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—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(1235)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I would like to call the heritage committee meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the supplementary estimates (B) for 2016-17, vote 1b under Canada Council for the Arts, etc. However, I think that, given the date of this hearing, there will be no votes on this. It's just the subject matter only and the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage, will be appearing to speak on the estimates. With her, from the Department of Canadian Heritage, is Graham Flack, deputy minister, and Andrew Francis, chief financial officer.

We shall begin, Madame Joly, for 10 minutes.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, distinguished guests and committee members, good afternoon.

I'm pleased to be appearing before you today. With me, once again, are the deputy minister for Canadian Heritage, Mr. Graham Flack, and the department's chief financial officer, Mr. Andrew Francis.

[English]

It is a pleasure to be with you again today. I follow the work of this committee with great interest, as you all know, and deeply appreciate the work you do on behalf of Canadians.

The studies you currently have under way lend an important voice to the conversation our government is having. The study on the media and local communities, in particular, is an important one, as it comes at the same moment that we are holding consultations on the future of Canadian content.

I look forward to hearing your feedback on a range of topics and continuing to engage in conversation with you on these important initiatives.

[Translation]

I have now been Minister of Heritage for one year, and it is truly a privilege. All across the country, I have met talented Canadians, bold entrepreneurs, and decision-makers who are in tune with our new realities. I have listened to them, I have seen their projects, their creative spaces, their communities, and I have worked passionately

to meet their expectations and to realize our government's commitments.

Today, I would like to share some of those accomplishments with you, and show how the supplementary estimates (B) for 2016-17 will help us honour our commitments.

[English]

In our first meeting together, I talked about budget 2016. Budget 2016 set aside an historic level of funding for arts and culture in Canada, in which \$1.9 billion in new funding was committed over five years. Supplementary estimates (B) seeks \$3.4 million in new authorizations, of which \$2.8 million is for grants and contributions, and \$600,000 for operating expenditures.

These funds will allow our government to continue to provide Canadians with important economic opportunities, promote Canadian talent, and celebrate our diversity. For example, additional resources, in the amount of \$1.9 million, will go to the young Canada works program, which will help young people from coast to coast to coast in this country acquire jobs and earn valuable workplace skills. This sum includes \$1.6 million for internships and summer jobs in the heritage sector and \$300,000 for green jobs, in which young people can work while they improve their official second language skills.

I am proud that our government is increasing funding to this program, which is a key item of the mandate letter from the Prime Minister.

Supplementary estimates (B) will also authorize \$1 million in funding for the Harbourfront Centre, in Toronto, which will play an important role promoting, celebrating, and supporting the arts.

[Translation]

Supplementary estimates (B) provide \$75 million to CBC/Radio-Canada for 2016-17, funding which is part of the \$675 million budgeted over a five-year period. This is a promise that we made to Canadians during the election, and it is a promise that we are keeping because we believe in the importance of a strong public broadcaster.

The supplementary estimates (B) also include \$1.5 million for the National Film Board of Canada, which is part of a total of \$13.5 million over a five-year period. This funding is intended to support audiovisual production, audience development, and digitalization of the heritage collection.

We will also provide funding to the six national museums. The 2016 federal budget provided for \$60 million over five years for their capital projects. It also provided \$45.9 million for operating costs for three national museums. In total, national museums will receive \$30.5 million in 2016-17 under the supplementary estimates (B).

In addition to making massive investments in the arts sector, our government wants to create a nationwide ecosystem that will foster a true culture of innovation. This is a top priority for me. On September 13 of this year, I launched Canada-wide consultations on Canadian content in the digital world.

•(1240)

I wanted to open a national dialogue to help me adjust our cultural policy to current realities. I led six round tables in various regions across the country. We organized three live consultations on Facebook and made a website available to all Canadians. The consultations concluded last Friday. Thirty thousand people participated in the consultations and over 400 others made online submissions.

[English]

We discussed a wide range of topics in the context of these consultations, including flexibility in the cultural policy tool kit and the role played by private investments.

The consultations are complete, and we are now busy examining the responses. Our goal is to create an ecosystem that encourages innovation, enhances the vitality of Canada's cultural sector, and fosters economic growth. We are working hard to establish an effective cultural export strategy for Canada. We want to help our creators increase the dissemination of their works and our cultural entrepreneurs expand their business opportunities.

I have had the privilege of meeting with so many of Canada's finest artists in the past year. These encounters with their talent, passion, and creativity, have reinforced my drive and commitment to ensuring that our government is there to help them find new opportunities and to support their efforts.

