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Chair

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld

Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (1300)

[*English*]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): Welcome, everybody.

Thank you very much to our witness, Philip Tunley, who's here by video conference from Toronto.

My understanding is that Mr. Henheffer is not going to be able to make it, so we have just the one witness today.

This is our first meeting of our study on the state of the free press.

Philip Tunley is the President of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression. We're very pleased to have you with us, Mr. Tunley. We'll start with your comments for about 10 minutes.

Mr. Philip Tunley (President, Board of Directors, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon to the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of CJFE.

I am currently the president, although you should know that I'm not a journalist. I'm actually a lawyer. My practice includes representing, defending and supporting the media in Canada. That's my claim to be the president at the present time.

In my remarks, I'd briefly like to touch on three key areas of the environment surrounding journalism today.

If I may start with the government environment, I think the committee knows it's been a challenging year for the media and free expression, in Canada and around the world. I'll give just three examples out of many, obviously, that could have been chosen. In the Middle East, first of all, I think as everyone's aware, we have an allied country whose government, according to U.S. security and intelligence services, may be responsible for the brutal murder of a Washington Post journalist in that country's own embassy. We usually think of embassies as a safe haven for travellers. This is one instance, but it's not the only one.

In the United States, we have a president claiming, in the United States district court, that he has absolute discretion to strip a long-standing, long-accredited member of the White House Correspondents' Association of his hard pass and his access to the White House and ultimately, of his career as a journalist.

Here in Ontario, we have a premier who believes he can divert taxpayers' money, provided to support the legislative and constituency responsibilities of his caucus, to fund his own private news outlet called Ontario News Now.

Those are three examples, all government actions. In my view, how Canadians and how Canadian laws and institutions react to these and other events in the government environment will be critical tests of our commitment, not just to the free press but also to the rule of law.

If I turn then to the economic environment, again, the committee will well understand the business climate for news media is another problem area. At a very high level—although there are lots of studies that go into more detail—two main causes are cited. The first is a major draw of advertising revenue away from traditional media that are involved in journalism, as we traditionally understand it, and towards social media that are not involved in journalism. That's the first cause. The other is a serious decline in audiences, particularly and significantly among younger generations.

It's really in that context that I looked at the finance minister's recent announcements, which include a trial balloon, I would say, on possible measures to address the resulting financial pressures on media. I have a number of points. First of all, this has rightly begun as a consultation, not a prescription, and I think that is a good thing. Government funding of our free press is controversial, even among journalists. It will be essential, for the government and for Parliament, to hear strongly held opposing views, on both sides, before choosing among options in this area.

I'm happy to take your questions on those issues, but I offer this. One of the options put forward in the finance minister's recent statement would give the tax credit to subscribers, rather than directly to media outlets. I have to say that appeals to me because it directly addresses one of the two underlying causes that I have just identified, which is the problem of declining audiences. This leads me to another thought. What about a tax credit for advertisers who place their advertising in major media?

● (1305)

Obviously, these options, however you structure them, are not going to completely avoid the need for a process to identify those outlets that should receive public subsidy, presumably because they are contributing to our values and our goals for a free press in Canada. This is where most of the debate and controversy arises. It's not an easy topic and we won't solve it in this hour, I'm sure.

However, these options would give both the public and advertisers a say in which media receive how much of the available government funding, if there is to be any. They also, I think importantly, subject the media who receive those subsidies to at least some basic market disciplines in terms of earning the support that the government may be prepared to offer or at least make available.

Lastly, I want to briefly turn to the legal environment, obviously the area that I know most directly and the best. In this area, I think we have a little more cause for optimism. A number of developments in recent years have been positive in, I think, the view of everyone who deals with media and represents their interests in the legal process.

The first, of course, was the passage by Parliament last year of the Journalistic Sources Protection Act. This brings long overdue protection to a critical area of news reporting, which is the protection of sources. I think you as parliamentarians all know that the ability to speak to the press off the record and to give background without attribution is critical. The discourse between sources and journalists and protecting that discourse, that discussion and that exchange of information from undue intervention in the legal system is critical.

The interpretation of the protections for journalists and sources created by that act is already before the Supreme Court of Canada in a hearing that will take place in the spring. We look forward to the court's interpretation.

