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—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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• (0850)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

It is my pleasure to be able to fill in for our chair, Hedy Fry. I am Vice-Chair Larry Maguire. I will be chairing today's meeting.

I want to welcome our guests here from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to start with this morning. We have an hour and a half for your presentations. Because of the time we have today, we will do a couple of seven-minute rounds and then, as time permits, we will do one or two rounds of five minutes each. Those include the questions and the answers, as my chair always informs our guests, and members as well.

With that, I would like to introduce Mr. Cochran, Ms. McGuire—welcome to the family name—Mr. Cormier, and Mr. Dubé. It is a pleasure to have you with us this morning.

A voice: It is a family name, but it is spelled differently.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Oh, no, the other side of the family spelled it that way as well when we left Ireland.

Thank you very much for being here this morning and taking time out of your busy schedules to appear before our committee. We are dealing with rural and remote areas of broadcasting and media, not just television and radio. We want to have your input into this very important topic to make sure that we provide as much news into those areas of Canada as we can. Of course, we are very interested in the models you work with.

With that, I will turn it over to you for your presentation, 10 minutes, and then we will proceed.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire (General Manager and Editor in Chief, CBC News, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, members of the committee, for inviting us here today.

We welcome this opportunity to meet with you to talk about local services. Canadians have told us, as you have heard through the CRTC hearings, that local news is of utmost importance to them.

We're somewhat unique in the ecosystem, so we thought we would begin by talking about CBC locally and what's going on in the country for us right now.

In Newfoundland and Atlantic time zones, the day is well under way. About 80 of our news gatherers are already chasing stories.

They'll file them across platforms for mobile, desktop, radio, and television. Soon our radio noontime programs will connect neighbours with issues in their community. Our other teams are preparing for our afternoon shows on radio and our six o'clock television supper hours in every province.

In the digital world, our deadlines are continuous. On our site and on other social channels, stories are being posted, published, tweeted, broadcast, telecast, and updated all through the waking hours. When breaking news deserves immediate attention, it goes first as a push alert. Here in the eastern time zone, daily story meetings are getting under way right now. Every day is different, yet every day is in some ways the same. There are always more stories than reporters we have to cover them. Or as the case may be, uncover them.

Local editorial choices are always a balance of dealing with breaking news and, particularly for CBC, leadership in stories that no one else is doing. These for us take two forms, what we call enterprise stories, which are generated from the native curiosity of our reporters and staff; and investigative stories, probing for facts and patterns, asking questions previously unasked, and if need be and often, holding principles to account. I am proud to say that we have more than 70 CBC journalists dedicated to investigative reporting today. This has grown. They're based in cities across the country.

To the west of here, in the central time zone, our Winnipeg morning show just wrapped up. It's the most listened to morning radio program in its market. Canadians across this country wake up to CBC Radio. We're number one in 13 of the 23 markets where ratings are taken, and we're in the top three in almost every rated community in the country. Ratings are not the driver for a public service broadcaster, but they are an indicator of our relevance to Canadians.

Over the next hours, about 150 more CBC news gatherers will be at work across our four western provinces. In the north, our day takes on many more dimensions. We broadcast in eight aboriginal languages from stations across 3,500 kilometres of Canada, from Whitehorse eastward to Iqaluit and Kuujuaq.

I've used a lot of numbers. Let me gather the math for you. Altogether we have 350 news gatherers in our local stations, who work alongside 650 writers, editors, producers, and hosts. All of them work in an integrated way to present our radio and television programs plus our continuous publishing of digital content on all of our platforms and other people's platforms.

Our local programming across the country exceeds 8,000 broadcast minutes a day, Monday to Friday, plus digital, plus additional content all weekend long, on all platforms. We originate from 33 stations including one all-digital station in Hamilton and three in the north.

To do this we have about 1,150 people working today in local services to cover this large country that we live in. This is fewer than before. We've made reductions and faced the same pressures others have. We have taken difficult but considered steps we thought were important to ensure sustainability in the long term.

We have re-imagined everything. It's led to the largest transformation ever in local broadcasting within CBC/Radio-Canada. Today our local services are central to our long-term corporate plan, strategy 2020. Local is at the forefront of the digital shift for the whole company and is key to us being able to deliver more local services, where audiences are moving, at lower cost, on mobile, desktop, radio, and television.

Many of our reporters will end the day after doing a story that doesn't even exist, or that they don't even know about right now. We resource our stations and train our people for many eventualities, among them the ability to stream or broadcast live from anywhere at a moment's notice, through satellite technology or through their smartphone.

We have a brief video to show to you today, that started that way about two weeks ago.

[*Video presentation*]

• (0855)

That was a sizzle reel and not a newscast. You saw from the tape, our coverage of Fort McMurray in the midst of the fury of the fires. CBC provided up-to-the-minute coverage in both official languages that residents needed, including survival information through the early hours and continuing through the evacuation, details on where to get help, ways to lend a helping hand in contributions to charities, expanded local footprint in the local service we were providing, and of course, the local programming was supported by the network and vice versa.

On our website we were continuous. People were able to reach us with timely information they could rely on. CBC was there giving essential information, helping the community navigate its choices, challenges, and causes for relief or celebration in service to the local community, but as important, sharing those local stories across the country. That's what we do every day.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to our discussion afterwards but now I would like to introduce my colleague from Radio-Canada, Michel Cormier, general manager of news and current affairs.

• (0900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Cormier (General Manager, News and Current Affairs - French Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):
Thank you, Ms. McGuire.

Mr. Chair, we are pleased to be here with you today. With me is Marco Dubé, executive director of regional services, French services. This is an important part of the information we offer.

Radio-Canada's local and regional news, like the news sector as a whole, is accelerating the digital and mobile content it offers in order to develop a more constant and continuous link with its audience. Our audiences today want to consult our content online, on their preferred platform, and when they want it. That means we can no longer simply offer programming at set times. That is why, in the regions and elsewhere, we offer more than news programs at the end of the day or radio news at set times.

This approach, which seeks to establish a more direct link with our local audience, reflects changing consumption habits. It is at the heart of Radio-Canada's Strategy 2020. The principle of this new relationship with local audiences is simple and can be summarized as more local, more often, and on more screens.

In concrete terms, Radio-Canada's regional services have trained hundreds of people across the country on the new digital tools that are necessary for this important shift. When teams go out in the field, they still produce news for television and radio of course, but above all their efforts focus on digital access and mobility. Our promise to local audiences is to serve them 18 hours per day, seven days per week. This is a fairly substantial commitment.

This increased presence has enabled Radio-Canada's local and regional stations to multiply contact points throughout the day with the communities they serve. Our journalists are constantly updating news through seven new regional websites: two in Ontario, two in eastern Quebec, and three in the Atlantic region, for a total of 21 across the country. They provide a digital presence on Facebook, to be sure, and on the other digital platforms.