In my first year as Minister of Canadian Heritage, I conducted pan-Canadian consultations on official languages. All of the round table consultations were facilitated either by me or by my parliamentary secretary, Randy Boissonnault. Several of my cabinet colleagues and fellow caucus members and MPs from all parties also took part in these important exchanges. We received more than 5,000 responses online, we held round table discussions in 22 cities, and we heard from more than 350 leaders and stakeholders. Our government understands that the best way to learn from Canadians is to listen to and engage with Canadians.

[Translation]

Aboriginal languages are an integral part of the Canadian identity. With the 150th anniversary of Confederation so close, we must continue to promote them. I am currently working with many stakeholders, including leaders and representatives of indigenous communities, to create a new strategy to ensure the vitality and growth of aboriginal languages and cultures. I look forward to discussing this further in the coming months.

In just 33 days, on December 31, we will be kicking off the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of Confederation, here, in Ottawa, and in 18 other Canadian cities. As I mentioned earlier, the supplementary estimates (B) include \$480,000 in funds re-profiled from 2018-19 to 2016-17 in support of these 2017 celebrations.

[English]

Numerous activities have been announced in the past few months that will allow Canadians from coast to coast to coast to celebrate this historic moment in their communities and with the rest of Canada. The celebrations will revolve around four themes. At this point, of course, you are aware of these four themes, which are Canadian youth, social diversity and inclusion, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and our environment.

I am incredibly excited about the year to come and encourage all honourable members of the committee to continue their important work of promoting and celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary.

In conclusion, our government is committed to listening to Canadians so that it may best serve them. We believe in the importance of investing in Canadians and supporting the economic opportunities that they need to succeed. We believe in the importance of celebrating our culture and traditions. We believe that the path of reconciliation is one we must all be on together, and the relationship between our government and indigenous peoples will continue to be the most important.

•(1245)

[Translation]

Thank you for listening. I would now be happy to answer your questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. That was really well done, and under 10 minutes.

We will now open the meeting to questions. I will begin with sharing between Mr. O'Regan and Mr. Vandal. This is a seven-minute round. I will give you notice when you finish your first three minutes so that you can make a decision about how you will continue to share.

We are beginning with Mr. O'Regan.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Minister, in my mind, the status quo at the CBC is not going to stand. It cannot stand, and going ad-free is not nearly enough. I think our public broadcaster has a critical role to play in providing quality local and regional news to our communities—we've heard that time and again—especially in more remote and rural parts of this country where, as we've heard, viable alternatives are exceedingly hard to come by, if they exist at all.

I firmly believe that the CBC, as the public broadcaster funded by taxpayers, can fill those gaps in the marketplace. They are no longer gaps; they are gaping chasms when it comes to news. I really do believe, particularly of late, that our democracy is in peril when people do not have viable, critical journalism in the towns and cities where they live, and about the towns and cities where they live.

As Hubert Lacroix, the CEO of the CBC, has said time and again—and I couldn't agree with him more—if not the public broadcaster, who? With budget 2016 pledging \$675 million in funding to CBC and Radio-Canada, how do you see that money helping to solve this critical issue of viable local news in Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you. That's a very good question.

We believe, of course, in the importance of our public broadcaster, and this is exactly why we decided, in our campaign, to commit to reinvest. As a government, we reinvested, as promised, \$675 million over five years.

That being said, and bearing in mind that CBC/Radio-Canada is independent, I expressed three wishes to be taken into account when reinvesting the money of the government, funded by taxpayers. The first wish was to have more local content and local news. The second was to keep in mind that CBC/Radio-Canada must be in line with the digital reality and to invest in its digital infrastructure. The third was to increase the new talent at CBC/Radio-Canada—get new, young people on board in order to have a strong public broadcaster over the next 50 years.

I think that, understanding the impacts of digital disruption.... Right now, we are looking into all the submissions from CBC/Radio-Canada and all media outlets that decided to participate. We asked the Public Policy Forum to study the news industry, and we'll get the report in the coming weeks. We also understand that Canadians...10,000 people participated in our pre-consultation process, and the importance of local news and local content was clearly outlined.

I've said that I am willing to look at everything that is on the table. The news industry is going through extreme disruption. We understand that it's important to take into account the fact that a strong media industry is the basis of sound democracy. This is why I am also looking forward to hearing your recommendations as a committee. I think your work is extremely important, and it will be read and taken into account when developing our government response.

•(1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Vandal.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, Minister Joly, for your excellent presentation.