The second legislative initiative I think is worth noting. Many provinces, including recently the Province of Ontario, have now enacted anti-SLAPP laws. Strategic lawsuits against public participation are, unfortunately, still far too common in Canada. They include actions brought by large corporations in Canada and others. Recent decisions by our Ontario Court of Appeal interpreting the new Ontario statute are very welcome in giving strong effect to the deterrent aspects of the legislation, particularly in terms of litigation that targets free speech.

I think Parliament has before it currently in the Senate the reform of the federal Access to Information Act. CJFE has contributed to that process recently, and we look forward to your deliberations.

In terms of the courts, courts across Canada continue to implement recent decisions by the Supreme Court that have strengthened key defences in libel actions. The defence of fair comment on matters of public interest is of particular importance to your deliberations, and that was strengthened by the court some years ago in WIC Radio. The defence of responsible communication, which was developed by the court and accepted by the court recently in Grant v. Torstar, has been applied now several times and is a very welcome addition to the defences for appropriate media reporting in our court system.

Where I think I would identify a need for more protective legislation and more judicial awareness and sensitivity is in terms of the role of the media reporting on our criminal justice system. I say, unfortunately, publication bans, whether they are imposed by statute or discretionary on the part of the judges sitting on criminal cases, really seem to be increasingly the norm, not the exception. I say it should be the exception, because our charter defines the right to a fair trial. Everybody talks about a right to a fair trial. It's actually the right to a fair and public trial. The public nature of a criminal trial is very important, and the ability—

● (1310)

The Chair: Sorry, could you come to your conclusion? It has been 10 minutes.

Mr. Philip Tunley: Really, that was it.

The other aspect of the criminal system that is problematic is the production and assistance orders that are routinely made by the RCMP and other police outlets.

In summary, there's a lot for this committee to be concerned about, but also lots of progress that you can build on in the work of this committee.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Tunley, for your presentation.

As a reminder, of course, our committee is a subcommittee of the foreign affairs committee. It's not a legislative committee, so our study is global in scope. We will be looking at the state of the free press around the world.

With that, of course, part of this discussion is to see what scoping areas, thematically or even country-specific, we could be looking at in our study.

I will start the questions in that regard with Mr. Anderson, for seven minutes.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being with us here today.

To start with, is there a market economy for media, for it to be able to stand on its own two feet economically, or do we by necessity require taxpayers' money to support the media industry right now?

Mr. Philip Tunley: The free press has always been independent and will always find a way to fund its activities. There are other sources besides public money to support it. In the past, there has been support from political movements, from business leaders and from all areas.

At this time, the real challenge economically is the competition from social media. It's about getting the message out, obviously, but it's also about reporting on what's happening in Canada and around the world.

Mr. David Anderson: Would the position of your organization be, then, that the taxpayers have some type of responsibility to protect the industry from basically being uncompetitive because of changing technology?

Would your organization take that position, that there's some necessity for taxpayers' money to be involved in supporting media right now, or would you not see that as a necessity?

Mr. Philip Tunley: I would repeat what I said. The question you're asking would be controversial among journalists. You will hear different views on both sides and you'll see that in the commentary on it right now.

As a spokesman for the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, I have to say that there are times when it's more important for government to step up. This is a particularly challenging time in terms of business and other options for funding. There's room for government action at the present time.

Mr. David Anderson: How do you avoid, I'll call it "contamination", or how do you promote independence by anyone who's receiving government money?

As political leaders, we're accused of not being able to take more than a $150 or $200 gift or it will influence us, yet we see a massive commitment right now towards funding media in this country.

Around the world we see governments intimidating and influencing media. How do we avoid that? It's almost an inherent thing that happens when people receive government money, that they feel an obligation then to support it.

● (1315)

Mr. Philip Tunley: The two suggestions I made in terms of routing the funding, if there is to be public funding, through subscribers or advertisers is a way to distance it. It takes the direct decision-making out of government hands. There's also the suggestion of setting up an expert panel.

At the end of the day, there won't be much controversy around which outlets today really are serving the interests of society and a free press, reporting stories on a current basis that are of interest to the press, that are supportive of our democratic process. There won't be a lot of controversy around that. It will be the major media, not the social media, that are doing that to a very large extent, not exclusively—

Mr. David Anderson: Are you saying it will be the mainstream media that will present that information better than social media does?