For their part, news anchors are active throughout the day on the various platforms and make targeted appearances on television and radio to keep audiences up to date and to maintain this link all day long. Our work is already paying off. Visits to our regional web pages increased by 21% in the first three months of 2016. This is a substantial increase.

Radio-Canada is committed to being closer to its local and regional audiences. I will show you a short video highlighting the shift in our local coverage over the past year. This shift has allowed us to better respond to daily news events and to follow developments on all platforms throughout the day. This is how one of our journalists, Martine Laberge, covered the failure of the Nipigon River bridge, this past winter.

You can now watch the video.

[*Audiovisual presentation*]

A few years ago, we would have covered an event like that very differently. We would have done radio reports and a feature for the *Téléjournal* at the end of the day. Now, we cover the story as it unfolds. We are on all platforms. We make sure there is maximum outreach on the web using key words, and then incorporate all of that into a national story.

As the journalist said, the bridge failure cut the country in half. This is the new way of covering events.

We could also look at the events in Fort McMurray. We provided massive coverage of the developing story. We connected local journalists and the local machine with the national network, with very compelling results.

● (0905)

It should be noted that Radio-Canada stations do not have the same importance or play the same role from one region to another in Canada. Outside Quebec—and this must be remembered—francophone communities are in a minority and Radio-Canada is often the main if not the only source of information in French.

In Quebec regions, Radio-Canada operates in an environment with more French-language media, but it contributes to the diversity and quality of regional information. In the Quebec City, Ottawa and Montreal markets—the three big cities—Radio-Canada operates in highly competitive media markets and must constantly strive to stand out.

Despite these differences, Radio-Canada's public service mandate is the same, regardless of where it broadcasts: to offer Canadian citizens all the information they need to make informed choices. I think the word “citizens” is important. We are not talking about clients or audience, but citizens. This is the defining feature of Radio-Canada's public service role. Citizens have rights and responsibilities, and they need information to make choices in our democracy and in their lives. That is Radio-Canada's mission statement for providing information.

This mission also means seeing how major national issues play out in local communities, whether the survival of the French language, medical assistance in dying—a topical subject—or the integration of Syrian refugees. The different experiences of citizens enrich the national dialogue on major issues, which allows us to go beyond the traditional role of reflecting the regions on the national network and to better represent the country to our audiences. In this regard, we will invest more in a network of national correspondents based in the regions and place greater emphasis on our anchors and public affairs shows such as *Enquête* or *La Fracture* outside Montreal and Quebec.

This total package of information, including a stronger and more constant link with our local and regional audiences, is intended to keep those audiences informed of events as soon as they occur, and to give meaning to the events that shape their community life. That is Radio-Canada's public service commitment, and this is what creates the strength and originality of the bond that links us with all Canadians.

Thank you.

We will be very pleased to answer your questions.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you very much for your presentation. Because of the videos, we had a little extra time there, and we certainly appreciate your efforts in providing us with your information.

This morning we'll start off our first seven-minute round with Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you.

I was looking through your mandate as set out in the Broadcasting Act. I'm focusing right now on subparagraph 3(1)(m)(vi), which states:

contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,

Also, subparagraph 3(1)(m)(viii) states:

reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada;

We heard evidence a few evenings ago from members of the Punjabi press and the Ukrainian press. They were commenting on fact that they didn't feel their community voices were reflected in the mainstream media. That was part of the service they were providing. They felt that there was a disconnect there. I know that there used to be a Punjabi *Hockey Night in Canada*, which I'm assuming is no longer there.

How do you make that connection to the communities and make sure those local and diverse voices are being brought through?

● (0910)

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Reflecting the nature of Canada is an absolute priority for CBC, and we actually get very specific in how we approach it. For example, for our radio morning shows across the country, we actually set specific objectives for those shows to reflect the communities they're in. That includes making sure specific community stories are told, making sure we're representing the new face of Canada in terms of all the stories we do across our platforms, and then obviously changing the nature of the staff within CBC to be more representative, because the perspective you have around the editorial table obviously helps shape the content that you do.

What I would say is that it's a top priority. When we look at content, we see content reflecting communities represented. Can we do a better job? Absolutely, we can do a better job, but it is a significant priority for us.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Is there any plan in terms of communications with the various working members of the ethnic press to bring in those community voices?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: We do, and in our regional services, we have managers who connect with various stakeholders in the communities. We've certainly had partnership conversations with other broadcasters, such as APTN, and where it makes sense, we'll embark on initiatives together. Certainly, for dealing with our commitment to aboriginal stories, we've created a stand-alone aboriginal content unit, which is based in Winnipeg but also has a national mandate. We've added editorial resources dedicated to that, which is what generated the “Missing and Murdered” project, which CBC generated and which changed the nature of the conversation around that important issue.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

I just want a quick answer on this. On women's day I had asked a question about the representation of women within the CBC, in managerial and editorial staff. Do you have percentages on the number of women who hold senior positions within the CBC?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: I guess I'll start, as the woman on the panel.

In English services we have 13 senior managers. Eight of those are women, including in the key jobs of EVP of English programming, head of news, and head of programming. They're all female. At the corporate level we have seven vice-presidents. Five of those are women, including as head of English services, general counsel of the organization, and CFO.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

There's a larger question that I've been looking at. When I look at it, about 63% of CBC's funding comes publicly, which leaves a third from advertising, I presume. It's a hybrid as opposed to a purely public broadcaster that's working alongside private broadcasters. I'm just wondering, when you look at that, how does that work? We're hearing about advertising dollars, and private industry saying there is a shrinking pie. If they move to digital, there is less advertising available, and a hybrid organization is working alongside them.

Does it make more sense to render CBC fully public alongside the private broadcasters, or is there another model that would work?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: A significant portion of CBC's funding comes from its commercial activities, even in the case of CBC news.

In terms of the argument that CBC somehow is taking digital ad potential revenue away from privates, only about 1% of CBC's revenue is from digital. So I think the argument that CBC somehow is cannibalizing the business case out there is not necessarily a valid one.

We are commercial-free on radio. We have commercial services on television. Obviously we're commercial on video. We have a subscription service from where the bulk of our revenue comes, the BDUs, and the revenue we get for the news channels.

So I would say it's not feasible in the current economic climate, and I think the argument that somehow we are the cause of the ills is probably not fair.

• (0915)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I wasn't actually necessarily even going with the causing of the ills, when I was talking about it. It's just that you see in other countries that they have a fully funded public broadcaster, such as the BBC.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Right.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: We have a hybrid model.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Yes, we do.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That creates a difference. When we're looking at media concentration and local programming, my question is whether a fully public model, as opposed to a hybrid, better serves local programming.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: You will get a different kind of programming if it's commercial-free. Certainly if you look at CBC Radio, it's very different from any of its private competitors. The key to the argument is "fully funded".

At this point, a significant portion of the money for programming comes from CBC's commercial revenues.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you, Ms. Dabrusin.

We'll go to Mr. Waugh for seven minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you.

