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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 10th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this Tuesday, November 1, 2011. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, today we will be discussing the Evaluation of the Roadmap: Improving Programs and Service Delivery.

With us this morning are the representatives of three groups: Mr. Côté and Mr. Forgues from the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada; Mr. Potié, of the Association de la presse francophone;

[English]

Madam Ryan from the Quebec Community Newspapers Association. Welcome to all of you.

We'll begin with l'Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté (Secretary General, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada): Ladies and gentlemen, the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada would like to begin by thanking you for the invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We are pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to improving programs and service delivery for the benefit of official language minority communities.

An active player nationally since 1991, the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada was established by francophone and Acadian community radio stations anxious to take control of their own development and thus guarantee their autonomy.

As the overall administrator of community broadcasting in minority francophone communities around the country, our not-for-profit organization provides a variety of services to its members, including consultation, training, communications and liaison, as well as services related to all aspects of creating and operating a community radio station.

Our radio stations—27 in all—are social economy enterprises whose work is critical for the development, indeed the very survival, of many different communities around the country. They contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the cities, towns and regions where they operate in a thousand and one different ways. Allow me to give you a few examples.

First of all, our radio stations create jobs in their communities and promote both entrepreneurship and local purchasing. They also help to curb erosion of the local economy and the flight of capital to other

communities. In addition, these stations play the music of community artists and, in so doing, contribute to the development of their singing and musical careers. As well as contributing to the emergence of these artists, our stations are also virtual “radio labs” where Canadians from all around the country can have their first experience with radio and, in some cases, even make a career of it.

The community media are also an important source of information for thousands of social, cultural and community organizations around the country, not to mention, of course, the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

In fact, we would say that the positive impacts of community radio stations in the communities and, generally, around the country, are so numerous that it would take too long to list them all here.

We are of the firm view that our movement's contribution to Canadian communities cannot be ignored.

Mr. Simon Forgues (Development and Communications Officer, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada): The definition given by the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission clearly states the following:

[A community station] is owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organization whose structure provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large.

That is certainly the reason why so many Canadians volunteer for and are so actively involved in the work of these community radio stations. On the other hand, it is very difficult for small organizations such as our own to train and supervise human resources and volunteers, while carrying out the rest of their mandate, without adequate and ongoing funding.

In practical terms, many stations do not have adequate resources to secure studio equipment, regularly renew their programming and production software, offer appropriate training and support for their volunteers or provide a quality local and regional news service.

Programming budgets in our area represent approximately 11.5% of the average revenues available to commercial FM stations in Canada. That is not enough to allow them to actively support citizen participation or to adequately fulfill their mandate. Because community radio stations are required to present diverse views and programming to residents and that they are, in that sense, a public service, we firmly believe they should have access to some form of public funding.

If Canadian society wants community radio stations to continue to provide effective coverage of local, community and social events, the kind of programming which neither CBC/Radio-Canada or private broadcasters can or will provide, unfortunately, as it is not part of their mandate, we believe that community radio stations will need to have the budgets they require in order to do so.

● (0850)

Mr. François Côté: The Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, the National Campus and Community Radio Association and the Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec, which together represent 140 community and campus radio stations across the country and are supported by more than 500 employees and 10 000 volunteers, have already made a step in the right direction.

Indeed, it is out of a desire to ensure the development and sustainability of the third broadcast sector that the three associations established the Community Radio Fund of Canada in November of 2007. The three associations estimate that the sector as a whole requires more than \$20 million. Thus far, the fund has generated approximately \$1 million, which represents less than \$5,000 per station, an amount that is obviously inadequate.

It is our belief that, in order to fulfill their responsibilities, our radio stations must be able to count on a guaranteed annual amount of at least \$30,000, which would at least allow them to maintain one permanent position per station.

Given that the current funding model has reached the limit of its usefulness and that fundraising does not actually allow for any growth, community media organizations must possess twice the ingenuity just in order to survive. Advertising sales are considerably limited, because our stations operate in markets or programming slots that are not targeted by private radio, given that the latter has determined them to be unprofitable. So, the findings are clear: revenue growth is limited.

In our opinion, a federal government contribution would support the following statement from the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013:

Measures are also planned to support community radio and other local media that promote cultural and community activities among youth. For young Canadians, this will mean greater availability of local media and activities in the minority official language.

Without recurring government funding, we are concerned that the status of our radio stations will steadily worsen and that this will have disastrous consequences for official language minority communities.

I should mention in passing that we would like to extend our thanks to the government of Canada for including the Franco Médias 2010 project in the Roadmap. This initiative enabled francophones and Acadian communities to also contribute to the success of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver. However, it is important to keep up the momentum.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Our stations may not all be the "cornerstones" of their communities in terms of social and other activities, since they do not necessarily all operate in markets of comparable size and make-up. The fact remains, however, that they must make the same effort, whatever the size of their market, and

whatever the audience they serve, in order to properly fulfill their mandate as an open and inclusive broadcaster.

Furthermore, we often hear talk of the new media and the need for community radio stations to be part of that. In the space of barely a few years, technology has developed at such a pace and changed the Canadian media landscape so dramatically that even public and private broadcasters have been overtaken by events. Just imagine what it is like for radio stations like our own.

In the current globalized environment, where broadcasting giants are merging and diversifying their activities in order to deal head on with the phenomenal rise and popularity of the new media, community broadcasters, and particularly those operating in official language minority communities, are struggling to contain the erosion of their own audience and are fighting a totally unequal battle against the Internet, a medium which has neither boundaries nor clear and precise rules. Indeed, the CRTC made the point again recently that it does not intend, at least in the very short term, to regulate Internet content.

Canadians' interest in the new media is such that we are facing a massive migration of our audience to these new platforms, but without all the necessary means to recapture those listeners.

It should also be mentioned that, very recently, the President and CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada, Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix, told members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage that he intends to double the Crown corporation's investment in digital broadcasting between now and 2015. That means that more money will have to be invested in new platforms.

We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada recently filed a project application with Canadian Heritage, and we are hoping to receive the requested funding in order to develop mobile applications that would enable Internet users to tune in our stations using their mobile devices, such as smart phones or touch-sensitive tablets.

● (0855)

Mr. François Côté: In closing, we say that community radio stations are not definitely of critical importance to all our communities, and to the country as a whole. Furthermore, we are trying to do our best with the few resources at our disposal. However, we believe that an annual contribution of \$840,000 under the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality would at least allow every one of our stations to have one permanent staff member, while at the same time fostering the maintenance and development of these community media. Examples of similar government contributions to community radio stations can be found around the world, including South Africa, Australia and, closer to home, Quebec.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your kind attention and we look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Potié, please.

Mr. Francis Potié (Executive Director, Association de la presse francophone): Mr. Chong, Mr. Bélanger, Mr. Godin, members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, members of Parliament, the Association de la presse francophone would like to thank you for the invitation to appear today. We wish to commend you for undertaking a study of the Roadmap and want you to know you can count on our full cooperation. It goes without saying that the Roadmap is important for Canada's linguistic duality and for official language minority communities.

Having said that, when it comes to assessing the impact the Roadmap has had on the development of the French-language press in Canada, it is fairly difficult to arrive at a fair and satisfactory picture of the current state of play. Indeed, the document does make reference to the French-language press. It talks about measures to support community media that promote cultural and community activities among youth. According to the Roadmap, for young Canadians, this will mean greater availability of local media and activities in the minority official language.