Mr. Philip Tunley: What I'm saying is that when you talk about funding the free press, you're talking about funding the fact-finding process, the news gathering process, which is really only undertaken by the major media and very few new online media outlets. I think we all know who they are.

Those are the ones who are doing the job of really ferreting out stories independently rather than just reacting to an ongoing political debate.

Mr. David Anderson: I'm not sure it will be as simple as that, but I want to ask you a little bit about the notion of a government-appointed committee to determine who can actually access those tax credits. You seem to be comfortable with that notion. It would make some of us very uncomfortable. Could you comment on that as well?

Mr. Philip Tunley: I'm comfortable with it because we do it in all kinds of other areas. We set up arm's-length expert committees to fund the arts. We set up arm's-length expert committees to fund a variety of activities—universities—that need some independence from government to function effectively. I don't think there's any lack of will on the part of government or on the part of journalists to work out an institution that would work in our industry.

Mr. David Anderson: I get the sense that you don't think there is widespread cynicism about mainstream media. I certainly run into that in my riding. I'm just wondering if you would be interested in commenting on that.

People get their information primarily from Facebook and social media now. It's not from the mainstream media, when you look at the survey results. Are you suggesting we need to counter that, so that we elevate the one and then try to bring the other one down to the more realistic notion that it's more of a social conversation than it is a news outlet or venue?

Mr. Philip Tunley: I think the answer lies in our notions of what is the journalism that is worth support. I think a lot of what appears on social media is not in that category. Some is, but not always. Journalism, to be independent, has to be actively fact-gathering and actively questioning those in power. A lot of social media is not. It's in fact the opposite of those things.

Mr. David Anderson: That's interesting to me. I think there was a study out of Harvard University about CNN's coverage of the president's news in the United States. In their opinion, 93% or 97% of it was slanted in one direction. Would you consider that to be unbiased coverage from the mainstream news media?

For my second question, and I think I'm going to run out of time here—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. David Anderson: I'd like to have you talk a little about VPNs—virtual private networks—around the world, and the necessity for them. We have nations that are now banning them. I've talked to Internet security people who don't understand why we don't all subscribe to them. I'm interested in your perspective on that as well.

Mr. Philip Tunley: I'm not an expert on private networks. I won't have a lot to say about that. It's kind of the opposite of journalism to be on a private network.

The Chair: You are out of time, in any case.

We'll go to Ms. Khalid for seven minutes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your testimony today. I think that journalism and journalists are basically the watchdogs of any democracy around the world, and their role is very important in ensuring that governments and states are acting transparently. The public has a right to know what is going on.

With that, I want to talk a bit about the impact of this phenomenon that is fake news, and how that impacts the freedom of expression of investigative journalism and mainstream journalism. We've seen, around the world, allegations of fake news impacting elections or swaying public opinion. What is your take on that?

● (1320)

Mr. Philip Tunley: I would want to distinguish between what we can all objectively look at and verify is, in fact, fake news. It is knowingly reporting facts that are false, and is designed to disrupt and interfere with our democratic process, or other.... That, to me, is fake news.

There is also the phenomenon of the accusation. It's an easy accusation to make. It's one of these buzzwords now that has been popularized. The hallmark of good journalism is that, when challenged—"You are fake news"—a good journalist or media outlet can say, "No, here are my sources. This is how we went through the process of verifying, for your benefit, what we are saying."

That, to my mind, going back to the earlier questioning, is what distinguishes what's worth supporting in any kind of system, whether it's in Canada or around the world—the journalism that is able to back up its claims and statements.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Do you think the phenomenon of the Internet and the easy access to information has created issues for the reporting of journalists to be able to get that news out accurately to the public of any state?

Mr. Philip Tunley: I think it's created opportunities that some media have yet to fully exploit. I think that's one of the reasons why they are investing in the Internet as a way of getting their word out.

Of course, the challenge is how do you charge for that? So much of the Internet is free. If you are going to fund a fact-gathering activity that has validity, as journalism does, you can't give it away. I think that's the challenge. The Internet is a wonderful thing. It's like the printing press. It's like all the things that eventually will make free expression greater and more effective and reach more people, but its first introduction is causing some serious disruptions, which I think are a reason to consider measures to sustain what we truly value in the media.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: In this subcommittee, we hear a lot from journalists as they try to report on abuses that occur around the world, often risking their lives to do that. Can I get your thoughts on the international community's response or proactive measures to protect journalism and freedom of the press?