I'll just pick up on that. Radio is your most successful property, and yet we have no commercials. It's fully funded by the taxpayer. I do see your demographics increasing every year on CBC Radio. So why not?

You were out there. This is fully funded by the people of Canada, and there are no commercials.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: That's right. There are commercials around radio properties digitally, but on broadcast it is commercial-free.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's right. It seems to me, being a former broadcaster, that this market is untapped. Millions of dollars could be raised, coast to coast to coast, if we sold some advertising on your most successful property, which is radio.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: There was a time in history when CBC Radio actually had advertising on it. It was not seen as successful at different times, of course. I think for CBC Radio it would be a fundamentally different product if it was forced to absorb advertising. I think its strength is in the formats that it has.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: What is the cost of the radio programming?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: I'll have to bring that to you. I don't have the costs with me.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes, that's okay.

The budget was Christmas for CBC, \$675 million. Did you have any input with this government on a five-year strategic plan? Or was it, here's the money, go to it? Did anyone have a plan to ask for money and say what you were going to use the money for if you did get it?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Certainly, the focal point for the money in the context of news and local news was to put it back into programming. On the English side, the local services have been transforming to digital first, but at the same time we also took almost 10% of the budget out. We have some reinvestment to do to ensure sustainability and then obviously growth.

We have announced that we will be adding a local service. We will be adding a station in London, Ontario as part of our commitment to the new money. Obviously, the investment for CBC goes beyond news. There will be investment in the television schedule in our digital capabilities, in terms of fixing some of the technology pieces and other programming initiatives.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I think regional news has been all over the map.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Cormier: With respect to news services, like our colleagues at the CBC, we will of course invest in the regions where there have been cuts. We will also invest a great deal in the digital and mobile sectors, since they are growing and we must establish a greater presence in them. We will also focus on local programming and journalism. We are not seeking to return to the way Radio-Canada was before the cuts. We are looking forward.

We will make optimal investments to make the best possible programming accessible to as many Canadians as possible.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I would say your regional television has struggled. Sometimes you go to an hour-and-a-half format and then a year later you're back down to a half an hour. You still don't provide any weekend television local news.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: I would agree with your comment.

There have been very different strategies with respect to television. Radio has been a pretty static strategy in terms of local service. From where we are sitting now, our view is that the obligation for CBC is to really invest digitally.

The goal is to treat local services as an ecosystem. Our radio services are very successful, but they reach a set demographic.

● (0920)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: If we are going to provide public service journalism and public service service to millennial Canadians and younger Canadians, we have to reach them where they're consuming content, and that is on digital platforms. It's not a well-known fact and it might surprise you to know that CBC online reaches almost 52% of millennials digitally. They're engaged and they are engaging in news content but they are not engaging in that content on television.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's different from what we were told last week by *La Presse*, who said the younger people are not interested in news digitally.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: That has not been our experience.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That has not been your experience.

I looked at the bundling. I see CBC is on HD so that means I pay a fee to CBC also on these bundles, right? I mean, each channel on there gets some money.

How much money does CBC make out of Kevin Waugh?

You know what I'm saying, though. We're going to the \$25 basic bundle, but I did notice in there that each channel gets money, so CBC also gets a revenue stream from Kevin Waugh who would buy that bundle.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: It's a different service.

Our news channel is a paid service. The fee for that gets negotiated by BDU.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: They're currently renegotiating that in the context of pick and pay.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Cormier: Mr. Waugh, I would simply like to point out that CBC's main channel and Radio-Canada's main French-language channels are made available free of charge.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: In Saskatchewan I will say this. I feel for you French guys in Saskatchewan because it's such a small market, yet you're dealing with the Gravelbourgs and the Zenon Parks, and its pockets. To find resources to feed francophones in Saskatchewan or, in fact, Manitoba is very difficult, I would say. You're having a struggle.

[Translation]

Mr. Marco Dubé (Executive Director of Regional Services, French Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): I am very proud that we are still providing services to francophones in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. As part of the digital shift we have started, we will be expanding our web-based production, from morning to evening, seven days a week. We still provide radio services to francophones in those provinces.

We also offer a 6 p.m. newscast for francophones in those regions. A large part of the promise that Radio-Canada made was that it would still be there for francophones across the country, even in communities where they form a minority.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I noticed in your presentation this morning you did mention...on how to deliver more local services at less cost. Can you explain that because you are going to get a healthy increase in your budget, and we do hear there are still cuts coming down the pipe?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: I think there are two things going on. CBC did have cost reductions connected to the overall budgets, but we're also re-engineering our newsrooms to be multi-platform newsrooms. In the past, you would have had separate newsrooms for local, for radio, for television, and separate assignment processes. What we have been doing quite aggressively, probably more aggressively than most, is integrating our services. So we're having a single, multi-platform assignment process and pulling out any duplication in coverage, and then sharing the content more effectively across platforms. This has been key to our ability to be able to reinvest in augmented journalism like investigative and enterprise journalism at a time when we're actually downsizing, and it allowed us to expand our service particularly in digital mobile. We are now 18-hours-a-day continuous service on digital mobile. We've maintained our footprint on radio. We shrunk our footprint on television, and we did this with a 10% reduction in cost.

Now, we've cut too deep. We have to make some adjustments, but I think changing the way we work is key to our ability to compete in this kind of digital age.

● (0925)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): I think I've already given you a few extra seconds there, Mr. Waugh, so we'll move forward.

Monsieur Nantel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank everyone for being with us here this morning. I am always pleased to see representatives from CBC/Radio-Canada. I am a big CBC/Radio-Canada fan and very much attached to the network.

Surely some witnesses in the group are people from my generation who remember that the Canadian national anthem was followed by grand music and images from across the country and magnificent animation.

Some people have frequently dragged CBC/Radio-Canada through the mud in recent years. Personally, I never perceived it as a dusty old corporation as others did, quite the contrary. I probably see it from a Montreal perspective. I come from the Montreal region, and, as a Quebecer, I feel very well served by Radio-Canada's French services. I believe this idea of a national radio and television network and national Internet services could be emphasized more without necessarily falling into classic Liberal horn-blowing. I think you should make that a more prominent part of your mandate.

I would also like to point out that, for many years, your corporation was accused of adopting programming and an approach that were not friendly enough. I believe the opposite is true. I still remember that you were the first broadcaster, by a long shot, to include the Internet in your media offerings, while others—private interests—were definitely more afraid of it. It was your mandate to do that, and you did it very well. Your slogan has been “radio, television and the Internet” for a long time now, or at least for the past eight or nine years.

That will definitely be the subject of my better question. There are different levels of efficiency when it comes to reaching audiences on your various platforms. Things are going very well in radio on the whole. You definitely have the incredible advantage of being able to broadcast without advertising. I think the formats, offerings, types of interviews, subjects, and the cross-Canada aspect are even more striking on radio than on television, at least when it comes to news. The success that radio has achieved by comparison with the challenges facing English-language television is quite representative of what the media are experiencing in Canada. Private radio is generally doing well on the whole and has not felt the impact that has hit television.