To our knowledge, there are no specific measures in the Roadmap aimed at developing the French-language press. Indeed, when the Roadmap was first launched, we made the point that the community media sector was almost completely absent.

In spite of that, it is possible to make some connections between the priorities set out in the Roadmap and those of the APF. I am sure you are aware that local media play an important role in every aspect of community life. Our newspapers can see their own influence in some of the initiatives developed through the Roadmap, at least indirectly.

Whether we are talking about linguistic duality, youth, economic development, access to services or governance, in all these cases, newspapers are the primary vehicles used to inform people, raise their awareness and also contribute to and stimulate debate. Community newspapers are partners with the businesses and organizations that are part of their community. They also act as a conduit between citizens and their public institutions.

The same could be said of the action items targeted in... Without exception, examples can be given that demonstrate the undeniable role played by the French-language press. The press are there to make people aware of the services provided by community organizations and government. Local newspapers also act as pillars of economic activity in their respective communities. One of the ways they do that is by allowing business to introduce their products and services to the community. I would go even further than the ARCC, as I believe that local commerce and local purchasing are closely linked to the local media.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the APF's activities that could be considered to be connected to the Roadmap. However, I cannot say that they are spinoffs of the Roadmap. None of the activities that we organized came with the "Roadmap" seal.

With respect to youth, one of the objectives set earlier in the Roadmap was to build the future by engaging youth. That is a happy coincidence, because that is a priority area for the APF. For a number of years, we have been focusing on two things: finding ways to develop loyalty and attract young readers; and, developing young

people from our communities, in particular, to work in our profession.

We have taken a number of youth-oriented initiatives. For many years now, we have been providing bursaries for studies and internships that have nothing to do with the Roadmap. They are simply part and parcel of our ongoing activities.

I can also give you some other examples.

We developed educational activity sheets with the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française. We also organized a contest in immersion schools with the help of Canadian Parents for French. With the ARCC, we set up a team of young journalists that took part in the Vancouver Olympic Games.

All of these projects received funding from the Official Languages Support Programs Branch. I believe Canadian Heritage could tell you whether this is part of the Roadmap. As far as we are concerned, the money comes from Canadian Heritage.

● (0900)

As for the Economic Development Initiative, the experience was not particularly conclusive for the APF and its partners. As part of a joint project with the ARC du Canada and the Quebec Community Newspapers Association, the APF took various steps with a view to securing funding under this program which, I believe, is part of the Roadmap. We discovered that it was pretty well impossible to carry out a national project covering two linguistic communities as well as all the provinces and territories. After making repeated inquiries, we realized there was no mechanism in place that would allow for the creation of a national program. In order to do that, you have to make six different applications to six different organizations, each one then assessing the project based on its own criteria and terms and conditions. I have not completely given up on it, but it's extremely complicated. It's feasible, but almost impossible. If the goal was to not fund national projects under the Economic Development Initiative, I'd say that this goal has practically been met.

With respect to governance, I can tell you that, as a general rule, the relations between the APF and our federal counterpart are satisfactory, whether we're talking about Canadian Heritage, the advertising coordination section of Public Works and Government Services Canada or the Canada Periodical Fund. Here I am referring primarily to our relations with public officials. They are relatively satisfactory. There are open discussions and we are kept informed about what is coming up. We also met with Minister Moore in 2010 and had an opportunity to make him aware of our concerns.

I'd like to come back to the Roadmap now. As I mentioned earlier, we are not denying its importance, but in many cases, it is impossible to make a direct connection between that program and the APF. For the francophone press, the most important government programs are federal government advertising spending and the Aid to Publishers component of the Canada Periodical Fund.

With respect to advertising, we are currently going through some tough times. In the last two years, French-language newspapers have seen a 35% reduction in federal advertising. The effects of that decrease are being felt. Newspapers are publishing fewer pages. Some are talking about the major challenge facing them in order to survive.

With respect to the Aid to Publishers component, which is not necessarily linked to the Roadmap but could be in the next edition of the program, the results are shared. We reviewed the program. We were told that there was a desire to ensure that official language publications would receive more support.

The positive aspect for the APF is that a larger number of publications are eligible under the program because the criteria have changed. Recently, however, we were finally made aware of the funding formula, which is different from the criteria, and we now know as a result that some newspapers will be winners, whereas others will lose a lot in the bargain. The unfortunate thing is that the big losers are provincial newspapers that serve communities in places like Saskatchewan, Alberta and Nova Scotia. Significant amounts of money are involved. In Manitoba, for example, they are talking about an annual loss of \$60,000 over the next three years. We intend to make the government aware of this and of the fact that, because of the formula it has established, the most vulnerable newspapers will be affected.

• (0905)

In closing, being a part of the family of organizations and communities that promote the francophone linguistic minority as well as linguistic duality, the APF cannot be opposed to the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. We are in favour of it, but the APF cannot say that any actions taken directly as a result of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality have had a major impact on us.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potié.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to Madame Ryan.

Ms. Lily Ryan (Member of the Board of Directors, Editor, West Quebec Post, Quebec Community Newspapers Association): Good morning, Mr. Chong, Mr. Bélanger, Mr. Godin, and members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

On behalf of the Quebec Community Newspapers Association, my response to evaluating the road map initiative is to talk about community media. Before I offer a picture of the world of English community newspapers and the challenges they face offering news in this minority language in Quebec, let me explain our relationship with advertising.

What does this word mean, exactly? For readers of community newspapers, advertising is information. Indeed, many readers may not differentiate between what is a paid ad, an opinion piece, or a news article. They simply read every thing, every word, with great interest. The key here is that before we look at increasing or decreasing advertising rates, we need to understand that we're talking about increasing and decreasing information to residents.

This is particularly critical for the English minority in Quebec. Our small newspapers are sometimes the only way residents are informed about what's happening that impacts them, from various agencies, from the province, or even from the municipalities. Advertising bookings from federal agencies dropped from 2008 to 2011 in the range that the APF has experienced. But we can't look at

2009 for these drops, except that there was an interesting lesson that year. Federal agencies were highly proactive in their fight against the H1N1 virus. They used community newspapers to run a preventive information campaign, with success rates any top agency would admire. Rates of infection for H1N1 were controlled in large part due to this aggressive advertising campaign. Readers responded by following advice contained in the ads. Readers were scared, they felt isolated, and they heard horror stories from abroad and from television headlines, but they didn't understand what was being published in the French newspapers. The spending that went into community newspapers targeted them and helped them through this, offering them very reliable information. It empowered them to act responsibly and to help themselves. However, advertising bookings from federal agencies dropped off to virtually nothing following that pandemic. Road map or not, the effect was chilling.

The situation where the federal governing bodies do not communicate with residents is shared across Canada; it's not just in Quebec. For a minority language group, this information is critical. It's information about what agencies are doing for them or about them.

Community newspaper readership rates across the country are extraordinarily high. Whoever said newspapers are dead has neglected the weekly newspaper bracket. We're doing better than ever. Circulation is up, readership is up, and profits are up. Recent polls show that 74% of adult Canadians read their local community newspaper. The numbers are even higher for those newspapers in minority language situations.

A Léger Marketing study commissioned last year by some member cities of the Union des municipalités du Québec showed rates of readership reaching 89%—that's the number for the *Aylmer Bulletin* in the Aylmer sector of Gatineau. Newspapers Canada, the Canadian association of newspapers of which the Quebec Community Newspapers Association is a member, is running an information campaign right now asking federal agencies the following question. If three out of four Canadians read their local community newspaper, why doesn't the Government of Canada advertise with us? Why are you not informing minority language groups?