[English]

I have a question about indigenous languages that is more important given that our 150th anniversary is 33 days from now. According to a survey in 2011, approximately 14% of indigenous citizens identified an indigenous language as their first language. Also, 64% of Inuit citizens speak their language, compared to 22%

of first nations. If you look at the Métis, you see that only 2.5% speak Michif.

We know that language is intrinsically linked to a vibrant culture. What is your department doing now and what are they planning to do in the future to preserve and promote indigenous languages?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you, Dan. This is a good question.

I must remind you that this is part of my mandate letter, to develop, along with my colleague Carolyn Bennett, a strategy to promote, preserve, and enhance indigenous languages and cultures. I understand that there are 90 indigenous languages in the country. Some are not at the same level; there are clearly some...but many of them are in dire straits. This is something that I'm looking into right now.

As was mentioned in my speech, in the next months I'll be coming up with our own plan to respond to this issue, but I certainly see that as an important piece of my mandate. Not only is it important in response to the mandate letter, but more than that, it's in line with the truth and reconciliation recommendations. We've committed to answer all of these recommendations, so I'll make sure that is taken into account.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I will go to Mr. Van Loan, for the Conservatives.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

There has been some attention in recent weeks on Liberal cash-for-access fundraisers. Have you, Minister, attended any fundraisers for Liberal riding associations or the party that have had stakeholders from your department present?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: This is a question that you should be asking the president of my riding association, because my fundraising is done not through me but through my riding association in Ahuntsic-Cartierville, and the events I attended were in my riding or just close to my riding.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'm aware of an event that was held on November 7 for the Edmonton Centre Liberal association—

Mr. Dan Vandal: This is a discussion on supplementary estimates. I'm wondering if this question is even in order.

•(1255)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Traditionally, there's a wide ambit given to ask questions on any subject matter in the estimates.

The Chair: That's right.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I thank you again for interrupting me, just like last time.

There was a fundraiser you attended on November 7 for the Edmonton Centre Liberal association that you didn't mention. Do you know if there were any stakeholders from your department or with interests in your department present there?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: This was a fundraiser for my colleague, the parliamentary secretary. This was not for me. It was done in his own riding. My understanding is that there was a close look to see whether there would be any stakeholders, and we made sure that we were aligned with the open and transparent rules. Therefore, I was very comfortable in going to that event, because I was also working with my close parliamentary secretary, Randy Boissonnault.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Did you discuss any of your departmental responsibilities with any stakeholders at that fundraiser?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Not that I understand, no.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: There is at least one individual who is a stakeholder for the department dealing with celebrations who posted or tweeted that he or she had a conversation with you about the arts at that event. Did you discuss the arts with anybody at that event?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Well, a lot of people have an interest in the arts in general and are very favourable—

The Chair: Minister, I think Mr. Van Loan is skating very close to the line here on discussing private conversations with the minister and any Canadian who wishes.... She's a minister of the arts, and anybody who wants to ask her a question could do that.

I think we're skating pretty close to—

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I think it's a legitimate question to ask, if somebody, at events people pay to attend, is discussing a minister's responsibilities, which they have an interest in with their portfolio. However, I'll move on to another subject then, Madam Chair.

I've looked at the table on the supplementary estimates. When you add up the initial allocations with the supplementary amounts, spending overall, whether it's been for your department or entities like the National Film Board, CBC, Telefilm...the 16 entities, goes up considerably. In fact, it is a 16% increase in spending, not surprising from a government that's spending out of control.

However, there is something that sticks out. There are two entities that have had significant reductions in funding. There are only two out of the 16. These are the National Battlefields Commission and the Canadian Museum of History, both of which are experiencing significant cuts.

Do you think this reinforces the notion many have that your government is engaged in a war on history, when everybody is getting in excess of 16%, but the two entities that deal with history are getting cuts from your department?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I think my colleague is trying to do politics where there is not, but I'll make sure that my department officials give him the right answer.

Mr. Graham Flack (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): It doesn't reflect a cut in operating funds. It's the two capital projects, in both cases, that are coming off high.

In the case of the Museum of History, the Canada Hall was a major capital project. That is, the expenditures were higher in the previous years and are coming down this year, as planned. It's the same with the National Battlefields Commission. It was capital expenditures that do not stay constant every year and have come back.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Are there any other capital asks from those organizations that aren't being funded right now?

Mr. Graham Flack: Any other capital...?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Asks from those to entities that are not being funded right now.

