of balance of needs. That's why we ask if it's a good balance of needs to cut all the cultural programming during two weeks, all information programming, to one million Canadians outside Quebec because 12,000 of them maybe will listen to the Olympics because they have no cable, no satellite? It's again a question of balance. Should we cut that to every francophone outside Quebec?

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Glover.

Mr. Lafrance, in the course of the discussions, there was some talk of broadcasting only the opening and closing ceremonies. Is there any possibility in that regard?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Well, it's the same problem. The consortium is telling us that we can cover the Games, but it will be their advertising and their revenues, and we will have to bear the costs.

The Chair: They said they were prepared to compensate you for lost advertising revenues.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: When they set out their conditions, there was no mention of that. Yesterday morning, they made no reference to any kind of compensation. They first condition is that we relinquish our entire commercial inventory as well as all the revenues.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Blaney, I believe you are referring to the 2005 offers, which were discussed subsequently. However, that is not what was on the table yesterday, when CTV's new proposal was discussed.

The Chair: The people from CTV suggested in their comments that their new proposal included an offer of compensation. However, that does not seem to have materialized.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Following Tuesday's Committee meeting, they only made us aware of their conditions verbally. They told us that they would forward them to us in writing in the coming days. The fact remains, though, that the first condition was for us to relinquish our entire commercial inventory.

The Chair: Pardon me?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: We would have to relinquish our entire commercial inventory and all the revenues.

The Chair: I had understood that they were offering compensation. It would be nice to know what is going on.

Mr. D'Amours, please.

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

Mr. Lacroix, Mr. Lafrance, thank you for being here.

I certainly got your point about cultural programming, news, and so on, and that you would have to continue providing the basic services that people expect to receive. On the other hand, we are talking about the Olympic Games. I am quite disappointed to see the kind of rules that CTV seems to want to impose on you. You already have a funding shortfall of \$171 million, and you have to find an additional \$56 million because the Conservatives are demanding that you reduce your spending by 5%. That is exactly what Mr. Lacroix said.

The Chair: One moment, please. I would like to remind everyone that Mr. D'Amours has the floor.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, as Mr. Lacroix already stated, the Conservative government has asked Radio-Canada/CBC to reduce its budget by 5%. Ms. Glover says that is not true, but everyone knows that it is.

To continue what I was saying, you now have to find an additional \$56 million. On the government side, they make a big deal about social responsibility and then ask you to reduce your spending. However, supposing the Conservative government proposed compensation for your foregone revenues, as well as transmission costs,

such that the Olympic coverage issue could be resolved. Would that begin to sound attractive to you?

● (0945)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I don't want to engage in conjecture about what could happen.

The only thing I want to repeat, Mr. D'Amours, is that in a situation where we are suddenly invited to provide coverage of the Olympic Games to Francophone Canadians all across Canada, we cannot, in our current circumstances, consider doing that with losses that would worsen our current economic situation, given that 800 jobs have had to be cut and that people will be receiving layoff notices from us.

I have no further comment.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I respect the fact that you have no further comment to make.

However, there is still the additional 5% that you will have to find. At some point, if the government wants to be that socially responsible, I think it is high time it gave CBC/Radio-Canada the financial means to provide coverage of the Olympic Games.

Mr. Lafrance.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: As regards what would happen if we were to receive compensation for covering the Games, the problem remains the same. We do not own the rights. If we cannot be there on the ground, if we have no accreditation and if we are not allowed to shoot, we will not be able to do that.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I understand, but if they got over that and came back with something that makes sense—

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: They can't afford to get over it, in my opinion. I cannot believe that, after paying \$163 million, they would tell us to go ahead and sell advertising and come in with them. They paid for the rights and they want to exercise them. They cannot allow another broadcaster to do that kind of thing. If they did, it would raise huge legal questions.

In order for something to happen, there would really have to be an agreement between CTV executives and ourselves, because they are the ones who legally own the broadcast rights for the Olympic Games.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: To be perfectly frank, I thought it was very clever of the people at CTV to do what they did. They made that suggestion when they appeared before you, and then passed on the information to us afterwards, which influenced the discussions. Rather than discussing CTV's service delivery based on the contractual conditions, CBC/Radio-Canada now suddenly finds itself in the position of having to explain to you why this offer, that we have yet to receive and which was suggested here, would be a problem. The fact is that they have very cleverly—and I have a great deal of respect for the people at CTV—shifted the discussion.

At the same time, we believe it is very important for all Francophones in Canada to have access to Olympic coverage. I simply want to repeat that, even if there is a desire to invite us in as a broadcaster, we have to assume that only CTV is able to do that. We cannot incur costs of any kind, given our current circumstances.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I would just like to know—you can give me a yes or a no answer—whether you have received written confirmation that you would receive \$60 million per programming category.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: No, we have not yet received that written confirmation. However, the Minister did verbally confirm that to me. Also, I believe the Treasury Board has minutes of that confirmation. It has not yet reached the stage where it is an actual parliamentary vote, but the Treasury Board has approved the amount of \$60 million.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

We will move on now to Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): I want to begin by saying that, here in this Committee, we have to be prepared to tell it like it is. The truth seems to shock the members on the opposite side of the House.

Since you, the Conservatives, took office, you have slashed Radio-Canada's budget, which is really unfortunate, because it is a Crown corporation.

You are a Crown corporation, and you have a presence all across English- and French-speaking Canada. To me, that is extremely important. It is totally illogical to take away Radio-Canada's ability to broadcast its programming in Quebec. That effectively means that 7.5 million television viewers who could watch your programs are unable to do so. That further reduces your television viewing audience.

If CTV has made overtures to you, it is because it needs you. It is clear that they know they will not be able to provide coverage all across the country. Otherwise, they would not continue to try and negotiate with you.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Ms. Guay, I can only remind you why we are still negotiating at this point. The President of the CRTC wrote to Mr. Fecan and myself to express his concern about coverage of the Olympic Games. He asked us to consider reopening the discussions that had been ongoing since 2005. I repeated what I called the Lafrance conditions—in other words, the conditions laid down in 2006. We reiterated them in 2007.

The only reason why there is still correspondence between us is that the President of the CRTC asked us to reconsider. The same thing happened all over again, and you have that correspondence in front of you. You can see for yourselves what Mr. Fecan's ultimate comments were. He said they do not need us, that they are fulfilling the conditions, that they will do the best they can and that they are satisfied that they will do a good job for Francophones.