The campaign goes on to explain that this readership market is growing and enjoys a dedicated readership of over one million people in every corner of the country. Canadian numbers indicate that federal government spending in newspapers is under 10% of its total advertising budget. These numbers do not add up to responsible governments. Does this trend follow the road map guidelines?

Maybe the Internet is better than newspapers. The Internet is widespread, of course, and most newspapers have online versions, but the proof has not been established that turning to online advertising fulfills the responsibility the agencies have of informing Canadians about critical information. This responsibility has been outlined in the road map.

● (0910)

There's currently an online advertising campaign that celebrates veterans. On the ground yesterday I polled everyone I met in the busy shopping centre where our offices are located. Nobody I spoke with knows about this campaign. At the same time that I was out there asking people if they had seen it, we fielded 23 telephone calls or e-mails regarding information that was in our paper that day, information that did not include anything about veterans or that campaign. But my anecdote might not be convincing enough.

Editor and Publisher, a media industry magazine, published results of a readership study relating to advertising in their July 2011 edition. The study evaluated advertising media options—readers', viewers', listeners' various responses to advertising messages. Again, these are information messages coming from agencies. Thirty-six percent of adults preferred newspapers and responded to the information they received through their community newspaper. The study included questions about the Internet, television, radio, direct-to-user platforms, and social media. I have copies of these results if anyone's interested.

The Quebec Community Newspapers Association urges federal agencies to increase communications with residents, particularly in areas of Quebec where the English don't understand what's in the majority-language newspaper or on television. It needs to happen in such a way that residents can assimilate the information most effectively, and that's community newspapers. The English-speaking minority in Quebec has supported its weekly newspapers because these people read their papers every week. They read every aspect of it, and they respond—letters to the editors, submitted photos, tips. They continually use the newspaper. Local businesses advertise. And this shows how important it is. Anyone with a message to share uses the paper, and why would anyone with a message not use the community newspaper? Can federal government agencies put themselves in the group that does not follow best practices?

The road map initiative, with its flow charts and best practices guides, seems to require federal agencies to use community newspapers to dialogue with residents, based on performance results of these newspapers. The Quebec Community Newspapers Association and the Canadian Community Newspapers Association have documented the performance of the newspapers.

Use what people use. In Quebec, minorities use English newspapers.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Ryan.

We'll have about one and a quarter hours of questions and comments from members, beginning with Monsieur Godin.

● (0915)

[*Translation*]

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

I'd like to welcome our witnesses to the committee. Thank you for being here.

In terms of following up on the Roadmap, I think it's important to have these discussions here and now, and to know your opinion. The mid-term report is currently being prepared. Were you consulted about it by the government?

Mr. François Côté: Actually, a meeting was recently held to talk with Canadian Heritage about what has been done thus far under the Roadmap and to find out whether we had received anything with respect to the media, culture, and other components of the program. That took place about a month ago Ottawa, I believe.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is it Canadian Heritage that consulted you?

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You wondered whether you had been... I'm trying to understand.

Mr. François Côté: It was a mid-term evaluation. They wanted to know whether there had been any successes and, if so, find out more about them. The APF and our association have not had any, other than Franco Médias 2010, which was a success thanks to the Roadmap. But, other than that, the Roadmap did not affect us.

Mr. Yvon Godin: And you, Mr. Potié?

Mr. Francis Potié: There was, in fact, a meeting—consultations. There were workshops and discussions around certain themes. For us, the theme was culture in a broad sense. I did not see it as the end of the process. I saw it as the beginning of a process being undertaken by the department. It lasted one day.

I think I remember the point I made when we were talking about communications. The problem is that newspapers are very often forgotten, since most of the discussion focuses on television and the Internet. That's fine, but the fact is that a lot of people still read newspapers and listen to the radio. The traditional media are not finished yet; they are still around.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Francis Potié: So, I didn't see this as the end.

So, there were consultations that lasted one day.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Whether we're talking about the Roadmap or the plan that was introduced in the early 2000s, is this the first time that you have been consulted since then? It's just that the way you were talking earlier, Mr. Potié, I had the impression that you feel as though you are not part of the process at all. You don't even know whether the money you're receiving comes from the Roadmap.

Mr. Francis Potié: I'll be honest with you. I don't consult the Roadmap every other day... We establish our plans and priorities based on the needs of our members.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Which means—

Mr. Francis Potié: When we read the Roadmap, we saw nothing in there that said there would be something for the French-language press.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So, having looked at what's in the Roadmap for the francophone press, be it newspapers or something else, your feeling is that there are no language or other programs in there that could help you or are even aimed at you. There is nothing in the Roadmap which would allow you to tell the government that this is something for you and your group.

Mr. Francis Potié: I think we would really have to show considerable ingenuity in order to do that. As I mentioned earlier, we could always say that we are delivering a youth project and that it's in the Roadmap. That would be an additional argument in support of our project. However, unless I'm mistaken, there is not one word in the Roadmap which says that—

Mr. Yvon Godin: If there is to be another roadmap, what would you like to see in it?

Mr. Francis Potié: An example I could give would be the Aid to Publishers component, which is part of a program that is open to all newspapers in Canada, including English-language newspapers in Quebec. The Quebec Community Newspapers Association and ourselves have always argued in favour of a funding formula which recognizes the fact that it's far more difficult to penetrate a minority market which represents 2% or 3% of the population, and that there are far more obstacles involved. That is not currently in the Roadmap. My position is that the funding formula should reflect that reality, but it's not there.

Earlier I pointed out that the funding formula is the same for everyone. Whether it's an English-language newspaper in Swift Current or a French-language newspaper in Saskatchewan, the funding formula is exactly the same. And yet there are a lot more alternative strategies in play to distribute the newspaper in Swift Current. There are a lot more options. For example, *L'Eau vive* has to go through Canada Post, and yet the funding formula does not recognize that. Taking those examples of specific newspapers, it's clear that the funding formula should acknowledge the fact that newspapers operating in official language minority communities are special cases.

• (0920)

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madame Ryan, do you feel the minority language newspapers are treated equally?

Ms. Lily Ryan: In Quebec, the English minority, compared to the French minority in Canada...? Is that your question?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, within the minority.

Ms. Lily Ryan: I can say that most member papers of the Quebec Community Newspapers Association have the impression that French language newspapers outside of Quebec have an advantage, whether it be advertising advantage or program funding.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How do you define that?

Ms. Lily Ryan: Speaking for the members, I might not be in the best place to answer that question. Often, a newspaper might not have a high enough circulation to take advantage of funding programs.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I was listening to Mr. Potié say it went down by 35%.

Ms. Lily Ryan: Was that advertising?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

Ms. Lily Ryan: We've had virtually nothing this year except for during the election campaign.

It's a bit of a mystery about which newspapers get which ads. For example, in the Outaouais, one newspaper got ads for the retrofit program. This was a very important program that most English language readers wouldn't know about if wasn't through their local paper. Readers of one paper might apply for this funding and retrofit their house and there would be an economic gain for them, whereas a neighbouring community's newspaper didn't get those ads and that population wouldn't even know the programs exists, unless they were browsing the Internet and somehow stumbled upon it.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Monsieur Gourde.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank our witnesses for being with us this morning. Their comments are very interesting.

Each of you talked about the relationship between social medium and your own media, particularly newspapers and radio. I don't know whether the challenges are the same for everyone. From what I can tell, however, newspapers are practically always available on line. In Quebec at least, regional newspapers are, and the electronic version is updated on a daily basis. On the other hand, it must be more difficult for community radio stations to operate in that environment, since it is practically a competitor.