You frequently refer to your digital developments as an easier, more economic, and more flexible way of gathering local news. We heard a great deal about that during our study. One of the obvious aspects of our study is to ensure that the linguistic communities and minorities outside Quebec have access to services. You are clearly the leading player on this issue, but the odd paradox is that you are planning to offer more services over the Internet. However, there is no Internet coverage in many of those places. How do you react to that?

Mr. Marco Dubé: High-speed Internet access in remote regions is still an issue for all Canadians and the country as a whole. It is not simply an issue for CBC/Radio-Canada.

At the same time, high-speed Internet access is expanding. Our priority is to be able to offer content as this service becomes available to Canadians. Our corporation produces content, and our first concern is to produce reporting, images, and programs. We are not responsible for the pipeline, if I may use that term.

Now I want to talk about the efficiency of our resources. Earlier you saw the story by Martine Laberge, who is our video journalist in Hearst, in northern Ontario. Video journalists are reporters who do the filming themselves, who do their own editing, and who write their own stories. They work alone.

We think this is the way of the future. We have been doing this for a long time, and we are going to develop this approach by equipping video journalists with much simpler tools. Cameras are less expensive now. We can use more smart phones. By making this part of digital coverage on our websites and on social media, we can reach audiences across the country much more efficiently.

• (0930)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Many people were troubled that you sold your satellite trucks. What were they replaced with?

Mr. Michel Cormier: We now have broadcasting methods that no longer require trucks. Let me give you an example.

When Premier Notley visited Fort McMurray, there was a bus full of journalists, and we broadcasted live from an iPhone on RDI, our mobile platforms, and Facebook Live. That is where we stand today.

We did the same thing when we covered the bombings at the Bataclan and elsewhere in Paris. We were there when the attacks took place. We broadcasted over an iPhone using what is called “Dejero technology”, which is simply a way of broadcasting live to air using a cell phone, without any loss of quality. In short, not needing to have equipment in a truck is an enormous advantage. That does not mean we do not use it when we need it, because signals are not always available.

However, the idea of equipment that must be kept in a truck will obviously be entirely obsolete in 15 years. This gives us more flexibility and costs less. So I think it is a positive development for everyone.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Absolutely.

And this technological change requires you to recruit new and versatile journalists and it is taking place on your watch based on your experience because we knew you back when it took 19 cameras to shoot “Pépinot”.

I do not know where I should direct my next question. I touched on the subject earlier, but I forgot to go back to it. In CBC/Radio-Canada's financial statements, digital investments are something of a large block. Will it be possible at some point, at least for parliamentarians, to have an idea of the investments that are being made in the various sectors—English, French, radio, television, and the Internet?

Is this a question I can ask you, or should I wait for Mr. Lacroix to be here?

Mr. Michel Cormier: We are in the process of determining how we will spend that money. It is not yet entirely decided. I assume the information is usually made available in annual reports or during appearances by board members.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I see.

Mr. Marco Dubé: I would like to add that, if you go into a regional CBC or Radio-Canada station, such as the one in Ottawa, for example, and look at how we operate, you will see that our activities are entirely integrated. In other words, the boundaries between web, television, and radio in a single station are increasingly blurred. We encourage all our teams to contribute to all platforms. For example, consider a radio program that has to expand its digital presence. This separation between platforms is fuzzier than it used to be and will be increasingly so.

I think it is important for us to stick to our mission, quite apart from technology and platforms. For the past 80 years, CBC/Radio-Canada has been faced with technological changes that have always disrupted the way we did things. As they did then, Canadians today acknowledge the value that we generate for the country as its public broadcaster.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you, Mr. Nantel. Time is up.

We'll go to Mr. O'Regan.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to see you here. My first job was as a 10-year-old reporter on *Anybody Home?* on Saturday mornings, so I'll blame you.

• (0935)

Mr. Andrew Cochran (Senior Managing Director, Strategy, CBC News, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): That was a few years ago.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: That was a few years ago.

I remember—and I think of it in Fort McMurray—when I was growing up in Goose Bay, Labrador, and we had to evacuate because of a forest fire. The CBC was our lifeline, and it is for many people who live in the north and who live in local areas.

What I want to concentrate on in my questions to you may sound provincial in the sense that I grew up in Newfoundland and Labrador, and so my examples will come from there, but where I'm going with that is with local newsstands and how we handle that nationally.

I'll take you back in time to the early 1990s, or mid-1990s, I can't remember the exact date, but *Here and Now*, which is the local supper hour newscast in St. John's, was doing extremely well. When I was growing up it was an institution. It was so pervasive that if you added up, but not per capita, the number of viewers they had in every other supper hour market—in Calgary, Toronto, Vancouver, and Halifax—that number did not equal the number of people who

watched *Here and Now*. You got rid of it, which I find astounding, as I did then. Then the *Canada Now* experiment began. Ian Hanomansing came in, and eventually the move came that it would be a half an hour of local television. I find that astounding, because if you saw any such glaring success in any other environment, and by any other company, you would immediately say, "How can we possibly learn from that, and how can we not emulate that and duplicate that in our other markets, because these guys are obviously on to something?"

Unfortunately somebody at the time—not you, this is before your time—thought better. In fact, a number of people thought better. In fact, it seems to me an entire mentality thought better, which gives me great cause for concern, because even though *Here and Now* in St. John's has gone back to its one hour, it is no longer anywhere near what it was. The private network immediately grabbed about 75% of the market share after that, because people didn't want a half an hour. They wanted an hour, and in that half an hour the news became even less than that because of weather, and sports, and the other sundry items you need to have in a supper hour newscast. It was a glaring lack of judgment, so I'm nervous that in the latest cuts—which in your eyes should be a glaring success—my little neck of the woods is probably going to suffer.

Maybe one of you could fill me in on how the most recent round of cuts is going to take them back, now that they're almost at parity with that private network.

Mr. Andrew Cochran: I'm happy to tell you that *Here and Now* is substantially back, perhaps not quite to the historic levels you're talking about, but still neck and neck with VOXM in the marketplace and vital to the life of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In fact, an example I wanted to bring to your attention about the commitment of local broadcasting to the community happened on *Here and Now* a few weeks ago. As you know, the provincial budget is a matter of considerable interest in that province right now, so our staff there turned over the whole airwaves for an hour to have the premier and the finance minister on live to talk about the budget. Maybe you were one of 700 people who sent in comments, and I answered, and we're on Facebook. It was a grand—

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: I have a direct line for my comments. It's one of the privileges of the job.

Mr. Andrew Cochran: There you go.

Absolutely *Here and Now* is vital to us and to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's one of our two most successful evening news programs, along with *Compass* in Prince Edward Island, in terms of viewers.