Mr. Graham Flack: I'll—

Hon. Mélanie Joly: You can answer, and I'll follow.

Mr. Graham Flack: There are.

As part of budget 2016, \$60 million over five years was allocated for capital backlogs focused on safety and other issues. That will be allocated between the major museums. That's an incremental amount coming in that's addressing some of those additional capital asks you've been describing that have been present, as you know, for some time.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I find it interesting that it's the history that's getting short shrift.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Waugh, if I have any time left.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: If I may, Mr. Van Loan, I'll just continue answering. There are no politics to be done out of this.

The Museum of History was extremely happy, because we got into the budget the fact of dealing with an ongoing pressure on the museum, for years, that was never dealt with by the Conservative government, which was getting rid of the issue with PILTs.

Maybe my deputy could talk about that for a second.

Mr. Graham Flack: That was the other investment.

The payment in lieu of taxes, which is a payment made to municipalities in lieu of taxes, hasn't been increased since authorities were transferred to the museum. Although their tax payments have increased, the government allocation to the museums hasn't. Budget 2016 did deal with a catch-up on that, so that they could deal with both the backlog and the payments. The biggest beneficiary of that was actually the Museum of History, because they had the largest backlog in the payment.

That was the other one. I didn't consider it a capital investment when you asked, but it is an additional investment that will assist them in not having to deal with other capital pressures.

● (1300)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The local municipality is really the biggest beneficiary.

Anyhow, Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Yes, I have a minute here.

I have to say that we were all blindsided yesterday with the announcement of CBC wanting an additional \$400 million, including \$318 million that would allow digital, radio, and television to have no advertising.

Could I have your thoughts on that? You're giving them \$675 million over five years. The CBC president, Hubert Lacroix, was here, and he made no mention of it. Then, he blindsided everyone yesterday with the announcement that he is going to ask the government, again, for \$400 million.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As you all know, we're going through these public consultations, and CBC/Radio Canada decided to go ahead and present their own points of view when it comes to dealing with how a public broadcaster could play a role. They're independent, and they brought this important piece into the discussion. We'll study it, and this will be part of our revision of the entire cultural policy tool kit.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Your time is up, thank you.

Now, Mr. Nantel, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Minister Joly, gentlemen, thank you for being here today.

Thank you for your kind words about the committee's work. All of us here are committed to and proud of working to improve the situation of regional media.

I am pleased to see that we will no longer have to hound the Minister of Canadian Heritage about collecting a sales tax on transactions, because there is broad agreement among the media on this tax. Everyone is talking about it. It is becoming commonly accepted and will make its way to the office of the Minister of Finance, and I am very happy about that.

I looked at the votes of supplementary estimates (B), and I am wondering if Carolle Brabant, of Telefilm Canada, has contacted you to say that the \$2 million that was earmarked was not necessary.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Can you be more specific, please?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Yes.

I commend you for having managed to obtain all of these amounts from the Minister of Finance or from Treasury Board, apart from Telefilm Canada, for which a small amount was set aside. I see that Mr. Flack wishes to answer.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We are discussing supplementary estimates (B), and supplementary estimates (C) will follow.

Mr. Graham Flack: That is correct.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: You must understand that there is still another period to come, around the month of March. Other aspects of the budget have yet to be confirmed. Obviously, that will be part of supplementary estimates (C).

Mr. Pierre Nantel: It is urgent in their case. Fine.

I have asked you on many occasions about an independent appointment panel to staff vacant positions on the CBC/Radio-Canada board of directors as well as trustee positions with our national museums. Yesterday, you launched a call for candidates, which was well received. The same thing applies to the CRTC.

Just to tease you a bit, I would say that the Conservatives moved more quickly in 2006. They struck their panel and completed their reform in less than a year. The NDP pushed them, and it got done more quickly.

What news can we expect from you on this topic?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As concerns the appointments, last week I launched a call to staff 45 positions in our national museums. This is the first time this has been done. I note that social media has reacted favourably. A number of people have participated in the process, as well, and continue to do so.

In the coming weeks, we will be announcing the new process to select directors for the board of CBC/Radio-Canada, as mentioned in my mandate letter.

Of course, we are reviewing all the appointments to ensure that our approach continues to be open, transparent and merit-based.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: My question concerns the government in general rather than your department in particular. Will this much-awaited new approach to appointing directors to the various boards be announced as being the official process early next year?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: It was made public in a general fashion during the summer. These 45 appointments will be made using this new process, and that includes the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. We are moving forward.