Can you tell me how you are dealing with the new technologies?

Mr. Simon Forgues: As I explained earlier, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada recently submitted a project to Canadian Heritage. The idea is to carry out a project that we have been very interested in for some time now, which is acquiring mobile applications for the four main mobile operating systems—Android, BlackBerry, Windows Phone and iOS. We would like listeners to be able to receive our programming not only through the FM band, but also using these new platforms.

We are being told more and more often that young people are deserting FM radio and that there are fewer of them listening to the radio. Most of the time, they have their iPods glued to their ears. I think there are probably some young people out there who probably don't even know what FM radio is. On the other hand, they do know what streaming is. They subscribe to those kinds of services in order to get music on line. We do not yet have a presence there, but it is not out of a lack of desire. It's a fairly ambitious project, but we still would eventually like to get there. That's why we are working towards it.

You also talked about social media. They do represent a challenge for us, in that it's a platform that is attracting more and more people. At the ARC, however, we are trying to work things so that these media are more like allies than enemies or competitors. For example, we are trying to convince our members of the need for them to be on Facebook and to use that platform for discussions which can subsequently be broadcast on our airwaves. We also use Twitter to relay bits of information that could prompt listeners to visit the station's website to get all the news.

The fact remains that radio stations with inadequate staff are having trouble fulfilling their role as broadcasters and at the same time putting content on social platforms.

• (0925)

Mr. François Côté: Yes, putting content on social platforms takes an enormous amount of time. You have to be there as often as possible in order to stimulate discussion. Some radio stations have only a web page. They haven't yet really developed a site, because they don't have the time to do it. And, as we all know, people don't visit static sites. All of this represents a major challenge for us, because the government is talking more and more about putting advertising on the Internet. As a result, it is probable that there will be less of it on the radio or in the traditional media. That's a major challenge for us because we have to have a presence on the web in order to secure our share of government advertising. We would like to regain what we're in the process of losing.

However, some of our members have extremely limited resources. I'm thinking of Iqaluit, for example, where there are 500 francophones and the station has only one half-employee. And yet these people are on the air 24 hours a day, like any other radio station in Canada. Having to be everywhere at the same time is a huge challenge. That's why we are asking you to ensure that we can have at least one permanent employee in every one of our stations. That way, we will be able to devote a little time to the web and new media.

Mr. Francis Potié: Where newspapers are concerned, APF members have been on the Internet since the year 2000. However, having a presence there doesn't mean you're effective. There is a difference. As with every other medium, you have to learn to be an interactive medium, in addition to being a paper-based medium that is published every week.

Basically, the challenge for newspapers is the same as for radio stations—a small staff.

Yesterday, I had a discussion with someone and complimented him on their website. He answered that it was nice, but because of recent staff changes, their priority would be the newspaper and that the website would not be updated as frequently. It's always a challenge.

The Internet is a different medium. It is a medium of immediacy, which means that it must be constantly updated. Facebook and Twitter accounts mean constant interaction. There is learning involved and resources have to be dedicated to it. With our members, the results vary: some are investing a lot in this while others are not able to invest as much.

The second challenge is profitability. People would be prepared to invest more if they were making more income with the Internet. So far, no newspaper that belongs to our association is earning significant income through the Internet.

There is a third challenge as well. The APF cannot really support its members with respect to the Internet, even if it would like to, because there is not much funding available. Resources are also a challenge. They are not unlimited.

The Official Languages Support Programs Branch doesn't really want to get involved in the Internet. If I'm not mistaken, that is because it receives a lot of funding applications. If it opens that door, there will be additional pressures on what is a limited budget. As for Industry Canada, it is no longer involved in that area, whereas previously, it was involved in the Franco-communauté virtuelle project.

That is a summary of the current situation. In a context where we are fighting against assimilation, government's support for web services would be greatly appreciated by the francophone media.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potié.

Mr. Bélanger, please.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My first question is for you or the clerk. I think you are going to get used to hearing me ask it.

More than two weeks ago, the committee requested information from Canadian Heritage about the Roadmap. Canadian Heritage promised to provide it. Have we received it?

[English]

The Chair: No, we have not received—

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I guess we should go and knock on their door, give them a call or send them an e-mail to find out what is going on.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, I asked the clerk at the last meeting to inquire of them. I'll ask him again on behalf of all committee members if he could get an estimated time—

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: We don't want to receive the information once we have completed our hearings. That would not be very helpful.

[English]

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk right now if he could let us know before Thursday's meeting how much longer it's going to take to get answers to the questions Mr. Bélanger posed.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: As well as the information they promised us.

Also, Mr. Chairman, do we have a schedule of future meetings? I would like to have more than one or two days' notice, in order to be better prepared.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, I asked the clerk to start inviting witnesses that all three parties suggested. As soon as we get confirmation of their attendance, whether it's the next meeting or two to three meetings from now, I've asked him to issue the notice of meeting.

Unfortunately, we started inviting the witnesses about a week and a half ago, and many of them either could not appear or agreed to appear and then cancelled. We're trying to map it out as quickly as possible. I hope in the coming week we'll have a much better schedule for you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: My next question is for our witnesses from the media.

Last week, we were told that the mid-term evaluation of the Roadmap, which the government is currently preparing and which should be completed by March, will not be made public.

Do you wish to comment on that?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: On a point of order.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Gourde.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I don't understand why my colleague, Mr. Bélanger, is making that assertion. We never said that here in committee.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. It's a point of information to ask that committee members focus on the issue at hand and ensure that their questions don't attribute remarks to other members that are not the case.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chairman, you told us that the parliamentary secretary had told you that the Roadmap would not be made public. You told us that at a meeting last week.

[English]

The Chair: I was told that it wasn't available and that it wasn't going to be made public, so as I said before—

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, and that's exactly what I'm saying. So, I want to put the question to you.

As journalists—

[English]

The Chair: One moment. As I said before, those were remarks made by the chair. So before you attribute remarks to another member of the committee, make sure they're accurate.

As I've said before, you're free to use your time as you see fit. I've always said that. But let's focus on the business at hand here—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I am.

The Chair: —and on the issues, rather than attributing remarks to other members. It makes the committee run more smoothly.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So, someone—and we will not talk about the identity of that “someone”—told our chairman that the evaluation of the Roadmap would not be made public.

As media representatives, do you have any comment on that?

[English]

The government is going to be performing an assessment of the road map at the midway point. It should be completed by March, we're told. It's under way now.

We've also been advised by our chairman at the last meeting that it would not be made public. I was wondering, as media representatives, would you have comments on that?

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): On a point of order.

[English]

The Chair: Just one moment. The floor goes to Mr. Weston on a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Regarding what Mr. Bélanger just said, I remember that you stated that—

● (0935)

[English]

It has not been released yet, but that's—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It can't be released yet—it's not done.

Mr. John Weston: That's different from “it's not public”.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, but as I've said before, let's focus on the business at hand.

Mr. Bélanger has the floor. He's free to use his time as he sees fit. I understand we have had a motion on the floor for the last 15 minutes that concerns this issue. Members will be able to debate then whether the report should be made public when it becomes available. Why don't we save that debate for those last 15 minutes? But let's give Mr. Bélanger the floor. He has his seven minutes and he's free to use them as he sees fit.

Mr. Bélanger—

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I'm not sure whether you are going to be allowed to answer my question.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bélanger, I'm not finished yet.

You have the floor. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm not sure whether you are going to be allowed to answer my question, but I will give it another try.