• (0950)

Ms. Monique Guay: That is not what we were told. There is contradictory information out there. We were told, up until today, that they would not be in a position to fulfill the terms of their contract—in other words, to provide coverage of the Games all across the country in both official languages.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: In my opinion, it will not be possible for them to fulfill those conditions. In theory, once they have resolved the problem for the 12,000 Francophones outside Quebec, they will

still have to find a solution for Anglophones in Quebec who are receiving the CTV signal. That problem has still not been fixed.

Ms. Monique Guay: There are also Anglophones in Gaspésie and in Gatineau, for example.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: If people in Gatineau are not using the Bell service, that is not our choice. It would be very difficult to find a system. Even CBC/Radio-Canada's system only reaches 98 or 99% of Canadians. There are always some areas that are very difficult to cover, although we naturally try to do the best we can. I know that CTV has made an effort to extend its reach through agreements with satellite broadcasters.

Ms. Monique Guay: They still are not able to provide coverage to 99% of the population.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: That may be.

Ms. Monique Guay: In any case, that is not what we were told here in this Committee. If that were true, they would not be trying to negotiate with you now. They would go about their business without worrying about anything else. The fact remains that, for our image, not providing that service during the Olympic Games would be appalling. And, it is equally appalling that we are told certain things and that you are not informed. You are on the defensive this morning, but you have no reason to be. These people should have communicated with you before you appeared before the Committee. Then you would have known what to say. In fact, you would have had a chance to prepare an answer. But that did not happen. I am extremely disappointed.

If it turns out that they are unable to meet their objectives, the entire country will be a laughing stock. To not be able to provide coverage to the entire population, when the Olympic Games are taking place in our own country, would make us an object of ridicule. That was just a comment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

You obviously do not want to be forced to take your signal away from every Francophone outside Quebec and put your regular series and newscasts on hold for two weeks. But, what about the opening and closing ceremonies? My understanding, based on what CTV told us, was that they would be willing to provide financial compensation for revenue losses incurred outside of Quebec and ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada has its own production.

Would that be of interest to you?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: What they told us is that CBC/Radio-Canada would have to develop its own production, but that they would not compensate us for our costs; in other words, we would have to defray all of those costs on our own, without being accredited or having access to the site, and so on. They are asking us to produce television programming with pictures [*Inaudible—Editor*], from a room in Montreal, and to bear all the costs of that operation. However, we have no desire to produce poor programming for Francophones outside Quebec. That is the issue. If we produce programming for them, we want it to be of the same quality as the programming we deliver all across Quebec. We also want it to be accessible to all Canadians, because that is the very nature of our mandate.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Imagine for one minute how difficult it would be for us to describe an opening ceremony if we are sitting in front of a television set—since we would not have access to the site—in the basement of the CBC/Radio-Canada broadcast centre in Montreal. Imagine what the implications of that would be for Radio-Canada's expertise.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Also, that coverage has to be available to all Canadians. Cutting off Quebec and Ottawa is really not a great idea. The fact is that this production would be very costly, even though we would be eliminating most of the market.

The Chair: I want to thank Ms. Guay for letting me use some of her time.

Our next speaker is Mr. Galipeau, and I believe he would also like to share his time.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want you to know how much I appreciate all the efforts you have made over the years. In the past, I have benefited from the coverage you have provided of previous Olympic Games. I am a Francophone and I live in a minority community in Ontario. I receive your radio and television programming, although I must admit that I have watched less television in recent years. However, I listen to the radio all the time. I owe a great deal to Radio-Canada, which allows me to preserve my language.

In the past, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation would come and ask me for my opinion, sometimes as a participant in a focus group, and other times as a commentator on programs dealing with Ontario. However, since I was elected to the House of Commons, it has not been as easy to have that contact. I met with Mr. Rabinovitch. We talked about a number of issues relating to the services you provide to Francophones who form a minority in their region. He strongly encouraged me to get in touch with you. I sent you e-mails and left you phone messages, but they never elicited any response. I find this whole situation rather complicated. I was elected by the people, but I am unable to access the senior management of Radio-Canada, even though I was able to do that when I was an ordinary citizen.

As regards the situation we are dealing with today, I was sitting at this table when representatives of the CRTC and CTV appeared before the Committee. In my opinion, what you are describing today does not reflect the tone of those meetings.

I remember another dispute relating to coverage of hockey games which was resolved through this Committee. I am wondering whether there is any way we could set aside our false pride in order to arrive at a solution that would mean that no one would either lose money or lose face. We would focus on the service to be given Francophones who are part of a minority community.

● (0955)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Galipeau—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: That also applies to Anglophones who form a minority where they live. I want to thank you for pointing that out to me.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Galipeau, I just want you to know that there is no animosity. The correspondence speaks for itself.

These are not trifling matters; we are not talking about a couple of kids fighting in the schoolyard, or anything like that. CTV is a serious broadcaster and it made a serious offer of \$153 million, with serious partners. They won. So, they own the rights.

You made some comments about all the effort they have gone to and the agreements they have reached with cable operators, in order to be able to provide signals to Francophones all across Canada. They have told you they can reach a certain percentage of the population. At this point, it would not be beneficial for CTV to have Radio-Canada come into the mix. They have already told you that they are able to provide the signal to the vast majority of people. They have the same concerns that you do. I read the comments made by Mr. Frappier, Mr. Brace and Mr. Goldstein before this Committee. There is no animosity there. I would not like you to think that we are not on speaking terms or that we are at daggers drawn. That is not at all the case. We are talking about a business transaction where they came out the winners, fair and square. They are doing what they have to do to fulfill the terms of their contract.

The Chair: Good.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Mr. Galipeau, I would just like to add something. To build on what Hubert Lacroix just said, we have had very good discussions with them. Monday, they told members of the Senate Committee that they had resolved the problem—here I am responding to Ms. Guay, who was saying earlier that they keep on trying because they have not yet solved the problem. They have made a real effort and have really made progress.

They know full well that, the day the issue of the 12,000 Francophones outside Quebec is resolved, they will still have to address the situation of Anglophones in Quebec and people in the North. Even if CBC/Radio-Canada were providing Olympic coverage across the country, there would still be problems that could not be resolved and that would remain a concern, because of the very nature of television distribution in Canada. We will always be able to reach an ever larger proportion of the population, but we will never be able to cover 100% of the population perfectly. At the same time, I hope our results will always be the best they can be.