Mr. Philip Tunley: One of the greatest initiatives that I've been involved in at CJFE—I became involved after its initiation—was the creation of the IFEX network. International Freedom of Expression Exchange is a group of, I think, now over 100 journalism organizations worldwide, which exchange information and actively intervene to protect journalists. At CJFE, we have a program called journalists in distress, where we contribute funding when journalists in foreign countries are persecuted or face death.

We're really privileged, in a country like Canada, to be able to play that role. We are constantly looking for new ways to intervene and support the free press in other countries, which is so critical to their emergence from dictatorship into mature participants in the international community.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge of our time for journalists, given the climate, given the opportunity of social media and the Internet, and also given the rise of extremism and extremist views across the world, like fascism and populism? What do you think is the biggest challenge that journalists are facing within our time and how can we address those challenges?

● (1325)

Mr. Philip Tunley: I wish it was just one. You've listed many. Unfortunately, many governments around the world feel they can act with impunity and they wish to act against journalists because they are the first line of critique. Very shortly, after the free press in a given country is undermined and is subverted, you will find the independent bar and the independent judges are the next in line.

Journalists are the first to be exposed, when a government is seeking to implement repressive measures, because what they want to do is protect what they are doing from scrutiny from around the world and from pressure from the United Nations. It's really a critical gatekeeper and I think that's why it needs to be maintained with all our efforts. Not only in Canada, but we have a role to support journalism around the world, if we want to have vibrant economic and political partners in the community of nations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Ms. Hardcastle for seven minutes. We will be doing another three-minute round for everybody afterwards.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair; and thank you, Mr. Tunley.

I want to stay on the international human rights lens of press freedom right now.

We do know that the independence of major print and broadcast outlets is being undermined. We know that the press freedom we deal with in international human rights is coming under pressure, not just in major democracies but in repressive states as well. There was a time when our major democracies had healthy and viable news outlets that had international bureaus. What is your observation on how that is changing and how that is contributing to weakening the coverage of human rights and the link of that?

I would like it if you could try to focus on that thread instead of this business model aspect and these other pressures, because we could go down a rabbit hole. I have a journalism degree. I think we should be teaching how to tell the difference between journalism and opinion columns that are polished up. We should start doing this probably when kids are learning how to read.

That said, let's talk about some of the international coverage done by bona fide news sources, and perhaps even the threats to journalists who try to do so today.

Mr. Philip Tunley: The ideal of one journalist organization that can cover news all around the world is very challenging to support today. Fewer and fewer media can rise to that level of activity.

What we're seeing, and we see it in investigative journalism within Canada as well, is a lot more collaboration. There's a lot more networking, which is essential. What it requires is the creation and encouragement of a community of journalists where we recognize and respect good journalism wherever we find it and we agree to use the best of the profession within Canadian media.

That's a critical point.

There are other points you're raising as well. It's linked to the economic model, unfortunately, because we can't afford to do it outlet by outlet anymore, if we ever could.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Do you see a correlation to the assertion or the attack on journalism when it's at its weakest?

In the heyday of traditional media, meaning before social media started to be used more often and before that kicked in, would there be something such as Egyptian authorities blocking hundreds of websites for allegedly supporting terrorism, including news sources? This is a fairly new form of attack on journalism, isn't it?

Can you differentiate or expand on that idea of why there's such....?

● (1330)

Mr. Philip Tunley: First of all, you have to realize where the problem comes from.

Actually, social media or citizen journalism of all kinds is a fantastic new resource for reporters and journalists around the world to get a view of current events in distant places. These types of initiatives by governments that you're describing are designed to shut that down, are designed to stop the sources of information that are now becoming available that were never available before. It was very easy to stop people leaving the country or newspapers leaving the country. It's very hard to stop video from spreading through the Internet, video that is, of course, high-quality, fact....

The difficulty that journalists face, and which still requires a lot of discipline on their part, is to separate what's real video, genuinely taken and unedited, untampered with, from the vast amounts of false information that governments and others are generating and circulating on the Internet.