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: I can take this. Today I'm here as part of the Quebec Community Newspapers Association, although I do work in a newsroom and run the newsroom. As a media organization, we're always interested in all the details of any programming that affects us.

To be honest, the road map hasn't changed the world of making newspapers for the minority language community in Quebec, as I've mentioned. So whether it's made public shortly or a little bit longer time from now, I don't know how much it would affect the association.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I don't think it would affect the association if you're not getting any money from it. I agree with you there.

I'm asking you, as someone in the news media, what is your view of that, that it not be made public—if it's not made public?

Ms. Lily Ryan: I'd have to have more details about why it wasn't made public.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Potié: Like any media organization, we are always in favour of as much transparency as possible. We would expect an evaluation carried out by the government to be made public. We would cover it in order to inform the public.

Mr. François Côté: Indeed, Francis gave you the right answer to your question. If there is any value in that news, we would want to know about it.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Does the ARCC receive contributions from the provinces and municipalities?

Mr. François Côté: No.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do you know whether, on an individual basis, your radio stations receive contributions from provincial, territorial or municipal governments?

Mr. François Côté: In fact, none of our stations receives recurring funding. Only one station in Manitoba receives a small annual contribution through the Canada-communities agreement.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Which agreement?

Mr. François Côté: It's with Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: And which radio station would that be?

Mr. François Côté: It is CKXL in Winnipeg and Saint Boniface. It's the only radio station.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I believe you set up a fund with student and English-language radio stations.

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Was that last year?

Mr. François Côté: It was in 2007.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can you tell me what the current status of that fund is? Also, does the Government of Canada contribute to it?

Mr. François Côté: No, the government does not contribute to its funding. The fund is for this year. Actually, there is an agreement now with private broadcasters who will be paying money into it for the development of Canadian content. We are talking about a fund of

about \$1 million for this year. After administrative costs, there is about \$750,000 left to distribute to radio stations. As I said earlier, that represents less than \$5,000 per station.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: In other words, the Government of Canada has contributed nothing at all since it was first set up.

Mr. François Côté: Not yet, but the government did allow for the fund to be set up initially.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are there any indications that it might contribute?

Mr. François Côté: We are trying to secure a meeting with government representatives to talk about a future contribution.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You are trying to set up a meeting—

Mr. François Côté: Yes, but I am not able to tell you what the status of that process is. Part of the plan of the fund managers is to meet with government officials.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So, you don't handle that.

Mr. François Côté: No, I'm just a member.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: With respect to the newspapers, I was able to read *La Liberté* on the Internet. However, I was unable to do so in the case of *L'Eau vive*. There is a website, but the newspaper is not available.

Can you tell me how many community newspapers offer online subscriptions? How many of these newspapers can you download?

• (0940)

Mr. Francis Potié: Are you talking about legal downloading?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes.

Mr. Francis Potié: There aren't many. I believe it's possible for *L'Express Ottawa*, *La Liberté* and *Le Franco*. Four or five of them publish their full version of the news for online subscribers. In other cases, they may publish excerpts and other items that do not appear in the newspaper on a database.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is there a strategic reason why all newspapers are moving in that direction?

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes. When it comes to the Internet, newspapers are proceeding by trial and error. I believe there is a strategic aspect to this, in that we want to be available via mobile technology, but we are not there yet.

So, there is a strategy which is taking us in the direction of providing electronic subscriptions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Galipeau.

[Translation]

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

I, too, would like to welcome all our witnesses to the committee.

I have a fairly unique rapport with community radio. When I was a child, I was the host of a program for children. It was broadcast, not on community radio, but on a commercial radio station with a 1,000-watt antenna. I also did some radio when I was a teenager.

When a francophone movement in the National Capital Region called on me to get involved, in the summer of 2008, following a refusal by the CRTC to grant a licence to a francophone community radio station in the region, I went on the offensive. Now we know the results.

I have been in the House of Commons for 2,110 days. I must admit that, despite my devotion to the cause, I only went to see you once. Perhaps I should have gone more often. But you came to see us.

I would like to talk to you about culture. How can we ensure that community radio stations, and perhaps even community newspapers, can become a better mirror of minority linguistic societies? How can we help you along the way?

Mr. François Côté: First of all, I would like to thank you for your proactive support of francophone radio in Ottawa.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I am still waiting to read your letter in *Le Droit*.

Mr. François Côté: In any case, I wanted to thank you.

To better reflect the communities we serve, we created a platform for artists. I will let Simon tell you more about it, because he is the one who developed it.

The service we provide to the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada consists of a programming exchange. Our server has a bank of programming that we make available to all of our stations. That way, you are able to hear a program produced in Chéticamp in Cornwall, Victoria or Yellowknife.

• (0945)

Mr. Royal Galipeau: But not in Iqaluit?

Mr. François Côté: Yes, you can also hear it in Iqaluit.

That gives us an opportunity to disseminate the culture of all of our communities across all communities. Obviously, we still have some ways to go. Indeed, we would like our radio stations to better reflect our communities, but given our lack of resources, that is quite difficult. It's a problem.

The platform is one of our initiatives. It is one of the jewels in the crown of ARC of Canada.

Mr. Simon Forgues: About two or three years ago, members of the Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique franco-ontariennes attended our annual general meeting, which was taking place in Ottawa, to talk to our members about what could be done to create closer ties between community artists and community radio stations.

At the time, artists expressed a desire to be heard more often, and benefit from better promotion. The people representing our radio stations answered that it is not always easy to have access to music created by community artists. Some of the reasons for that are the fact that distribution is a challenge, that staff turnover in radio stations can be frequent, and that the inherent costs of promoting artists are high. For example, it's expensive to send compact disks through the mail. We came to the conclusion that the best solution would be to create a national platform where music files from our community artists would be downloaded. That way, it would be

possible for people to quickly, even instantaneously, access these files for free in cases where a station was connected to the server when the song was added.

The idea was to ensure that the music created by an artist from Western Canada—for example, Manitoba or Saskatchewan—would be broadcast in the Atlantic provinces, and vice versa. That way, songs by Acadian artists would be broadcast over the airwaves of radio stations in Western Canada or Ontario. That project was completed this summer, without additional financial support; in other words, the ARC of Canada paid for the hosting, implementation and maintenance of that platform. Artists now have a platform for disseminating their musical works. And radio stations are now able to more quickly and more easily access the work of our artists.

Even better, our colleagues from the Association des radio-diffuseurs communautaires du Québec have thus far said that they are very open to this service and inclined to pick it up. It is not yet a reality, because we want to test the platform. There are still some adjustments to be made, but we hope that, very soon from now, the 30 off community radio stations that are members of the ARC du Québec will also have access to this material. Not only will artists from our communities be able to travel to provinces outside Quebec, they will see their music played by radio stations in Quebec.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I want to commend you for that initiative.

It's very important because the major broadcasters do not provide access to francophone artists from elsewhere in Canada. They are not part of the secessionist messaging coming out of other politically polarized groups. They are not serving the message—

Mr. Simon Forgues: The purpose—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: If you manage to do that, you will help the overall francophone community in Canada, not only in the nine provinces outside Quebec and the three territories in Canada, but Quebec as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: How much time do I have left?

I had enough questions for another 10 minutes.

The Chair: Your time is up.

Mr. Lauzon, please.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): No, I have no questions.

The Chair: Mr. Trottier, please.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank you for being here this morning.

I have several questions about youth. As I see it, our youth represent the future of the minority language communities. I spent a good part of my life in Alberta. I used the French language media in that region, as well as in Ontario.