• (1305)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I have a question for you regarding the consultation process and the 400 submissions that were made. That is a great level of participation. Mr. Flack was talking about 30,000 responses. Obviously, that will take a lot of analysis.

We all have the same question here. I do not doubt how qualified your staff is, but what kind of time frame are we talking about? Do you already have an idea of when all this information will have been processed so that new documents can be drafted?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We are working very hard on that. Two hundred and seventy-two people submitted comments online, 75 submissions were made, and 30,000 people participated in six public consultations. I know this is a lot of work, but I am also convinced that my team will be able to complete this work so that we can present our new public policy in 2017, on both the information and entertainment sectors.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I do not want to insist too much on this, but we are wondering when we will be able to provide you with a report in order to ensure that the thought process has been started. There is no new policy. You correctly told everybody that everything was on the table. There will be no major changes announced for Easter, March or April. You said it would be in 2017.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: It will be during 2017.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: So we cannot get any more details. How unfortunate!

Yesterday, we were all surprised—and for my part, I was pleasantly surprised, unlike my colleagues—to see how well CBC participated through its submission. They have a fairly ambitious proposal. However, there was one point that was disappointing.

I remember that during the election campaign with Mr. Trudeau, you stated that you would ask CBC to conduct public consultations on its mandate.

Honestly, what CBC is proposing is interesting. I have often said that CBC must be the champion for our broadcasting policies and that it must position itself as a leader with special status.

Earlier, you clearly stated that CBC is an independent entity. We can decide to ask its representatives to come see us and tell us about their proposal.

There is also the issue of the public consultations you would like CBC to hold regarding its mandate.

What do you think?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: The issue of CBC's mandate was raised many times during the public consultations we conducted. One of the benefits of our consultations was that we were able to take a holistic, as opposed to a narrow, look at all of the government policies, the applicable legislation, and the various levers of funding.

As I mentioned, if the Broadcasting Act, which includes the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada, needs to be revised, we will do so. Of course, we must first study the whole issue to understand what the repercussions of the decision would be on the various stakeholders, in order to find the right answer. We must also take into account the importance of sustaining a healthy democracy, developing local content, supporting content creators, and having a culture export strategy that will have positive economic effects for the country.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel. That's it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I hope we will be able to speak again later.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We have Mr. Breton and Mr. Samson, who are splitting their time. Who will begin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): May I begin, Mr. Samson?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Breton, will you begin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will share my time with Mr. Samson.

Thank you, Madam Minister, for being here. It is always a pleasure to have you with us.

I will be brief. In your mandate letter it says you are to promote Canadian culture abroad. As you know, in my riding, there is the École nationale de la chanson in Granby, which trains francophone songwriters, composers and singers. In fact, it's the only school of its kind in Canada. Many recognized artists whom you probably know,

such as Lisa LeBlanc, Alex Nevsky and Andréanne Malette, trained at this school, which is located in the Cégep de Granby.

My question is as follows, and you referred to it in your opening statement.

Can you tell us more about your vision for promoting Canadian cultural talent abroad, which is such an important thing?

● (1310)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you.

In my mandate letter, I was tasked with bringing back and modernizing two programs that had been abolished by the previous government, namely PromArt and Trade Routes.

I decided to do more than what was laid out in the mandate letter and develop Canada's first cultural export strategy. I am currently working with my colleagues including the Minister of International Trade, Chrystia Freeland, to adopt an approach which will take into account not only the cultural export strategy, but also, generally speaking, the export and investment strategy for our creative sector.

This includes not only music, cinema, television and books, but also virtual reality, video games, design, and so on. It is therefore a wider approach than the traditional one, which includes the living arts and the various artistic categories I just mentioned.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

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

Madam Minister, it is always a pleasure to have you here.

My question is about your consultations. For a while now, we have been hearing from communities and various councils, and they all talk about accountability. How can we make sure that the money is spent as intended?

In the course of your consultations, did you hear of new strategies or new ways which would help bring back more accountability in the future?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: During our public consultations, we heard a lot about changing the sector business model. I imagine that your committee has also heard about this.

The challenge for the government—and for any legislator—is to make the right decisions when the business model changes. One of the impacts digital technology has had on the business model is the fact that some intermediaries have changed or disappeared. That's why it is essential that we take into account these different aspects in the development of a new cultural policy or public policy.

Of course, accountability will lie at the heart of our approach. Nevertheless, you have to understand that the Department of Heritage oversees 17 government agencies, and each of these must of course be accountable.