There's still a challenge. Part of it is a technological challenge. However, that's what good journalism is about. There's actually an opportunity here. The reactions of governments such as the one you've mentioned have to be seen in that context.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Thank you.

Further to that, in your opening comments you mentioned the things happening in the Middle East. That was an early onset phenomenon so that we could all start thinking about journalism and some of these implications.

Do you have any take-aways or recommendations for this committee, basically coming from that, on what you think our approach should be in terms of international human rights facilitation?

Mr. Philip Tunley: A very hard choice has to be made as to how far you push other countries. There's a diplomatic choice to be made, but I think that for journalists, the murder of Mr. Khashoggi is so brazen and extreme that it needs more than just a kind of indignant reaction. It needs more than just words, and that's the perspective that I think every journalist would bring. This is a very serious crime, an international crime, a crime motivated by someone who was pursuing his profession as a journalist. It was an attempt to silence him, and that makes it very egregious.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will do a second round, but we will limit the questions to three-minute rounds because we have some committee business to do at the end.

We will start with Mr. Tabbara, for three minutes.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you very much, and thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

Overall, the world rankings of press freedom fell in 2018, and Reporters Without Borders reported that it was due to a variety of factors including war, growing threats from non-state operatives, civil unrest, economic crisis—the list goes on.

Could you mention a bit about that and add your perspective to that?

Mr. Philip Tunley: I think the process of reporting on press freedom on an indexed basis is a good one. It's not very scientific. It's not completely accurate, but it gives you a general measure of whether things are trending up or down, and I think there's no doubt that in recent years we've seen a trending downwards. There are a lot of reasons for that, and I think you're right. The report doesn't just focus on one thing. There are a number of factors involved.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Do you think that this is a new phenomenon? Does it have to do with the rise of technology? Can you give us a breakdown of what we've seen in the past 30 or 40 years? Has there been more of an attack on journalism?

How has that changed over 30 to 40 years?

● (1335)

Mr. Philip Tunley: I think that much more information is available to me as a viewer today, if I go looking for it, than was the case 30 or 40 years ago. In that sense, we've had a massive increase. The problem is how that gets filtered through some kind of editorial, journalistic process, to separate out what is really going on from lots of stuff that's out there. The big challenge is that—the business of journalism, which is to select the stories that are important, to get the facts and report them fairly and accurately, and to editorialize around the messages that Canadians or audiences around the world need to hear.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: In terms of states that have authoritarian regimes, what are some of the tools and methods that they're using? My colleague across the way mentioned that regimes can block websites, and there are other measures. They could be monitoring what you're posting on a certain blog that you've putting up.

Obviously, they're threatening journalists and even activists, but what other measures are they taking?

The Chair: Unfortunately, you're going to have to hold that answer because that's your time.

We will go to Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Tunley, thank you for your testimony here.

I wanted to do a pitch for our committee. One of the challenges we face is that we hear story after story internationally about people who are suffering, whether it's the Uighurs or Christians or Tibetans or Rohingyas. They're always desperate, and we find there's an under-representation of that suffering in Canadian journalism.

I would like to ask you to maybe encourage your colleagues to cover these stories. If they wanted to do one or two more stories regarding international human rights, we would certainly appreciate it. Sometimes we do press conferences, and we show up down at the press gallery and there's no one there.

There is an appetite, from the discussions I've had with Canadians over the last.... This is my 13th year on this committee. They're always surprised when I tell them a story about it. They ask, “How would I ever hear about that?” Maybe that's something you could take back to your colleagues.

For the last part of my time, I want to give you the opportunity to share with us. For journalists who are persecuted, incarcerated or maybe killed, I understand that your organization will send a letter to ambassadors in Canada when there are journalists who are mistreated. Do you have other initiatives whereby your members contribute so that you can support families of journalists who are being abused, etc.?

Mr. Philip Tunley: The main one is our journalists in distress program. We provide funding to selected candidates who are in distress. Either they are threatened or they are having to flee from threats of violence, and they need money for medical support or for travel to a safe place. As part of a global community of free speech and journalism organizations, we contribute to that process.

The other is the journalists who arrive here in Canada. We have a journalists in exile program. We work with the journalists in exile group to try to get training for journalists so they can continue their careers here, and so on.