Now I live in Toronto. Once again, the French-language newspapers and radio stations are very important for the survival and development of the francophone community in those areas.

Do you have any particular projects or initiatives underway with a view to attracting young people? As you were saying, the platforms aimed at young people today are different. They don't really use traditional radio, television or newspapers.

My question is actually addressed to all the witnesses. Do you have any programs, projects or initiatives that target youth? Are you changing direction, in terms of your activities aimed at attracting young people?

● (0950)

Mr. François Côté: There is no doubt that they represent the future of our radio stations. It is extremely important to involve young people in our stations. Often, student radio stations in the schools record programs that we broadcast on our radio stations.

Also, we invite young people to come in and produce programs in our radio stations, either in the evening or on the week-ends. That way, we are able to introduce them to culture and to radio. Often, these young people remain involved in our radio stations and make a career there.

For us, it is especially important to develop an even greater number of projects that involve young people. However, as you know, there are not many avenues available to us to present projects for funding, because we are broadcasters. We do not easily fit into any particular programming slot. That is the problem. There is not necessarily any avenue for us to present our projects.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you.

I now have a question for Ms. Ryan.

Let's talk about community newspapers,

[English]

Canadian newspapers.

Do you find that young people pick up community newspapers? If not, why not? What can you do to increase readership amongst youth in your linguistic community?

Ms. Lily Ryan: One of the jobs of community newspapers in a minority language situation is to explain to that population what's going on around them. In Quebec there's a lot of support for youth. Le Secrétariat à la jeunesse is attached to Monsieur Charest's office. What happens for youth is very important to youth. We cover what happens in French to the English population as much as possible.

We have strong ties with organizations that deal with youth. Forum Jeunesse is an organization that has a funding program. They have grants up to \$5,000 for youth by youth. So as much as possible we keep that in the newspapers. All of the members do that. Even if youth don't always read the paper, their families do, and that information trickles down to them. It brings them back in, because we always publish websites and they loop back in.

Certainly it's more the adult population that is reading newspapers, advertising in newspapers, and writing letters. But youth are movers and shakers, so we cover what they do. We run photos of youth. There are photos of youth on our front page building their communities. So they and their peers are reading the paper.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Do you have any statistics on readership and listeners among youth? How do you define youth? Do you have any data? Maybe you have stories that you can share with young people.

Mr. Francis Potié: Our readers are as much as 18 years old. We really have any data on this, although we could probably look at it. A survey will soon be released, but it deals with adult readers.

At the same time, I can tell you that almost all of our members have youth projects on the go, whether it is a student publication, a partnership with the school board or agreements with Canadian Parents for French. Indeed, rare are those that do not make an attempt in that area. It is a challenge, in the sense that 14 year olds are not necessarily interested in reading articles about municipal zoning.

● (0955)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: And, in your opinion, what age group corresponds to youth? Is it 18, 25?

Mr. Francis Potié: I would say it is gradual. We discovered that the people who read our local newspapers tend to invest in their community and that homeowners were more likely to read the local newspaper because that reality affected them more. In terms of when someone becomes a regular newspaper reader, that varies.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: An engaged reader.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, please.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you for being with us today.

I would like to briefly return to what my colleague, Mr. Godin, was saying about development of the Roadmap for Canada's linguistic duality.

You established certain projects and priorities. Did you have an opportunity to present those projects and priorities to the government when the Roadmap we are currently reviewing was initially developed?

Mr. Francis Potié: There were a number of consultations, including about everything having to do with the Summit of Francophone and Acadian Communities. We were expecting the government to take inspiration from that to develop its Roadmap. I believe Mr. Lord held consultations at that time. We made our views known then. That led to one reference to the media in the Roadmap. In other words, we did have an opportunity to express ourselves, but we did not secure all the desired results.

[English]

Ms. Éline Michaud: I guess I could ask you the same question, Ms. Ryan.

Ms. Lily Ryan: I'm certain that we were involved in those same discussions around programming.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: You mentioned that the same funding formula would apply to all media, whatever their circumstances. And yet it is quite clear that the circumstances are not the same in every region.

My question is more specifically addressed to the ARC of Canada.

Could you give us an overview of the situation as regards community radio stations in Canada, and tell us whether specific regional needs should be targeted in the next Roadmap?

Mr. François Côté: Needs are not specifically associated with either small or large markets: they are the same, whether we are talking about Shediac, in New Brunswick, where things are going well, or in Yellowknife, where the station has only one half-employee and is very dire straights.

In fact, our large radio stations serve to support the small ones. If they do not develop new content and news expertise, the entire system suffers. Whether the station is large or small the needs are the same. They all need money. Things are tough in our communities. They receive funding requests from everyone. As you know, there is limited money available to be invested in causes. And, when we have to compete with cancer societies or the scouts, we are pretty far down on the list when it comes to donations.

We told you that funding campaigns are more and more difficult, and that is true. The fact of being a large or small station changes nothing. The needs are the same.

Mr. Simon Forgues: A little earlier, Mr. Côté talked about stations where things are going better. Some will say that most of them are located in New Brunswick. However, they have greater weight on their shoulders because of their circumstances. Indeed they will have to provide training to small stations that are a little more... They will have to support them in terms of training volunteers. They will also have to fulfill their needs in items of programming.

We were talking earlier about a national programming exchange server that all communities would contribute to. Of course, the larger stations carry more of the weight, because they are doing better. Even when they are better off—if you can put it that way—they still support the relative weight of their circumstances, which is probably less than what is felt in Rivière-la-Paix or Gravelbourg. It may sound strange to put it that way, but that's the way it is.

• (1000)

Ms. Éline Michaud: How much time do I have left exactly?

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Ms. Éline Michaud: You say that youth are your priority. Is there a specific measure or program that you would like to see in the next Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, with a view to getting young people a little bit more involved in your programming or in the operations of your radio or television stations?

Mr. Francis Potié: We develop projects. I will give you an example. We are trying to launch initiatives to support the student press in minority francophone universities and colleges. We are discovering that it's really complicated, because there is a major problem of continuity among the stakeholders, given that they have no money. Yet we don't have enough to pay for everything for them or to provide ongoing mentorship to that sector.

That is only one example I'm giving.

Ms. Éline Michaud: As I understand it, your priority is recurring funding. Correct?

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes, recurring funding is always more attractive than one-time grant. It is rare for a problem to be resolved in one year.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank our witnesses today.

This is a very interesting conversation that involves a number of dimensions. There is the matter of the distribution of government revenues and trends in the media, newspapers and radio.

I am the member of Parliament for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. That is where the Winter Olympic Games we talked about earlier were held. In my opinion, there is no community radio station in the second language in British Columbia. It is possible that CBC or Radio-Canada are providing the equivalent of community radio in Quebec, conceptually at least.

We obviously have community newspapers. Today, it is my honour to be meeting with a representative of a national community newspaper association. I imagine he will ask me the same question you just did.

I believe people are really confusing two issues. There is the matter of equality. Mr. Godin asked whether we were given advice. I believe that is somewhat related to justice and equality. Is the government sharing its revenue equitably?

The second issue has to do with how the government could communicate more effectively. I put the question to you, Ms. Ryan: what is your focus?

[English]

Is it the fairness of government spending?

[Translation]

Is it the effectiveness of the government's messaging?

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: First of all, you're lucky to come from an area with such a healthy community newspaper environment. The newspapers there are doing very well, and all regions of Canada have a lot to learn from the Sunshine Coast newspaper industry.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: I will tell them that.

[English]

I'll tell them your message.