I can assure you that this has nothing to do with pride. It is about two corporations that each have to manage their affairs and fulfill their own mission and commitments. We are trying to talk and find solutions.

So, that is the situation at this point and the way things are now: in the last discussion I had with Mr. Frappier, he told me that he thought he had found an optimal solution, and that they were well on their way to implementing it. I believe he said they could reach 98 or 99% of the Canadian population.

● (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Godin, would you be prepared to use your talents as a mediator to help out the Committee?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Asking questions here can be difficult at times. We exist in a political climate, and yet we are not supposed to be political. It is pretty tough.

In spite of that, I am hearing that you have social responsibilities, but we did not hear anything like that said about CTV. They were not told that their television service involves social responsibilities.

As for CBC/Radio-Canada, this country's public television broadcaster, we may disagree with it about certain things, but we love our public television. You are aware of my views on the subject, and you know how much I love Radio-Canada. If I am complaining, it is only because I love it and I want it to have an even stronger presence in my region and on the national news. I wanted to mention that in passing.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I hear you loud and clear.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

The government says that you have social responsibilities. That means that it, too, has a role to play in terms of our public television broadcaster. It should invite all of us to sit down together to find some answers, because this public television broadcaster, which belongs to Canadians, to taxpayers, has social responsibilities. If there are costs to be incurred, they should not have to be borne by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, whose funding has been cut. The station in Windsor has lost six journalists, and is almost on the verge of closing. In Moncton, we have also lost six journalists and we will again be losing services.

In addition, even though you have social responsibilities, you are being asked to cooperate with CTV, a private broadcaster, and give it what revenues you still have, which would only dig you in deeper. One of these fine days, we will lose our public broadcaster. That worries me.

First of all, does the government have a role to play in this situation? Second, could you forward to the Committee that section of the contract which stipulates that there is a responsibility to provide coverage in both languages? Does that exist?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, I do not know whether the contracts or tender call documents are public. We will find out. If they are public, we will be very pleased to make you aware of the conditions that were set out.

In terms of our social responsibility, it is very clear under the Broadcasting Act. Every day, we try to provide Canadians with appropriate programming, based on those objectives. It is clear that CTV does not have the same mandate that we do; we often say so. Indeed, it is that very difference that makes the national public broadcaster so important.

CTV won the broadcast rights through a commercial call for tenders, to which its consortium duly responded. It is the people at CTV who are behind the wheel and driving the car. We cannot force them to enter into an arrangement to fix something that they do not see as problematic.

That is where the situation now stands.

Mr. Yvon Godin: No; CBC/Radio-Canada does not have that power.

However, the Government of Canada has a duty to respect the fact that there are two official languages in this country when the Olympic Games are being held here, particularly since we do have two official languages in Canada, whereas other countries do not

even have French as a language. Also, the Olympic Games began within the Francophonie. It is the federal government that should be acting as mediator, not Yvon Godin.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, I will leave it up to the lawmakers and legal experts to decide who has what power to force which people to reach an agreement.

I simply want to say that we fully understand our responsibilities under the Broadcasting Act. That is why Sylvain was explaining earlier what we will be doing over that two-week period. We are trying to reach as many Francophones as possible with the programming we have prepared.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lemieux, please.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I wanted to ask whether I could ask one factual question.

The Chair: We still have a minute and a half within Mr. Godin's time.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I'm sorry, I thought Monsieur Godin

[*Translation*]

had finished. Do you have any other questions?

Mr. Yvon Godin: If it is for the good of all Canadians, I will let you put your question, Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Thank you very much. It is a question of interest to the Committee.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to hear what you have to say, Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: You are very kind, Mr. Godin.

If CBC/Radio-Canada were to provide Olympic coverage, what would its budget be?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Sylvain can add to my answer in a few moments. I'd say it would depend on the specific circumstances of that coverage, the kind of programming we wanted to deliver, the number of hours—

● (1005)

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: But your plan, sir? You have a plan; you must have a—

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: No, we don't have a plan. We don't have the rights to the Olympic Games. We have programming that will be on the air during that time.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I understand that you don't have the rights, but I'm sure it's not a blank sheet for you right now. In other words, I'm sure you thought this through. When you negotiate with CTV, you have a number in your mind about what kind of effort you'd like to devote towards the Olympics and what the cost would be. I can't believe that it's a blank sheet and you have no idea.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Well, you'll see why.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: No, negotiations with CTV didn't go there. In fact, there was a start of a negotiation to see whether there was any possibility, and the answer was no. So we didn't go to the point at which we would say we'd do 40 or 50 hours, and we didn't cost it.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: You must know what you would like to achieve.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: It's difficult, because we don't have the rights, so we don't have to ask the question—unless there's a deal; then we'll work it through.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: So you don't know what you would like to achieve?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: We know what we would like to achieve. We have to make sure that whatever deal they show up with for us, there is no cost to the public broadcaster.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes, so I'm asking, what is the cost to you?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Are they going to give us 50 hours, 20 hours, three events? Are they going to allow us to do the final game of hockey, or—

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I'm asking, based on what you would like to achieve.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Well, it's not up to us. We're not playing defence here, sir, with the greatest respect.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Lemieux.

I would like to thank our witnesses for agreeing to meet with us this morning. We were very pleased that you could attend and we appreciate your answers.

Mr. Petit, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Daniel Petit: I would like CBC/Radio-Canada to provide us with the documentation. It is a public corporation. I have heard two different sets of testimony and I would like to see the documents in order to verify whether or not they are consistent. I want to know what they proposed and what the status of negotiations is with the group that appeared.

The Chair: If the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has other documents that it could provide, perhaps it could forward them to us.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I have nothing other than the information that was provided this morning. You already have all the correspondence.

The Chair: We will suspend the meeting for a few minutes. Is there anything further?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Lacroix, which document outlines the five points and states that no CBC personnel will be allowed?

[English]

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Madame Glover, actually, I would really like to read from a document. But this offer was made by Mr. Brace in front of this committee. We read about it in the paper.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shelly Glover: No, he did not say no CBC personnel, etc.

[English]

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's a conversation that Mr. Lafrance had, as I said in my notes, yesterday.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: So it's a “he said, she said”. Do you have no documents to show?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Ma'am, I'm sorry. They raised this issue in front of this committee on Tuesday. They didn't phone us beforehand to tell us what it was about. I don't know what the conditions are. They were given verbally to Mr. Lafrance, because we ran after it yesterday.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I'm sorry, I misunderstood. I thought there was a document, and that's what I was trying to get at. We'll have to bring you back.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: There is no document.