Interestingly, in Newfoundland and Labrador, the staff there are not only working with that program, but they're leaders in providing digital services throughout the province, and they're leading in some of our experimental activities in starting out an experiment to do a local YouTube channel for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Mr. Cochran, I'm a big fan of digital services. I use them every day, and I think you do excellent work there. I'm a big fan of CBC Radio 2. I think you do excellent work there.

Let me cut to the quick, because the word on the street is you're regionalizing everything in Halifax.

Mr. Andrew Cochran: No, what's—

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Or how much are you regionalizing in Halifax?

Mr. Andrew Cochran: Here's what has been regionalized and what hasn't. We took a decision about three years ago to change the management structure of our regions across the country. What used to be two separate CBC regions, the Maritimes and Newfoundland and Labrador, became one. I happened to be the managing director at the time and was part of that activity.

We did centralize the senior management for the region, but at the same time as doing that, we decentralized from Toronto to Halifax more and more decision-making about what would be going on in Atlantic Canada. It was movement in two directions at the same time. To some extent, it was bringing the national decisions closer to the regions.

The other thing that was done as a regionalization was to do regional late night and weekend television news. Aside from that the four morning shows, the noon show, the evening news, and the digital service are still services for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The impact has been at a senior management level and also at the late night and weekend, our two lowest watched television programs.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: The late night TV newscast and weekend news in Newfoundland and Labrador have closed.

Mr. Andrew Cochran: Late night and weekend come from Halifax.

• (0940)

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: And you know—as he said, he's been there—but with all due respect to my friends from Nova Scotia, there's no Atlantic in your broadcast market. People in St. John's are not interested in what's going on in Halifax any more than they are interested in what's going on in Toronto.

The reason I bring this up is if you listen to people on the ground and local people there, that is what they will tell you. The performance hour that you put on that's based out of Halifax nobody watches in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's that simple. It's an hour and a half from St. John's to Halifax and it's an hour and a half from Halifax to Ottawa. It's a very different place.

I wouldn't mind if I was here saying be charitable and look after my rock and that large piece of land just north of it. But it's a market that's starving for you, and it just seems to me that time and again I have seen management decisions that come, that seem to.... It's the goose that lays the golden egg in both the model and the absolute numbers of people who watch, people who crave you. And yet they often fall victim to across-the-board cuts that seem to be done with no creativity or listening to the people who are on the ground. There's no thought to that or experiments like *Canada Now*, when it worked. I don't get it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Just a quick answer, please, and then we'll move on.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: The financial pressures of CBC absolutely contributed to the decisions we made locally.

As you can appreciate, full service in every market, in multiple markets, costs a lot of money. Every community would say the same thing, that they want a full roster of local services from CBC. Communities where we're not and people would like us to be would say the same thing.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you for those questions, Mr. O'Regan.

We'll go to Mr. Waugh for seven minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm going to pick up on the venting Seamus.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: You haven't seen anything yet.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I thought it was just me who went off the wall at this.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: No, no.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: We've had private broadcasters here, and to be honest with you, the private broadcasters locally produce more news than CBC locally. You don't have a noon show locally in my province. You have a five-minute introduction at 10:55, late news. To be frank with you, you're hiring anchors, some at exorbitant wages, to do one newscast that rating-wise you're third or fourth in the market.

If we're going to get into what does local mean to the CBC, when I look at my province, you're getting destroyed because you're on either for 30 minutes or maybe you've extended it to an hour next year, and we don't see you at noon, we don't see you any other time. The anchor who does the six o'clock doesn't even do the late night show. I'd like those jobs.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: The way you're framing the question assumes that the definition of "local" is television.

We don't look at the market that way. We know there are different demographics consuming news in different ways across platforms. We know that our services do different things, but we look at local service collectively. We look at it in terms of our radio, digital, and television services.

We don't view our six o'clock broadcast as just a supper-hour team. We expect our hosting talent to be present in other spaces, including our digital platform. We see it as an ecosystem. We see television as being broadcast not only on our own airwaves, but also within social media spaces. It's a different ecosystem. It's multiple outputs and it's a collective service to the audience. The audience is moving and we feel it's our obligation to meet them where they are.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's branding. The anchors represent the station. It's pretty hard to brand your station if you only see the anchor at 6:00. Plus, you don't have a vehicle where you can peel the onion on a news story and do a 10-minute sit-down interview with someone. You give me the two-and-a-half-minute story, but you don't give me the capabilities on any of the CBC regionals to sit down and peel back the onion to get into an issue.

• (0945)

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Certainly, our radio service is framed around current affairs.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm talking TV here.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: The television service is framed around news. The digital format will do both. It'll do breaking news in depth. It's what consumers want at 6:00. They want a news program; they don't want a long-form interview program at that time of day.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I would say, looking at ratings, that you're wrong.

Mr. Andrew Cochran: I want to underscore that we no longer look at a single platform as a stand-alone platform. I can't speak to the specifics of the anchor in Saskatchewan. Generally, however, I can say that our anchors and our producers and our reporters typically are working on multiple platforms at any given time on any given day. Where they have a profile in the community, we want to leverage it to increase our connection with audiences. It could be a column online, appearances on one of the radio programs, or doing something out in the community. Our hosts and anchors are also active journalists—they're involved in the writing and the production of the program as well. Believe me, they're busy and we're trying to put them in front of the community at every possible opportunity.

[Translation]

Mr. Marco Dubé: I would like to answer that question.

I do not know whether you were referring to the French newscast or just the English one, but the people who present the news at six o'clock in the francophone markets are very much sought after on the other platforms, whether it be social media, radio, or the afternoon programs. In several cases, these people eventually become both newsreaders and line-up editors. They are more versatile. They do a range of jobs. These changes have helped us obtain funding to improve our digital services and to add Internet services, whereas we previously did not have more money to carry out our mandate.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I would say CBC has just caught up to the private industry. The privates have been doing this for years. No longer do they just put the mike on and sit in front of the camera. They've been producing news and writing it for years. I think the CBC is just catching up, if you don't mind my saying so. When I went to news conferences, you had a photographer and a reporter from English, a photographer and a reporter from the French, and now you have the digital. So you had five CBC news reporters at one event. I hope you're streamlining that.

Mr. Andrew Cochran: I take your point and I agree. The production of television has been streamlined. The difference with a CBC local person today is that they are working across all the platforms.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's good.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: We also use our local reporters on the national platform.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Good.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: You would therefore see our local reporters very present on the news channel.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I have one last question.

Talk about your use of freelancers, because your probably most famous panel is the At Issue panel on CBC, and yet they're all

freelancers. You're not even branding CBC on maybe your most important 10-minute segment on television on Thursday.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: [Inaudible—Editor] So, you said we use freelancers.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes, we saw that during the election, which could have been a conflict, but I won't go there right now.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: In our local services we use freelancers primarily as radio contributors, and certainly on the news channel, on national television, but not a lot on local TV. It allows us to bring other voices in.

Sometimes freelancers are in places that we're not, and we need access to their ability to bring us to the content.

It is a traditional thing, and it has been going on for a long time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Okay. Thank you.