Ms. Lily Ryan: I think both of your questions hold equal weight. Naturally, distribution of program funding needs to be fair. That goes without saying, I'd say.

That residents are informed about issues affecting them is also a requirement in any democracy. We need to look at the numbers on how residents get information, particularly those in rural areas where the broadband Internet, and Internet advertising, hasn't reached them. This points to community newspapers.

• (1005)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: I think you're right. In my riding, everyone reads the community newspapers from page to page.

If you can persuade the minister responsible for cultural affairs that this is the best way to get a message across, I think you will be successful in securing a lot more from the government.

Ms. Lily Ryan: Thank you.

Mr. John Weston: Would you like to add something?

Mr. François Côté: I can tell you that last year was an extremely trying year with respect to advertising, because a choice had already been made: it was the year of television and the Internet. Radio stations and newspapers paid the price, and it was a very stiff price. There was a drop of more than 85% in revenues from the federal government. There was not much left for us. Things are slightly better this year, and yet there are a number of campaigns in the newspapers and on television, but not on the radio.

Just as we pointed out to Public Works, part of the population is not being served or is not receiving the government's message. This is what we are working on now. We would like to see all Canadians have access to that message, but they are not all receiving it at this time. Do you understand what I mean?

It is clear to us that there must be a larger proportion of government messages.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ryan, Mr. Forgues, Mr. Côté and Mr. Potié, I would like to welcome you to the committee and thank you for being with us this morning.

In theory, we are meeting today to assess a Roadmap with an evaluation program that can only be described as ridiculous. We do not yet have access to the mid-term report, nor do we know whether we ever will, which makes the process of assessing the Roadmap a little complicated.

So, we are going to skip a step and move directly to the next Roadmap. If we ever do receive the mid-term report, we will be able to compare your suggestions for the future with what is basically being done now.

The challenge of the next four and a half minutes rests on your shoulder. You will be sharing the available time. I would like each of you to explain as clearly as possible what your expectations are, and if the word "expectations" is too problematic, perhaps we could just call them suggestions.

What are your practical suggestions in terms of funding mechanisms for your organizations? Do you want to continue to survive on advertising or are you expecting something else?

What are your suggestions regarding governance and management approaches in terms of relations between the government and your organization?

Finally, what suggestions can you make about the mechanisms used to consult official language minority communities?

Mr. Francis Potié: I will try to answer some of those questions.

With respect to funding, I would say that, when it comes to newspapers, adapting to new media is a major challenge, given the limited resources available. It is not only a major challenge for us, but also a serious threat to francophones in minority communities. The current context is one where the media are having trouble remaining competitive. It is, in fact, difficult to compete with *The New York Times* and CNN.

As far as the Canada Periodical Fund is concerned, it's a very good program, but I still think it should be designed in such a way as to reflect the fact that our market reality is not the same as a newspaper that can be delivered to the home and reach 100% of the population.

In terms of governance, I must admit that I haven't really given much thought to that. I am going to rely more on my spokesperson, the FCFA, to present the views of the community. Generally, we support that.

In terms of consultation, I would like it to be carried out on more of an ongoing basis and focus more on dialogue. Let me give you an example. We are consulted, we are asked what we all want, we go back home, the drafting begins, and then we are told: "Here is the program". Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. I believe that ongoing dialogue as an approach would be more satisfactory, and that the government would end up with a program the goals of which would be more easily met.

• (1010)

Mr. François Côté: As regards community radio, we would really like to see something in the next Roadmap that deals with community media and would relate specifically to those media. There is currently nothing in the Roadmap—or at least, only passing reference to them.

Obviously, base funding is fundamental for us. That is what we need most. That funding would ensure that there is at least one permanent staff member in each one of our radio stations. And that would allow us to ensure a presence in the new media.

I agree with Mr. Potié in terms of the huge challenge that represents for small companies such as our own.

We also think that there should be increased dialogue and discussion by means of consultations.

In terms of governance, we will support the FCFA's position.

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: My contribution on the part of the Quebec Community Newspapers Association is to echo, basically, what Francis and François said.

As for the landscape, with social media and website presence for media, help in that regard is really critical in terms of having a presence and staying current. None of us has the funds to be as dynamic as big corporate newspapers are. Each of us has to struggle through that challenge.

As for governance, I wouldn't have a comment on that.

In terms of consultation, QCNA is always ready to communicate concerning how the programs could be run more effectively. Keeping the dialogue open is important.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Menegakis.

[Translation]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): I would like to thank you for being here today and for your presentations.

Within your organizations, do you have members that represent the media in the multicultural communities?

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: Over the last couple of years we've had extensive discussions about defining what a newspaper is. Is it a newspaper just because it's paper? Is a "newspaper" that pops up at election time a newspaper? Does it have to have subscriptions? Does it have to have an editorial page? Many "capital N newspapers" don't have an editorial page.

We are using the term "ethnic newspapers"; there are lots around Montreal. We have several members—and that's how we would define newspaper: being a member of an accredited association. That provides anyone who's interested in using newspapers the tranquility of mind that we're looking at professional journalism. The multicultural groups have professional journalists working in newspapers, and some of them are becoming members. It's a matter of finding them and establishing a relationship with them. We have a handful of members who publish articles either exclusively in another language or partially in another language.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

I have a question for the Association des radios communautaires, for Monsieur Côté.

In 2009, our government directed the CRTC to do a public review of its policies for campus and community radio. Specifically, I want to ask you about the streamlining of the regulatory framework that gives flexibility in your programming. Would you care to comment on that?

•(1015)

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté: A review of the community radio policy was very good for the sector, both for campus and community radio stations. The new policy provides for greater accessibility and is also much simpler for radio stations to administer.

In terms of flexibility in programming, I am not certain that we have achieved what we wanted, because we asked for certain things. That said, thanks to the new policy, it is now much simpler to

operate a radio station than it was prior to 2009. It was very complicated.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: *Merci.*

I've heard a couple of times about newspapers being used at election times. You've mentioned this a couple of times, Ms. Ryan.

I'm curious, since you're speaking specifically about Quebec, as to whether members of Parliament in Quebec use their local newspapers to inform their constituents about government programs. Do they not do so?

Ms. Lily Ryan: Do you mean outside of election time?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes. You mentioned the retrofit program, and there are other programs. In my riding I certainly use the community newspapers to inform my constituents about government programs of which they can avail themselves. Have you not seen this happen?

Ms. Lily Ryan: It's hit and miss. Our local MPs will run ads for the poppy campaign or at New Year's, or greetings such as Merry Christmas or on Canada Day. That's when we'll get a business card, at a time when everyone is putting in a greeting, or for school safety

Mr. Costas Menegakis: But they are not tied specifically to a program—the retrofit program, the horizon seniors program—?

Ms. Lily Ryan: I don't want to say never, but I'd say it's very rare.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: With the advent of the Internet and the Internet explosion, we've seen a big use of computers and stuff, but I agree with you that not every home has a computer and not everyone relies on technology to be informed. I'm specifically thinking of seniors, because I would think that a lot of seniors don't have a computer in their home and have not picked up computer skills.

Do the local newspapers that you represent go to every single home?

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Potié: It varies. In some communities that are 80% francophone or more, the newspaper is delivered to every door. However, if the community is only 5% francophone, it is not financially viable to distribute the newspaper to everyone. In those cases, the newspaper is paid for by means of subscriptions. So, no, it is not delivered to every door. It is delivered to the doors we knocked on to secure a subscription.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: And for the local English newspapers...?

Ms. Lily Ryan: It's the same. Some are for free distribution in a *Publisac*.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Aren't most free?