[Translation]

The Chair: When you receive the document, please be kind enough to forward a copy to us.

We will suspend the meeting for a few moments.

•(1005)

(Pause)

•(1015)

The Chair: I would like to call this meeting back to order.

My name is Steven Blaney, and I am Chair of the Official Languages Committee here in Ottawa.

What time is it there?

Mr. Yves Trudel (Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique): It is 7:15 a.m.

The Chair: Please accept our apologies for the 15 minute delay.

Welcome to the second half of our meeting on broadcasting and services in French at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games.

Our witness this morning is Mr. Yves Trudel, Executive Director of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, who is working with the Olympic Committee.

Mr. Trudel, I would invite you to make your opening statement now, after which there will be several rounds of questioning about your presentation from members of the four political parties.

Mr. Yves Trudel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Official Languages Committee, thank you for your invitation and for allowing the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique to contribute to this important discussion on coverage in French of the Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. My name is Yves Trudel and I am the Executive Director of the FFCB.

I have to say, right from the outset, that our community was surprised, and even concerned, when it found out, at the same time as all other Canadians, that coverage of the Games had been awarded to the Bell Globemedia consortium, which includes RDS, a pay service, and TQS, which does not broadcast over-the-air outside of Quebec.

In our opinion, the decision of the International Olympic Committee not to award the contract for Olympic coverage to a national broadcaster was not a pragmatic one. We believe that any event of national or international scope should necessarily be broadcast over a national network, or one which, at the very least, is available to everyone at no additional cost.

Having said that, based on the content of a Canadian Press article that appeared on January 8, the CRTC report tabled on March 30 and information provided by Ms. Mounier, the Assistant Deputy Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport, at hearings held by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages on April 27, the consortium has negotiated free access to those channels broadcasting the Games in French with cable and satellite operators. So, we now know that not only will Télévision Quatre-Saisons and the Réseau des Sports be used, but also the Réseau Info-Sports and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, or APTN. Therefore, part of the programming is in French. Based on this recent information, the consortium now believes that more than 95% of Canadians will have access to Olympic coverage.

The fact remains, however, that TQS is not available in every region of the country. The TQS network currently has only one antenna outside of Quebec. Although the consortium did indicate that it will broadcast all competitions live on its Web site, in addition to providing VSD content in both languages over the Internet, some members of our communities will not have access to Olympic coverage in their own language—including people who subscribe to certain analog services, people who are not subscribers of any broadcasting distribution undertaking, or BDU, and people who do not have access to broadband Internet service.

It is very unfortunate that CBC/Radio-Canada and the consortium were not able to negotiate an agreement whereby coverage would be provided to Francophones outside of Quebec, particularly those who are not BDU subscribers.

Furthermore, a number of questions are still unanswered, in our opinion.

Will RDS and TQS be in a position to propose programming that is comparable to what CTV and TSN have offered in the past? Can all our communities expect to receive the same number of hours of programming as their Anglophone neighbours? Can Francophone television viewers expect to receive coverage of events prior to the opening of the Games?

According to the latest CRTC report, the consortium expects that Canadians will have access to 1,100 hours of coverage in English but only 800 hours in French. Why that difference?

It should be noted that the consortium has confirmed that signals will be available at no charge for a three-month period, including the two-week period that precedes the opening of the Games. That is an interesting premise, but in no way does it meet all of our expectations.

For example, many artists and creators from our communities will be participating in activities during the pre-Olympic period, such as the Torch Relays and the Cultural Olympiad. We were very much expecting to give them the visibility they deserve at the provincial level, and, of course, at the national level.

I would like to give you a very practical example. Several months ago, we found out that RDS has installed in the Vancouver region—

• (1020)

The Chair: Monsieur Trudel, we can neither see nor hear you any more. You have disappeared. It reminds me of a *Star Trek* film. He has been teleported.

Voices: Ah, ah!

The Chair: Colleagues, in order to make effective use of the time at our disposal... [*Technical difficulties—Editor*].

We had planned to meet in camera to discuss our current work. If we wish to continue that work, we will simply have to go into camera to avoid—

Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: If you wish to discuss that now, Mr. Chairman, I want you to know I did not bring my schedule. Is that what you wanted to talk about?

The Chair: Yes. A review of Committee business should give us a chance to see what we will be doing at the next few meetings.

Well, well!

Mr. Yves Trudel: I do apologize. I was asked to change rooms.

The Chair: We thought you had been teleported and that you would re-materialize in the room here with us, Mr. Trudel.

Mr. Yves Trudel: I undoubtedly appreciated the new *Star Trek* film that came out last weekend, like other members of my generation, but I am afraid I am unable to do that.

The Chair: I believe we were talking about the new program *Vers Vancouver 2010*, which is to be broadcast on CTV.

Mr. Yves Trudel: In fact, that program is broadcast by TQS and is already on the air. What is interesting is that the program that aired on January 19 was about the Francophone community in Maillardville, an historic community in our province which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Unfortunately, most of us and most listeners or viewers who would like to receive TQS in Western Canada are unable to do so.

Finally, I want to share with you another of our concerns with respect to television coverage. Will the Games be broadcast in public places, hotels and other sites known as live sites? What can we do so that visitors are not deprived of this service? We know that people will be attending the actual competitions, but others will be out and about in Whistler and Vancouver, or could be at sites where they could access a television screen.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in terms of television coverage. The situation is less critical now than it was previously for Francophones in our different areas, and we do want to commend the consortium for all its efforts. However, we also expect the consortium to fill in the current gaps and we are still hoping that Radio-Canada will have lots of coverage of all the cultural and political events that will be taking place around the 2010 Games.

We would also like to congratulate the consortium for broadcasting the Paralympic Games in a way that has never been done before. We believe that is important.

As regards the print media, the Federation is pleased to hear that VANOC has negotiated an agreement with the Gesca group newspapers. However, we also think it would be a good idea for there to be an agreement with the Association de la presse francophone, in order to include all the minority Francophone newspapers. That is an oversight, as we see it.