I'd like go to Mr. Breton for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being with us here today.

We have looked at all kinds of figures since the start of this meeting. Unless I am mistaken, compared to the previous budget, CBC/Radio-Canada has obtained an increase of \$75 million in the first year and \$150 million a year over the next four years. That is nearly a 7.2% increase in your budget for the first year and 14.4% for subsequent years. Those are obviously sizable and significant amounts for CBC/Radio-Canada and for all Canadian citizens.

My first question is this: what are your spending priorities for those amounts? How will they benefit Canadians?

● (0950)

Mr. Michel Cormier: I can talk to you about Radio-Canada and new services but not about the rest.

As I said, we will not be rebuilding what we had five years ago. We are extensively developing digital services and mobility since that has to be done via smart phones if we want to attract a younger new audience. We know that. Consequently, we want to develop our digital activities as a way to leverage the rest of our programming.

Let me give you an example. In the case of the "Enquête" episode that featured aboriginal women in Val d'Or, which caused quite a buzz, we did not just produce a television program. Starting at noon, we began broadcasting capsules for the digital audience containing statements by these women. This gives us leverage in getting other people interested in television. They can thus get informed about a single subject in a variety of ways. We are working hard to expand our content distribution strategy. We want to ensure we have several formats and can develop new digital formats to attract new audiences with quality journalism.

These are some of the basics of what we want to do. As I said, we also have to invest in original content because everyone now has access to general and daily news. What distinguishes Radio-Canada is that we practise original journalism. We even have a Facebook presence. Broadcasters and the media demand original content that is consistent with and confirms Radio-Canada's brand as the public broadcaster. Consequently, in a fragmented world in which a lot of rumours and news circulate, our mandate is to ensure that we continue producing high-quality content. We have to go digital for all the benefits that entails, and we also have to ensure that people can find that product. As you know, an entire debate is under way on the phenomenon of "discoverability". So it is very important for people to be able to find Radio-Canada's content.

Generally speaking, those are more or less the key areas we are working on. The idea is to continue producing quality content and to be in more places for longer, locally, nationally, and internationally. This is very important for us, in addition to ensuring that we have the digital leverage to drive that content and to ensure people know how to find it.

Mr. Marco Dubé: Allow me to add that the three objectives for our regional services are as follows.

The first is to make the digital shift. Here I am echoing what Mr. Cormier said on this point. In each of our major regions, we have to ensure that we are active on the Internet with our regional websites 18 hours a day, seven days a week, covering the news when it happens, and that we are there for Canadians in their regions with regional content when they decide to access our digital platforms. This is the plan that we announced last year and that we will be consolidating over the coming year.

The second is to restore a service that we lost as a result of the cuts. In consultations with the francophone minority communities in the west and Ontario, people clearly told us that the loss of more social and cultural programs—we were forced to cut them—had had an impact on those communities. Here we are talking about everything that was not information, news, or public affairs. Cultural programs are about a certain activity in the communities. This is important for them, and we are the only ones who do this kind of program. If we do not do it, that will be a loss for the communities. Consequently, we will be restoring a number of those programs in some of those regions, and we are in the process of taking action to address this question.

The third concerns the succession issue, more particularly in the regions. When we get out of the major centres such as Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, and Gatineau, we experience quite significant problems recruiting young journalists, directors, and producers of digital content for Radio-Canada. We have to invest money to ensure that the next generation joins our stations across the country and that we are able to offer the services that Canadians expect.

Those are the three objectives for reinvestment in regional services.

Thank you.

• (0955)

[English]

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: I was just going to finish the story.

On the English side, we are investing in local, fixing some of the pressure points in terms of the cuts we have made, and expanding our service, with the first station announced in London, Ontario. We are also investing in international coverage, and you will see us create more pop-up bureaus through CBC News. For the rest of the English services, it is investment in content, particularly dramatic content, and in our digital capabilities.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Okay, we will go to Mr. Waugh again, for seven minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: First of all, thank you for your three services that you just talked about.

I hear the French got cut back. I don't know if it got cut back as much as the English portion of it. You are going to get some money. How does this work on CBC? I know there is radio, there is digital, there is English television, and there is French. Do you get the same amount of money as the English on your budget?

Mr. Marco Dubé: For the regions, we get a similar amount, but I would say that budgets on the French side are applied to the priorities on the French side, and budgets on the English side are applied to the priorities on the English side. In this case, for the first year, it is a similar amount.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: How much would that be?

Mr. Marco Dubé: For the regional services, it is about \$3 million that will be applied for the first year of the reinvestment.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That is out of the \$75 million that the new government has promised you.

Mr. Marco Dubé: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: It is the same with yours. Is that right?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: On the English side, it is \$3.5 million to news, with \$2 million going into local services, notwithstanding the expansion piece, which would be separate.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: What is "local services"?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: It is anything that is local, for locals. It would be local radio, local television, and local digital that is based in the community, and also some of our music services.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I will compliment you. I have seen many cameramen from western Canada down here on professional development over the last six weeks, many from Saskatchewan, so I think your organization does a very good job on professional development. I would say that CBC does a way better job than any private broadcaster in this country. You seem to have a higher level of integrity, if you don't mind my saying that.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Marco Dubé: Thank you very much for that comment. That is very kind.

I would add that, with regard to the digital shift, our first priority was to train employees and to ensure that those who were with us were familiar with the business, mission, and values of the public broadcaster so that they could make the shift to new technologies and new tools.

We have trained more than 1,000 people for the digital shift across the company. They have acquired all kinds of new skills.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Mr. Waugh is going to share his time with Mr. Van Loan.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): In terms of your focus on local news, out of Toronto, what do you consider the local market covered by Toronto radio and television?

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: It is the greater Toronto area, so the 416 and the 905. That is the primary focus in terms of the local Toronto station.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'm in the greater Toronto area, but I think you might have heard me say it has been literally years since I've seen a CBC camera in my constituency. I see one from CTV maybe every third or fourth weekend. It used to be every weekend. Usually when something breaks, you have someone on the phone, and a map, and they declare that this is happening north of the GTA. It's actually in the GTA, but they always say that.

If you'd looked into what I've said in the past, you might have a comment on the way that the East Gwillimbury-Georgina-Northern York region is just not on the map as far as CBC is concerned.

• (1000)

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: We've experimented with putting bureaus within the city of Toronto to try to do a better job of covering, but I take your point. I think we strive to hit the most important stories on any given day for all of Toronto, wherever they live. Could we do a better job of reflecting the different communities in Toronto? Absolutely.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Certainly, the impression, even for folks who live in parts of old metro Toronto, is that CBC is the "south of St. Clair" station. I can tell you, going to door to door during elections, I see what people are watching at the news hour, and it is CTV and Global all the way, in my neck of the woods. I think that's because, occasionally, they show up. Occasionally they cover local stories there. They just don't see that with CBC.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: We are currently in the process of resetting our Toronto programming strategy, and this has been an active discussion, particularly with regard to the television products. I think the radio piece is quite successful across the GTA. Hopefully, you'll see improvement on that front.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I was saying that on the radio side it used to be very, very different, primarily because a guy named Peter Gzowski was actually based up there. With his departure, it was like we disappeared.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: Right.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I have one more question.