Ms. Lily Ryan: No. For example, the one I edit is one-third subscription. Not all of them are free at all.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Thank you all for being here. I'm going to switch it up and actually speak in English. It's what I'm feeling comfortable with today.

You have probably heard several of our members on the opposition side bringing up the midway report for the road map. It is worth saying that this is largely because we feel that in the planning of the next road map, that midway report is going to be very important for planning the path ahead, the road forward. Getting lots of input—and I hear you speak today about what you'd like to see in the next one—is certainly important.

Since there has been a bit of a theme on youth and involvement, I wanted to ask a couple of questions. Would it be fair to say with respect to new media, for instance, that the degree of involvement of your newspapers and radio stations each year is dependent right now upon whether you have the one volunteer or employee who is very adept at it; that the papers and radio stations that are better involved have that person and the other ones don't? Would that be fair to say?

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté: Absolutely, Yes.

● (1020)

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: That's fair to say, but it also depends on what's going on inside the newspaper organization, regardless of how interested in activism a school is or not. Often it comes down to what kinds of teachers are promoting media.

One initiative in Quebec is this key word, which I guess is a new buzzword, *plate-forme*. The ministry of culture in Quebec is working on a *plate-forme*: an information-sharing system for community newspapers whereby articles can be shared and downloaded throughout Quebec. It will be interesting to see what level of increased youth readership there is.

Mr. Dan Harris: Since many, though not all, of your organizations are not-for-profit, do some of the organizations apply in the summertime for the Canada summer jobs program to employ youth, and do you get any?

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté: Some of our stations have students come in during the summer, but there are not many who do. I would say it is about 10% of radio stations overall. It depends on the market.

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: I'm not sure what the numbers are across Quebec, but I'd say the numbers are medium to low.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Potié: I don't have any statistics on that. In any case, we encourage our members to make an application. Many of them do, and they normally secure one employee.

[English]

Mr. Dan Harris: That's good that they are. Of course, it would be nice if there were more jobs available. That goes coast to coast.

Following up, most of you have mentioned some base funding. This seems to be across all aspects of government right now, whether we're talking about transit, infrastructure, or anything that cities, provinces, or organizations are looking for. They're looking for long-term, stable funding that they're going to be able to rely on so they can plan.

Just how critical do you think that would be—getting stable, long-term funding in terms of being able to plan two, three, five, ten years out?

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté: I'd say that for community radio stations, that is absolutely critical. In a context where money from fundraising and advertising is dropping year over year, obtaining base funding becomes critical. Many of our radio stations are in dire straights. In Iqaluit and Rivière-la-Paix, employees were lent by the newspaper or the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. And yet they are not much better off, which means that, at some point, the situation is going to become extremely difficult. At one point, we even thought that we could lose the station in Iqaluit. In the last few years, that was also the case for other stations. So, having base funding is critical, at least for us.

[English]

Ms. Lily Ryan: Certainly stable funding for small newspapers would be particularly interesting in a program to hire sales managers, advertising sales managers, because time after time, once that sales manager is hired, the stability of a newspaper is far more assured.

Going back to your youth question, I wanted to mention that although readership might be predominantly adults, people who work at newspapers tend to be young. These are freelancers of every department, whether young graphic designers, or young journalists who spend a couple of years in local media before they move over to the bigger companies—

Mr. Dan Harris: And get established.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lauzon.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome our witnesses to the committee.

[English]

Ms. Ryan, you suggested something in your last comments about going out and hiring a sales manager. I'd be interested to know how much of your financial resources come from advertising, for example, percentage-wise.

Ms. Lily Ryan: Different newspapers are very different, so on behalf of the Community Newspapers Association...

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Give me an average.

Ms. Lily Ryan: Of what percentage comes from advertising sales...?

Professionally, I represent three newspapers. We have three newspapers in our independent company, and advertising sales account for about 80% to 90% of our income.

•(1025)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Where is your other income?

Ms. Lily Ryan: There's a bit of subscription, and we get some help from the editor's fund.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: And for community radio stations?

Mr. François Côté: Advertising represents about 30% or 35% of our funding. The rest comes from fundraising campaigns.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Would it be possible to increase that 35%?

Mr. François Côté: Not at the local level. Possibly at the national level. We obviously would like to see a much higher percentage of government advertising.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: But where local advertising is concerned, there are local businesses.

Mr. François Côté: Yes, but you know as well as we do that, given the current state of the economy, it is not necessarily easy everywhere. There are some communities where things are better.

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: All right.

[Translation]

Are you familiar with CHOD in Cornwall?

Mr. François Côté: Yes, I was the executive director of that station.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It is doing well now.

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It had some serious problems, but thanks to advertising, it is starting to do much better.

[English]

It's the same thing with newspapers. We've got a couple of weekly newspapers in Cornwall, for example, *Le Journal de Cornwall*.... I don't know if you're familiar with it. It published 800 newspapers; they're now up to 25,000. Conversely, the *Seaway News*, which is a weekly newspaper, always sends out 37,000 English newspapers. They give them out for free. Now they have a French version.

The advertising is coming in, but I won't advertise there. I don't want to advertise in *Le Journal de Cornwall*. I advertised with my

heart because there were only 800 subscribers, but when they have 25,000 it makes more sense.

If you want to make money, sometimes you have to spend money. What you said is so critical, and I wonder if sometimes you have to push the envelope a little. That's what enterprise is all about, because the competition in the media in the last five years has been fierce. A lot of the media have not survived in the last five years. We had an English radio station in Cornwall that failed because of the competition. I think it's survival of the fittest, and if anything, I would recommend that you be more aggressive and maybe make an investment in hiring that sales manager so you can get you more business.

[Translation]

Do you have any comments to make?

Mr. Francis Potié: I agree with you. For a newspaper, the sinews of war is advertising sales.

However, our reality is different. For example, between 5,000 and 6,000 people speak French at home in Saskatchewan, whereas the total number of French mother tongue residents is between 16,000 and 17,000. If everyone read the French-language newspaper, it would still be difficult to convince the guy who owns a service station to buy advertising. Whether we like it or not, all these households are scattered across the province. In spite of that, I agree with you that the newspaper should make every possible effort to increase its local advertising.

Going back to what Lily was saying, advertising is information. It represents revenues and makes the newspaper more vital. But there are market realities in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island which make things very difficult.

Having said that, we are not asking for your pity. Our newspapers do their job and generate revenues, but there is another side to the coin: we are a pillar of community vitality.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It's the local situation.

The Chair: Fine. Thank you.

I would like to thank our guests for their testimony. We will suspend the sitting for two minutes to allow our witnesses to leave the room.

•(1025)

(Pause)

•(1030)

[English]

The Chair: We're coming out of suspension.

Yes, Monsieur Gourde?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I would like the meeting to continue in camera, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Could you repeat that please?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Could we continue our work in camera, Mr. Chairman?

[English]

The Chair: There is a motion on the floor that we go in camera.

Mr. Bélanger.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chairman, I am opposed to the motion to continue the committee's work in camera. This is an issue of concern to everyone and something that committee members have already discussed openly. There is a motion before the committee—which, as a matter of fact, I have not yet moved.

I see no reason why we should continue our meeting in camera. That really goes against—

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, I've heard your points, Mr. Bélanger, but I am going to have the floor now.

Motions to adjourn, motions to go public, and motions to go in camera are not debatable, so I will call the vote.

All those in favour of the motion moved by Monsieur Gourde to go in camera?

(Motion agreed to)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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