It is our sense that coverage of the preparation of the Olympic Games is not as extensive in the Francophone newspapers. The best example would be the coverage and promotion of the Olympic Torch Relay. According to recent data, Quebec is the province where the least number of people have signed up to carry the torch. Here in British Columbia, our Federation as well as the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue have been working together, produced a poster, issued a press release and successfully promoted this event in all the other provinces where Francophones live.

We also want to be sure there will be Francophone representation during the celebrations at every torch relay stop. Francophones need to be identified who can join the working groups that will be struck in each of the cities. We were happy to see that the eligibility criteria recently announced by Canadian Heritage in order to receive funding do refer to linguistic duality. However, it remains to be seen how that will actually work.

We want to state unequivocally that, in the course of the last year, VANOC has made a tremendous amount of progress. However, as has already been pointed out by the VANOC Official Languages Advisory Committee—recently constituted and of which we are members—there is still work to be done, and we intend to do it.

Finally, in partnership with VANOC and the Foundation, we will continue to take a keen interest in everything relating to linguistic duality and services in French at the Games, including services for athletes, their families, visitors, volunteers and anyone and everyone connected to the Games.

Signage and communications by third parties, such as municipalities, the province, sponsors and celebration sites are of critical importance at this stage, because we are not yet convinced they have the same commitment to linguistic duality. It would be unfortunate if the use of French were to be limited to competition sites alone.

In closing, I would just like to add that we still have cultural concerns. You may recall the show that was presented for the countdown, on February 12, and some of the activities organized on that occasion. There were some disappointments.

We continue to work with VANOC and the Foundation, as well as with the relevant government authorities, to ensure that such cases do not occur again in this final year of preparation.

Expectations are high, but that is perfectly normal, in our view, and we are delighted that it is the case.

Once again, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to share our concerns, as well as testify to the fact that progress has been made.

●(1025)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Trudel. We will now open it up for questions.

I just want you to know that we heard from representatives of CBC/Radio-Canada before you, and they confirmed that there will be coverage of cultural events at the Olympic Games and that CBC/Radio-Canada will have a strong presence on the perimeter of the Olympic site. Committee members also share your concerns with respect to Francophone content.

Ms. Zarac, the Vice-Chair of the Committee, will begin the questioning.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Good morning, Mr. Trudel. Thank you very much for your presentation.

You have expressed concerns, and I think you are right to be concerned. The Federation has referred to several levels of concern. When you come right down to it, in terms of coverage, it is fine to say that the Games will be 95% accessible to Francophones, but the remaining 5% still represent some 10,000 households. In my opinion, those concerns are very relevant.

At the same time, you seem to be very optimistic, because you say that arrangements will be made whereby it will be possible to provide coverage of the Games. In your opinion, who has the responsibility to ensure that all Canadians are able to watch the Olympic Games, whatever language they speak?

Mr. Yves Trudel: I want to begin by pointing out that television broadcasting contracts are awarded by the International Olympic Committee. That is certainly the first level of responsibility. In addition to that, there is a shared responsibility, in that Canada is hosting the Games through the participation of Vancouver and Whistler.

An organizing committee has been struck. We believe that this Committee and the Government of Canada have a responsibility to intercede with all the parties to ensure that coverage of the Games is the best that it can be. Our minor role, as a community partner, is to dialogue with all the stakeholders.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: That is important, in my opinion. Your questions are very relevant.

You said you are part of the committee. An initial meeting was held on April 23. Do you not think that was a little late for an initial meeting? What concerns were expressed at that time? What have you resolved? And, when is the date of the next meeting?

Mr. Yves Trudel: There will be another meeting very soon but, unfortunately, the date has not yet been set. I should also tell you that Mr. Serge Corbeil, Vice-President of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique sits on that committee on our behalf. Within the committee, we have acknowledged the progress achieved thus far, but we have also noted the challenge still ahead in terms of communication, as well as the visible and audible presence of French at the Games.

These questions were all raised by the Federation. We recognize that VANOC is working very hard behind the scenes to recruit staff and volunteers, and to prepare signage. However, when there are public events, it is another story. A good example is the ceremonies organized for the Countdown, in Richmond and Whistler, the show that was put on for the Countdown, the launch of Torch Relay and the inauguration of the Richmond Olympic Oval. At many of these events, which were all public events broadcast by the major media outlets, unfortunately, French did not have an adequate profile.

We want to say, once again, to the members of VANOC and the VANOC Advisory Committee that, to ensure that linguistic duality is a success at the Games, it has to be present not only behind the scenes, but at all the public events as well. And, the most important public event—namely, the Olympic Games themselves—is fast approaching. We have every reason to be seeking reassurances in that regard. I believe the creation of this committee was a positive initiative on the part of VANOC. We obviously would have preferred to see it established earlier. Right from the outset, we knew we wanted to participate in this kind of process. The Fédération des francophones has been associated with VANOC's internal committee right from the beginning. It even took part in the work of the task force that was struck with the goal of bringing the Games to Vancouver.

• (1030)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: When VANOC representatives appeared before the Committee, they said that their role is only to advise and support, and that they have no additional responsibility to move things forward. Does this not concern you somewhat?

Mr. Yves Trudel: Considering that VANOC has been able to recruit people of the calibre of Mr. Jean-Pierre Raffarin and Ms. Judith LaRocque, who represents the Government of Canada, I think we have to listen to the advice given by these individuals. Members of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie also sit on that committee.

It seems to me that if VANOC has taken the trouble to strike such a committee, it has every intention of heeding its advice. Of course, when you have to move through every step of the operational chain, a reaction is sometimes slow to come; but, in this case, certain opinions will probably make their way more quickly and more directly to the ears of VANOC's senior management.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: So, we can expect the advisory committee's work to bear fruit. At the same time, it is not known when the next meeting will take place.

Mr. Yves Trudel: I would be very pleased to inform you of the exact date once I have had an opportunity to go to the office and verify the information.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarac.

Mr. Nadeau, please.

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

Good morning, Mr. Trudel.

The Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique forwarded a brief to the Standing Committee on Official Languages which is entitled: "THE 2010 VANCOUVER OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES, APRIL 27, 2009". On page 4 of

the brief, which is dated April 27, 2009, you make the following statement:

In airports and even on Olympic sites, the presence of French is often still secondary and at times appears to be deemed an irritant that would sooner be forgotten.

Can you provide additional details in that regard?