With regard to pooling resources, you've partnered with Global and you've partnered with CTV to cut costs. Just talk about that,

because there has been resentment in the past about private versus public, but at least you're now in the same room talking. Some of the pooling has worked; some hasn't.

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: News organizations for a long time have pooled around certain events to save costs. Sometimes it's story-based and you negotiate a pool around the story. Certainly, CBC, like other broadcasters, subscribes to syndicated services to augment our ability to cover wherever we need to be, wherever news breaks.

We've also entered into partnerships with some of the new media companies around certain pieces of coverage and content, and we're open to any conversation. I think that, for all of us, the idea is to bring value to our journalism and spend our money where we can differentiate. If we're all going to be covering a news conference in essentially the same way, why would we do it three times? Why not share what is going to be the same base clip content for everybody?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Well, you would be a little different, wouldn't you? You'd get the video, but you'd still need the reporter.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Cormier: Our last major co-operative effort with our competitor TVA was on the funeral of René Angélil, Céline Dion's husband. It was a bit unusual, given that we are talking here about quite a competitive television environment. However, we pool resources for major political events, whether it be covering the leaders' debates or election campaigns, particularly during the tours of the political leaders. However, it is practically limited to those aspects.

Our activities are quite different when it comes to news. We have our national and international mandate, whereas TVA targets a Quebec audience. Our editorial priorities are also quite different. I think that partly explains why we do not co-operate very often. However, whenever possible and when it works for both networks to pool resources, we co-operate. For national events, we also join the pool of the CBC and the Global Network.

[English]

Ms. Jennifer McGuire: We also partner with newspapers, particularly around investigative projects. When CBC did the investigation into the Boy Scouts, that was with the *Los Angeles Times*. We've done investigations with the *Toronto Star* certainly, around the Panama papers, as you've heard.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Okay, thank you.

I'm going to Mr. Samson for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I quite agree with Mr. Waugh about the cuts. CBC/Radio-Canada has had a diminished presence in the past few years, and that has left a gap, particularly in the rural areas. Listening to Mr. Waugh, I thought it was unfortunate that he was not part of the previous Conservative government. He definitely could have tried to convince it not to make those cuts. They did not leave much for the regions. There is virtually no CBC/Radio-Canada news in the rural and local communities.

In addition, my colleagues in Nova Scotia noted on several occasions during the last election campaign, and even on election night, that the Radio-Canada people pronounced my name in English. Several emails were sent to Radio-Canada that evening to point out that my name should be pronounced in French. It was a bit disappointing that they had to do that.

People from my community who support me noted that I was the only Acadian candidate to run in Nova Scotia. We are talking here about 11 ridings in which there were at least three candidates in each one, so at least 33 people. I was the only Acadian, but no one there was aware of the fact. Consequently, no comments were made on the subject, and, in addition, my name was mispronounced.

My colleagues claim that Radio-Canada slipped up on that occasion. I am not the one who said so.

•(1005)

Mr. Michel Cormier: I apologize if we mispronounced your name. I was familiar with it since I am from Moncton. The Nova Scotia Samsons are well-known. If we did not talk about you that much, perhaps it was because you were so successful that all the Atlantic provinces went red before the election started. We focused less on the details of the provincial races.

All joking aside, Mr. Dubé can tell you about local coverage, but, as regards the network, I do not think regional coverage should be summarized on the 10 o'clock newscast. That is often the problem.

With RDI, we are in the Atlantic region and Nova Scotia every day. We cover the event of the day. Some of our people are on live all day providing that coverage. I invite you to check that out. We also invested a lot in the region. At the time, we even had a bureau in Cape Breton. We kept it up for a few years but shut it down in the wake of the cuts. We wanted the most significant communities in Nova Scotia, which are not all in St. Mary's Bay or Halifax, to be represented.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you for your comments.

I have a second question for you.

What percentage of the new investments that the government has announced and that my colleagues have mentioned will be directly allocated to local news, including news intended for official language minority communities?

Mr. Marco Dubé: Thank you for your question.

As I said earlier, approximately \$3 million will be reinvested in regional services across the country this year. With regard to news for minority communities, we have 13 television stations outside Montreal, seven of which are located outside Quebec. We are obviously talking about the Moncton station here, but also about our entire presence in eastern Canada.

This funding will be invested in the three priorities that I mentioned earlier and that I will not repeat. Most of that funding will definitely be invested first and foremost in digital content production. That is what people increasingly want. If the next generations, your children and grandchildren, develop a relationship with Radio-Canada, it will be via their phones, tablets, and computers. It is a historic occasion for us to have additional funding available to offer services. In the current conditions, we will definitely be focusing our efforts on digital content production and our connection with the communities via mobile devices in the digital space.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would like to add—

Mr. Michel Cormier: We are developing a new national coverage strategy. We no longer merely want to show what is going on in your village or what mainly interests the people in your town or region. We want to see, for example, how people in your community are experiencing issues such as physician-assisted dying. How are you experiencing these major issues? That enriches the national dialogue on these major questions. We are showing how people in various regions experience the same problems. This is very enriching for the majority audience in Quebec. We get very positive feedback every time we do it.

So there are two aspects to our way of talking about Nova Scotia, for example. The first is local coverage. It is more mobile and directly related to local issues at every moment of the day. The second is a willingness to cover national news based on the way the major issues affect the regions.

I hope that will start showing up on the screen within the next few months.

•(1010)

Mr. Darrell Samson: In response to the question my colleague asked earlier about the number of women in high-level or executive positions, Ms. McGuire explained that it was 7 out of 13 in English services. How many are there in the French services?

Mr. Michel Cormier: I think I will answer that question.

It is about half and half on the vice-president's management committee. As for the overall figures for the corporation, it is approximately 46% or 47%. It is 47.5% for senior executives and 47.6% for employees as a whole. We have almost achieved equality, but we of course have to monitor the situation.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

I have one final question for you.

In light of this new investment, what is your plan for regions that do not always have access to television, the Internet, or other media? That may include Newfoundland and Labrador, the north, and all the regions.

Mr. Marco Dubé: Could you clarify your question? Are you referring to what we were discussing earlier? Are you talking about Internet access in general or the services we provide?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Some places in Canada still do not have access to CBC/Radio-Canada services, whether it be on television, radio, the Internet, or other technology platforms.

Mr. Marco Dubé: Generally speaking, everyone who has Internet access has access to all CBC/Radio-Canada services. They are in a region that we serve since we serve all regions across the country. Consequently, it is hard for me to be any more specific than that. I think the major issue is obviously Canadians' access to broadband Internet. That is obviously not our responsibility.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We will resolve that.