I will just briefly comment on your first point, because I'm almost out of time. One of the issues is that people actually have a lot more access to stories around the world, particularly of suffering around the world. One of the problems the media has is that there's a feeling that, “I've had enough of this. I don't want to hear it,” at a certain point. It doesn't sell newspapers.

If you want that journalism, it's part of this economic problem that I started with. You have to incent that kind of reporting, and I really feel it's important to do so. I agree with the sentiment underlining your comments.

● (1340)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go for three minutes to Mr. Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much for your comments, Mr. Tunley.

I wanted to talk to you about something we are seeing in the world, especially in Europe. We are seeing this rising level of populism in democratic countries. You have ambitious leaders who are populist leaders and whose intimidation of the press works in very subtle ways. Their supporters, or people who are aligned with their way of thinking, tend to spend the resources and operate either newspapers, radio stations or TV stations. There's a different, more subtle way of controlling the media in other ways also, by oppressing certain dissent and making sure that certain news does not come forward, whether through social media or other means.

We can understand that in strong democratic countries there is a certain element of press freedom, and there are countries where there is going to be very little press freedom.

What is your comment on those countries that have democratically elected populist leaders whose supporters are in many ways using the press as a tool to continue their populism by either intimidating journalists or exercising greater control of the media outlets? What happens in that middle ground, in those countries where you have democratically elected leaders? How do you deal with that phenomenon?

Mr. Philip Tunley: You have to view it as a marketplace of ideas. You have to rely on people to critically assess, and not everyone does of course. First of all, it's social media rather than the mainstream media that feed the populism, and to some extent you can't criticize that. There are groups that can now communicate and share ideas in ways they could not in the past, thanks to social media. That's partly behind the phenomenon.

What should be the reaction of major media or governments in that circumstance? It is a democratic process. It is a marketplace of ideas, and the only credible response at the end of the day is a political one and a journalistic one: to report facts, to correct errors and to make sure the discourse comes back to things that matter to Canadians and others.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the last question we'll go to Ms. Hardcastle for three minutes.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Thank you very much.

Mr. Tunley, I'm also just thinking about some of the reporting that was done early on in Myanmar about what was happening to the Rohingya. I know that you mentioned the journalists in distress program, and journalists in exile—two different programs. I don't know how long they've been going on. Maybe you can talk a bit about the challenges, how they've changed.

Also, how are they being funded? Is there any government funding for either of these initiatives? Do you see an opportunity where we could be fortifying journalism through these types of programs?

Mr. Philip Tunley: The answer is that we have been funding our journalists in distress program, which is the more difficult of the two to fund, internally. It comes from our general revenues that we raised from our gala, from our members. We would love to stabilize that funding with either a long-term private or a long-time government funding source. It is critically important work. It's work that no one else is doing. None of the journalist organizations in Canada, other than CJFE, do this. We're very proud of it. It originates from our relationship with the IFEX organization, which I mentioned earlier. It's a wonderful program.

In terms of getting journalists here, for the journalists in exile program, there you have to really deal with major media in terms of their hiring policies. How do you encourage media here to hire a journalist from Iraq, Mexico or wherever? The second thing you have to do is some training. Although the basics of journalism don't change, some of the realities of practice in journalism here do.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: I don't have any other questions. Perhaps you want to expand on that. Otherwise, I'm done.

● (1345)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a question.

The Chair: You have just one minute then.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you so much.

I wanted to ask this earlier. In your viewpoint, what are the issues that women journalists deal with that are unique from their male counterparts? What kinds of support systems does your organization provide to women journalists across the world?

Mr. Philip Tunley: I'm obviously not the right person to ask.

I think the answer is that women do face special vulnerabilities especially when they're reporting around the world. We have some wonderfully courageous journalists who have been through that, but we also have some sad stories of the results that can occur. What kinds of supports do we have for that? It's hard to target. It's very hard to devise a program that's aimed at those circumstances. I think the most we can do is to encourage best practices in the major media who have correspondents around the world, to ensure that they have appropriate security and other measures in place to support the work of these journalists.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Philip Tunley: It's really at the level of the media organizations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you so much, Mr. Tunley, for your expert testimony. I think this has given us some ideas in terms of this study going forward. Thank you for being here through video conference.

We'll now go in camera for 15 minutes to do some committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]