Mr. Yves Trudel: Like me, you have probably read or heard about the comments made by the Mayor of Richmond and members of the city council with respect to the Richmond Olympic Oval. This has been a concern of ours right from the start. We are talking about an Olympic site that was built partly with federal funding. In addition, the International Olympic Committee has given permission to use the Olympic rings as well as the word "Olympic"; however, the main signage at the site is in English alone.

People say it is an irritant. However, I think we could certainly use that same term to describe a situation where the mayor of a municipality says that linguistic duality is not important to him when, in fact, we are talking about an event of national scope connected to the organizing committee of an international entity—namely, the International Olympic Committee—whose two official languages are French and English.

We are currently taking steps to do some education and awareness-raising among officials at the City of Richmond, which appear to be urgent. There is a Francophone association in Richmond. It is surprising to us that the mayor would be unaware of that. So, there is still some work to be done in that regard.

This also illustrates the fact that VANOC and the Government of Canada have a responsibility to inform VANOC partners, on a urgent basis, of their responsibilities with respect to linguistic duality. They should be concerned not only with what will be happening during the competitions per se, but also the entire legacy of the Olympic Games.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you very much. That is very clear, Mr. Trudel.

In the same document, it states:

It is inconceivable, in our view, that athletes, official delegations, sport federations and Francophone visitors, from Canada and elsewhere, would have trouble obtaining information in their own language before and during the Games, either in the form of signage, written material, information communicated through the various media, or in oral communications with volunteers.

Could you expand on that please?

• (1035)

Mr. Yves Trudel: Yes.

As I mentioned previously, VANOC is doing a considerable amount of work behind the scenes. We see that as an encouraging sign in terms of what will be happening directly on the Olympic sites. However, as you can well imagine, everybody coming to see the Olympics from somewhere else will not necessarily be spending all their time at the competition sites. They will need to get to the competition sites, and therefore will be coming through airports, walking or driving in the streets of Vancouver and Whistler, as well as on the roads linking the different sites.

They will also require tourist and travel information during their stay in our province. If visitors, athletes and delegations accompanying the athletes are going to be coming to Canada, Canada and British Columbia will certainly want to enjoy the economic spinoffs associated with the Games.

We know that there will be at least as many Francophone countries, if not more, as there are Commonwealth countries sending athletes to the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. There is significant potential there, in our opinion. We are already educating VANOC and have begun to do the same with outside partners. However, it is my sense that these people are not feeling enough pressure. VANOC and the Government of Canada are not sending them clear, direct messages regarding their common responsibility to reflect our linguistic duality.

For example, the Tourism BC site still needs to be adjusted—in other words, the French version of the site has yet to be developed. The initial work done on it is not encouraging. The provincial government recently told us that this would be quickly corrected. We will let you know as soon as that is done.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you very much, Mr. Trudel.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

We will move on now to Mr. Godin.

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

Mr. Trudel, I want to come back to Tourism BC. Has the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique been involved in any talks with the government in that regard? Tourism BC must surely be receiving money from the provincial government.

We have noted that their site is aimed at more than six other countries in the language of those countries, but that there is nothing in French. Perhaps you could tell us how many Francophone countries will be attending the Olympic Games in Vancouver, countries that Tourism BC does not seem to be at all concerned about.

Mr. Yves Trudel: In terms of our contact with the provincial government, we have set up a coordinating committee which includes one of our member organizations, the Société de développement économique, or SDE, which has long been one of the partners of the province of British Columbia when it comes to providing tourist information in French.

Very early on in the process, several months ago, the SDE got in touch with Tourism BC to propose its assistance with the French material and to suggest that, until it is ready, there at least be links provided to SDE sites in order to provide partial tourist information to visitors. That had not yet been done. So, that is something that was done by one of our members.

We also have had direct contact with the provincial government, as has the SDE, of course. The provincial government was made aware of your comments, Mr. Godin, and I want to thank you for them. I still find it quite unfortunate that someone at the opposite end of the country has to intervene in order for a local government, which already has links to the Francophone community, to do the work it is supposed to do.

That is unfortunate. It simply reflects the fact that all of this work does not depend only on regulations, agreements, understandings and protocols; it also depends on the good will of staff and decision-makers. Sometimes, that good will has to be supported, encouraged and even given a good nudge from time to time, to ensure that important issues, such as linguistic duality at the Olympic Games, are dealt with appropriately.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I agree with you; that is unfortunate. Canada is recognized as being an officially bilingual country—French and English are its two official languages. At the same time, one of those languages is completely absent and I, for one, make no bones about saying that this is an insult.

Mr. Yves Trudel: People outside of British Columbia are not always aware of our ongoing relations with other minority communities in the province. It is important to understand that these communities provide ongoing support to Francophones and consider linguistic duality to be one of Canada's fundamental values. That is reflected in all the public opinion surveys conducted in British Columbia. It is one province which publicly acknowledges the reality of linguistic duality in all its communities.

For example, a large proportion of the people enrolled in immersion programs in British Columbia are from Asia and South Asia. Those programs are the most successful in Canada. So, the problem is not one of support for linguistic duality by the population at large.

• (1040)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I was referring more to the government. The problem is certainly not the population. If there is one place where the Francophonie can take its rightful place, it is certainly British Columbia. There are also agreements with France. In my opinion, the message Canada is sending is regrettable. British Columbia decided to put its name in the running to host the Olympic Games. So, it represents all of Canada, not just British Columbia. That does not present a very positive image to the rest of the world. Do you agree with me?

Mr. Yves Trudel: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In one document, it is mentioned that the offices of Tourism BC are located right across from VANOC's. And yet, Tourism BC's signage is in English only. We still have quite a way to go.

Mr. Yves Trudel: What is important to us is signage on the different sites and in the environs, as well as on the roads leading from one site to the next. We are wondering what kind of plans are in place to welcome and accommodate tourists in the province and the host cities of Whistler and Vancouver, and what kind of staff will be in the streets and at the sites where the celebrations are occurring to welcome everyone to the Games.

As regards the official signage of the provincial ministries, it is important to understand that British Columbia has no legislation or regulations in place with respect to services in French. So, it is a little difficult to pressure the authorities at that level with respect to the ongoing activities of provincial agencies.

The Chair: Thank you.

Would you like to ask one last question, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes. With respect to satellite reception of Olympic Games coverage, has anything been organized by you, CTV or the Olympic Games broadcast consortium? For example, will there be satellites set up in centres where Francophones can go to see the coverage? Is that feasible?