Mr. Marco Dubé: We are pleased to hear that.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Nantel, for a final question.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): You have seven minutes.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Seven minutes, that's perfect.

[Translation]

As I said a little earlier, I watch and listen to CBC/Radio-Canada a lot, and many people in my family, in Montreal, Quebec, and across Canada watch and listen to it as well. You must have phenomenal ratings among certain groups. Anyone who watches and listens to CBC/Radio-Canada does it a lot.

The changes resulting from the recent cuts were striking for regular listeners. In the evening, for example, they might see a feature on an illegal landfill site and then hear the audio from the same piece on the news the next day. That is irritating for someone who normally has the opportunity to hear different features on other subjects or on the same subject but from a different angle.

Perhaps those savings were necessary. An effort was very obviously made. I wanted to congratulate you because I think you took a pragmatic approach and managed the situation well. True, it is not as pleasant as it was, but in some instances, having two reporters reporting two similar stories at the same time was a luxury.

On the other hand, one might have doubts about the efficiency of that arrangement. Everyone knows I am not giving up on CBC/Radio-Canada's current board of directors. However, this morning I learned that the Radio-Canada news centre, which, unless I am mistaken, was established no more than 15 or 20 years ago, may be demolished and moved elsewhere.

Do you think that is the best possible use of the funding? There is new funding now, and that is typical. If I buy a big box of cookies, I will eat more of them. If we give you this money, which you really needed to carry out your mandate, do you not think we should be completely informed about the various development plans for the site? The most recent parts of the building will probably be

demolished or repurposed—perhaps to accommodate two or three convenience stores—instead of being a news centre, which, unless I am mistaken, cost approximately \$40 million.

• (1015)

Mr. Michel Cormier: I am not going to comment on projects that also involve the private sector. That is the subject of some quite specific negotiations. All we can say is that the plan for a new home for Radio-Canada was also made necessary by certain technological changes. That decision was based on a whole set of factors. I will not go back over them because I would not want to discuss elements that are being negotiated. We do not yet know all the intended purposes of projects submitted for certain parts of the building.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I am going to put that question to a journalist, and perhaps I will find out.

Mr. Michel Cormier: That is all to your credit.

As regards the news, you said that sometimes you listen to television journalists on the radio. That is not just the result of budget cuts. Our journalists work on multiple platforms now, on the web, radio, and television. We of course try to avoid repeating the television voice-over on radio. We still have journalists who do most of their work on radio and others on television. Some stories lend themselves more readily to radio than to television.

We just sent one of our journalists, Sylvain Desjardins, our Paris radio correspondent, to Africa. He has only done radio to date. These are difficult assignments that sometimes come across better on radio. There are eye-witness accounts and so on.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That leads to the use of several platforms.

Mr. Michel Cormier: Absolutely, but we try to cast journalists who are the best fit for the story being reported. For a news conference, what we call “convenience news”, a journalist will do both. On the other hand, we have divided up news depending on what is ongoing. Often a journalist will do breaking news, as it is called, up-to-the-minute news on a single subject, and we will subsequently assign a second journalist who will go a little further and research the story, or as Mr. Vaugh said, peel the onion. That provides instantaneous coverage of the story and a slightly closer look at the issue behind it.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: We will always remember the great pride Bernard Derome showed when he referred to Radio-Canada as the news leader. He must be very proud of the work done by someone like Jean-François Bélanger, who can switch from a story as dramatic as the events at the Bataclan to an item on birds of prey attacking seagulls on La Croisette, in Cannes.

Sometimes great initiatives are taken on other networks. I often watch TVA in the morning. What that channel does regionally is exemplary. I always wonder why Radio-Canada does not do a systematic regional review more often. I am not talking about RDI, but rather about Radio-Canada's main channel. I was looking at the Radio-Canada Moncton site this morning and learned that the reassignment of judges in New Brunswick was being arranged "among friends". That is news. Would you consider a more methodical review of this kind and mention what is going on here and there in the regions? You have the technology to do it.

Mr. Michel Cormier: On "RDI matin", we have people everywhere.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: On RDI, yes, but I am talking about Radio-Canada's first channel

Mr. Michel Cormier: Our correspondent Michèle Brideau is in Moncton every morning. The first channel will not rebroadcast RDI's programming. Youth programming is on the air at that time. That is general interest television.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I am talking about TVA and RDI. When you are an avid news consumer, you watch RDI. I thought it was possible to reflect the Canadian community as a whole. However, you seem to be saying that is not particularly useful.

Earlier you mentioned "discoverability". I expect a great deal from the major consultations Minister Joly referred to. I would like to know what you think about that. You say everything is on the table. Do you think CBC/Radio-Canada is in favour of a fuller representation of broadcasting services on the Internet operated in whole or in part in Canada? What is your position on all that?

Mr. Michel Cormier: Talks have started on that point. I will not present a position on behalf of Radio-Canada and the CBC this morning. What I can tell you, however, is that digital is a major asset in enabling us to do so.

Consider the example of radio. We just launched a new service called Première PLUS, which is both a catch-up TV and podcast service. We are developing strategies to showcase our archives, which are national treasures. All that will enable Canadians to discover this new content. If they have missed a program when it was broadcast at a specific time during the day, it will be readily accessible later on. We will also make them easier to find. The same is true for tou.tv. This is quite a successful service for watching in catch-up mode and even for certain original digital productions.

• (1020)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I entirely agree with you.

Mr. Michel Cormier: We are proceeding in the same way for news. We want to ensure that digital also helps us showcase our content and archives and catch up on content we may have missed.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I asked the question because I think CBC/Radio-Canada must champion our policies.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): We're going to have to shut it down pretty soon.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Cormier: Do you mean it must be the champion of digital? That is what we want as well.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That is why I wanted to hear your views on the subject. You cannot make decisions before the policy is adopted or before the changes occur.

Mr. Michel Cormier: I do not think we can escape digital.

Mr. Marco Dubé: I would add that the plan we put in place two years ago is leading us toward a quite substantial digital shift. The new funding will enable us to achieve that and to see it through. So when you say, "CBC/Radio-Canada, champion of digital", I say: absolutely. When we talk about the future of local news—because it is this committee's objective to find solutions to that issue—CBC/Radio-Canada on a digital platform is a solution to that problem, a solution that is good and efficient and that people are eager to see.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: So we need more network.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

That does end our time. We've gone a little bit over, but we started a little bit late.

I want to thank our four executives here from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation who have been with us this morning. We thank you for your presentation, but also the depth of the answers that you've been able to supply to us as well. Thanks to the panels for the questions that we've had and the information that we've been able to get this morning.

I do have a couple of questions that I had myself. I will give them to the clerk and maybe we can provide them to you and get some written answers back at some point. They were in regard to the staffing breakdowns by provinces and some of those things.

We have a bit of an in camera meeting. We'll allow everyone a minute to vacate the room if they're not a member of the committee or staff who deal with any of the committee members.

Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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