Mr. Yves Trudel: That is a good question. It would certainly be possible to establish community viewing sites. Up until now, there has been no discussion of that possibility.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We move on now to Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Good morning, Mr. Trudel. Are you able to hear me?

Mr. Yves Trudel: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Daniel Petit: You are part of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique. I live in Quebec City and saw on television that you have created the Société historique francophone de Colombie-Britannique. We saw some pictures of Maillardville. Is that the oldest community in British Columbia?

Mr. Yves Trudel: Well, the community of Maillardville is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. In terms of cultural, community and tourism promotion, the year preceding the Games is clearly critical for that community, as it is celebrating its own centenary.

Mr. Daniel Petit: I believe one person said it was the first time the story of Francophones in British Columbia was being told, even though they have been there for 100 years. Is that true?

Mr. Yves Trudel: I am sorry; I am not sure I understand your question.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Someone from the Société historique francophone de Colombie-Britannique, relating the history of Francophones in that province, mentioned on television that this was the first time in 100 years that anything official was being done to acknowledge the Francophone presence in the province.

Mr. Yves Trudel: An associative movement has been around in British Columbia for quite a long time. The Federation is 65 years old, and our organizations in Victoria are almost 75 years old. Maillardville has been around for 100 years.

The fact that an historical society has just been created will help us raise awareness of this and put it in context, in terms of how the province has evolved.

Mr. Daniel Petit: That is very much to your credit, Mr. Trudel. I am not being critical; on the contrary, I found that report to be extremely interesting.

I have a second question. Are your relations with VANOC—you raised the issue, and we read the documents that were provided—positive at this time? Are things going well with VANOC right now?

Mr. Yves Trudel: I am inclined to say that our relations with VANOC are excellent. We sit on an official working committee, a tripartite committee, which includes the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue, VANOC and the Fédération des francophones de Colombie-Britannique. Committee members meet several times a year.

In addition to that, there are liaison arrangements whereby we communicate with VANOC on a weekly basis. Information is exchanged electronically, of course. We also work with the volunteerism promotion committee to promote the Torch Relay.

I think there is a good cooperative relationship there. Every time we have concerns regarding the visibility of the French language, I am sure you can understand that VANOC is the first to hear about them. We seek solutions through the Committee and work cooperatively to find those solutions.

I do not think there is any problem as regards the relationship between the Federation, as a community organization, and VANOC. However, I believe VANOC's responsibility, in terms of presenting bilingual games, goes beyond just its relationship with community organizations. It has a responsibility to the population as a whole, its municipal partners and the province, and its sponsors. It is much broader than merely its relationship with the Federation.

• (1045)

Mr. Daniel Petit: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chairman?

Thank you very much.

Mr. Trudel, we know that the Official Languages Act applies to the Olympic sites. There are some sites in Whistler, you mentioned Richmond, there is the airport as well and they are considered to be Olympic sites—in other words, places where both official languages are required and even mandatory.

Let us talk about your relationship with the municipalities. At the provincial level, in British Columbia, the linguistic situation is different from what it would be in New Brunswick, say, because the latter is an officially bilingual province. In British Columbia, there is no law on bilingualism, but at Olympic sites, both languages have to be recognized. Has this subject been addressed, either with VANOC or with an organization able to make decisions, with a view to confirming that the federal official languages policy applies at all sites where the federal government has a presence? Has that been discussed? Can that be corrected between now and the opening of the Games, or as soon as possible?

Mr. Yves Trudel: Yes, we think it can be corrected and that it is important for that to happen. You must understand that when the Government of Canada and VANOC entered into agreements, those agreements were also binding for the partners. They are not only binding for VANOC.

In that context, we were also talking about coverage of cultural events, and not just sporting events. By that we mean the cultural Olympiad, the celebration sites and a lot of venues other than the competition sites.

Of course, we continue to make representations in that regard, both to VANOC and to the Winter Games Federal Secretariat at Canadian Heritage, to Committees such as yours, today, and to the provincial government, which does have a Francophone affairs program. So, we are making representations widely in order to continue to raise people's awareness of the importance of the French fact.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. D'Amours has a final question.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Trudel.

I have a very quick question for you. Based on what we have come to understand since we began looking at this issue, agreements have been reached in Vancouver for people to receive certain French-language television channels in the hotels. Is that true?

Mr. Yves Trudel: The latest information is that there are still two hotels that VANOC, the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue and the various stakeholders are continuing to try and convince of the importance of this issue. There are still a number of major hotels that have made no formal commitment in that regard. However, the vast majority of hotels have agreed to provide Olympic coverage in French free of charge.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I have one short comment I would like you to pass on to them. When you are staying at a hotel in Vancouver, it can be difficult to find a channel in French. There may be agreements in place but, although it has been known for several years now that the Olympic Games will be held in Vancouver, there seems to be a problem raising people's awareness, including the hotels. It looks as though they are waiting for the Olympic Games to be upon us to put up a little sign in their hotel rooms saying which French-language channels people can access. The fact is that it is difficult to find a French-language channel in Vancouver hotels at this time. You may want to pass that comment on to them. There will certainly be Francophones arriving in Vancouver prior to the Games.

Mr. Yves Trudel: There are Francophone tourists visiting Vancouver all the time, every month of the year, because of its pleasant climate. I can assure you that work is being done and has been ongoing for a very long time.

Of course, it is easier to exert pressure when regulations come into play. At the same time, we continue to make the economic and marketing arguments to them.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you.

•(1050)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Trudel, it is now time for me to thank you for appearing before the Committee. I invite you to call on us if you need the Committee's assistance with that process. We will be right here in the coming weeks and months. It is always better to take action as soon as possible.

If this could in any way reassure you, I want you to know that I have applied in Levis, right across from Quebec City, to carry the Olympic Torch.

Mr. Yves Trudel: Thank you for your work. Goodbye.

The Chair: Thank you very much and we look forward to hearing from you again—

We have Committee business. I don't know whether we actually have to continue the *in camera* session. Perhaps we could adjourn the *in camera* session and immediately address our Committee business, if I have the members' unanimous consent to do that.

Is there unanimous consent to adjourn the *in camera* meeting? We could then move directly to Committee business without any further ado, and without any requirement for an *in camera* session.

We are going to distribute the schedule for the next few meetings.

But, first of all, Mr. Lemieux had suggested at a previous meeting that there be an additional witness.

Ms. Glover, did you wish to comment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Lemieux's suggestion was that representatives of the School of Public and International Affairs at Glendon College be invited to appear, because that school is quite unique. It is the first one in Canada to offer a bilingual Master's Degree in Public and International Affairs.

So, I think that if they have an opportunity to present their program, they could give us another perspective to include in our study, which would be encouraging. They could provide other very important information for our study.

The Chair: Would you like to invite the witness, or are you simply asking that the Committee request a brief that could be passed on to our analyst?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I would like us to invite the witness to appear.

The Chair: Fine.

Ms. Guay, what do you think?

Ms. Monique Guay: I am against that suggestion, Mr. Chairman, because I think we have already heard from all the appropriate witnesses.

On the other hand, I strongly encourage that witness to send us a brief that we could then pass on to our analysts, and they could discuss it with us subsequently.

We have very little time left. If we want to prepare a report that is well thought out and properly considered, I don't think we should allocate additional time to hearing new witnesses.

The Chair: Are there any other comments on that suggestion?

Ms. Glover, do you wish to comment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: We have not heard from any witness on that specific topic.

In my opinion, they could begin—excuse me, but I have the floor. They could begin working on the report, and then add the witness's comments. I think that would be a good idea, because it would enable us to do good work and determine exactly what we've learned through this study.

The Chair: Are there any other questions or comments?

Mr. Rodriguez, please.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: A witness such as this would probably be a welcome addition. However, we all showed restraint when suggesting potential witnesses, precisely in order to get this work completed and be in a position to produce a report. We, too, could ask to add witnesses as we go along, the consequence of which would nevertheless be that no report would be produced and the Committee's work would have served absolutely no purpose. So, I will stop there right now, because I, too, could suggest that we hear from other witnesses while we are drafting the report.

The Chair: Ms. Glover, do you wish to comment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: We agreed to hear from a number of witnesses, but we removed from the list the ones that I had suggested—namely, representatives from the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. Could we replace those witnesses, who were originally agreed to by the Committee, with the ones from Glendon College? We have the time, and that would be fair.

The Chair: If there are no further comments on the motion, I am going to propose that we vote immediately on the suggestion to hear from representatives of Glendon College.

(The motion is defeated.)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I was going to make a motion when you put that to a vote.

The Chair: There is unanimous consent to receive a brief from Glendon College. The clerk will get in touch with them. As for the schedule, I want to draw your attention to the fact that we will now proceed with drafting the report.

•(1055)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order. Ms. Glover said that we had not heard from any witnesses able to provide that service. On the contrary, I think we did. So, I would like to correct the record, as we did in fact meet with a great many witnesses able to provide that service.

The Chair: That is correct. Everyone heard the motion.

With respect to the schedule, the Commissioner for Official Languages will be appearing on May 28, after the parliamentary break week. At the outset, he will discuss his annual report. Subsequently, he will be talking about our study on post-secondary institutions even though, at that point, we will already have the report or it will be in the process of being translated.

Following that, we have plans for another meeting with representatives of the Association des Franco-Ontariens des conseils scolaires catholiques. We will then adopt the report. Finally, we will be studying the Official Languages Transformation Model and the training of Francophone recruits in the Canadian Forces. We have already lined up a certain number of witnesses. There will be three sessions after that, which we can plan between now and the end of the meeting. I am going to review with you the topics that have been suggested. They are as follows: the Canada Magazine Fund, greeting visitors in French at airports and border points, the Rigaud Training Centre, the offer of bilingual service at the Immigration and Refugee Board, making Air Canada subject to the Official Languages Act, and the transfer of the Official Languages Secretariat to Canadian Heritage. In that regard, Professor Savoie is not available until the fall. For all intents and purposes, we have no witness lined up for

May 26. We could invite the Ombudsman to appear, if that is the will of the Committee.

Mr. Godin, please.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I suggest that we ask the DND and CF Ombudsman to appear. I don't know what is going to happen in June. It is possible that the House will not sit until the end. However, it is important to meet with the Ombudsman. We have work to do in that regard. The Canadian Forces had promised to make changes. We want to see what the status of those changes is and what the Ombudsman has discovered. He may have something to tell us. So, it is important that he appear immediately.

Ms. Monique Guay: If he is available.

The Chair: Yes, he is available, and we can get in touch with him.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher): If the Ombudsman appears on the 26th, it will be difficult to prepare as comprehensive briefing notes as we would have liked. We will basically have to rely on what was prepared in advance. That is going to take place during the intensive period when we are drafting the report. So, you will have to be tolerant in terms of the amount of information we will be able to deliver for that meeting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Paré, another analyst was with us for a certain amount of time. Perhaps he could help you.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: For that meeting, we will do what we can, but the notes will be less extensive than if that meeting were taking place later on.

The Chair: I will accept one or two more comments. Time is flying by.

Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: At the last session, I told the analyst that I wanted to have access to everything that is done in French at Borden. However, the titles alone are very long. The problem at Borden is that everyone was seeing gaps. The analyst did a considerable amount of research. We now have all the titles, but we don't have the actual documents. We don't know how many of them are in French. We would practically need a truck to carry all of them. In any case, I want to know what has been done in French at Borden. I made this request at the last session, but I still have not been given what I asked for. I am anxious to see those documents before we meet with the Ombudsman, so that I can ask him relevant questions.

I would ask the analyst to provide us with details in that regard.

•(1100)

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: Everything is completed. Last year, an effort was made by the Committee, and particularly Mr. Nadeau, who raised the matter at Committee and made representations to National Defence. We have the list of documents. I have done a preliminary analysis of it. The Ombudsman himself has analyzed those documents, and his analysis is far more comprehensive than mine was. There was discussion of this in the media this week. I can bring you the preliminary findings that I have prepared, and the Ombudsman could then complete that with his own information.

Mr. Daniel Petit: When will we receive that?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: You will have that before the meeting on the 26th.

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Like Mr. Nadeau, I asked that we be given that material at the last session, but we still have not received it.

Ms. Monique Guay: I hope it is going to be sent to us.

The Chair: So, that's it. We will see each other again after the break week.

Mr. Nadeau, we have to vacate the room by 11 a.m.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I have a simple question.

In theory, we were expecting to meet with Mr. Daigle, the Ombudsman, on June 9. As I understand it, that meeting has now been moved forward to the 26th.

The Chair: You understood correctly.

The meeting is adjourned.

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