I think that my colleague was also referring to official languages. The matter of accountability for groups receiving funding under the roadmap is being studied by another committee. This issue is being studied in the course of our development of a new plan of action which will come into effect in 2018.

[English]

Mr. Darrell Samson: I have a quick question. Our government of course has increased investment in infrastructure.

[Translation]

That's almost four times the previous amount. How are we going to make sure that communities living in a minority situation will benefit from these infrastructure investments?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: That's a very good question.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I always ask good questions.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I know, Mr. Samson.

Throughout our public consultations across the country, Mr. Boissonnault and I heard a lot about the importance of investing in official language minority community infrastructure. There is a lot of demand from minority language communities, but there is also a significant demand from Canadians in general for this type of infrastructure and for English and French courses for young people. We are looking at that issue right now, and we are working on our game plan.

● (1315)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

Tell us a little bit about how you think these consultations went. What were the two or three top issues which came out? Was there anything new? Was there anything the roadmap did not address?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Are you referring to official languages?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: People talked about the impact media have. As far as official languages are concerned, the main concern we heard across the country was about immigration and how to ensure that language communities remain viable. I'm working very hard on this issue with John McCallum. We have already relaunched the French Significant Benefit Program, but we will have further good news over the coming months.

I also heard a lot about community infrastructure and early childhood education infrastructure. We want people to be able to choose the official language they wish to be educated in, from early childhood to the end of school.

You know, one thing is clear. We are now looking at the second generation to grow up under the Official Languages Act. One thing is truly fantastic, namely that this law has transformed our country in certain ways. We could always do more. The vitality of language communities is fragile and must always be supported.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That's a very good answer.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

We are going to a second round, but given the time constraints we're going to do two five-minute rounds and the NDP will get a three-minute round.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Those are the rules we agreed to at the very beginning, when we do not have time. I'm sorry.

Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you.

Thank you for the Canada 150 pin that you handed out, because in my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood, they want a commemorative pin recognizing Canada's 150th year of Confederation. Where is it? We had it in 1867. We had it in 1927. We had our centennial year, in 1967, and we brought it back again in 1992. This pin, this commemorative medal, recognizes distinguished Canadians. We're not doing that, and I'm wondering why you and your government will not do this for the 150th commemoration of Confederation.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We're working on an important ambassador program right now, which will celebrate, through different ways, different gestures, and also merchandise the importance of community leadership. This ambassador program will be based on having great ambassadors. Some have already been announced: Julie Payette, the astronaut; Art McDonald, the Nobel Prize in Physics winner; Kardinal Offishall, an important musician; and many other role models and ambassadors that are known here in Canada, in all regions, and also internationally. These names will be rolled out over the next few weeks.

We're partnering with the Community Foundations of Canada also, who have developed a community leadership program. Also, we'll have a program called friends of Canada 150, which will be based on supporting anybody who wants to do volunteerism, for example, in the context of Canada 150.

Also, coming from Saskatoon, Kevin, rather than doing the celebrations for Canada 150 only in Ottawa, I decided, with my team, to celebrate in 19 cities, and that includes Regina and Saskatoon.

● (1320)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We've given money to the City of Saskatoon and to Regina to organize a December 31 launch. That will be the same for Canada Day, and that will be the same also for three important celebrations just before Canada Day, namely, National Aboriginal Day, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, and also Multiculturalism Day.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm running out of time, so I'm going to share it with my friend here, the Honourable Ed Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak.

I'm going to return to CBC.

My colleague, Mr. Waugh, mentioned the very surprise announcement by the CBC yesterday that they're seeking another \$400 million of support from taxpayers. Last year, your government gave CBC \$600 million. That's a 60% increase in their funding. Now we find out that CBC wants another \$400 million, which effectively doubles, by \$1 billion, the amount of funding that CBC receives every year. A lot of Canadians will be concerned about that kind of dramatic increase in funding for our public broadcaster.

Can you provide this committee assurances that you will reject the latest request from the CBC?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: First of all, I just want to make sure that we agree. The reinvestment is \$675 million over a period of five years. It's \$75 million this year and \$150 million over the next four years, so it's not an increase of 60%. It's to return to the budget level that CBC/Radio-Canada had before the important cuts were done.

Hon. Ed Fast: With respect, Minister, the amount of funding you announced last year over the next five years is going to increase the funding for CBC by 60% of its current budget. The current budget is somewhere around \$1 billion. You're adding another \$600 million.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I don't want to give you a lesson in terms of how to calculate, but if you take into account that it's a budget for five years, at \$1 billion per year it's \$5 billion, and if you're investing \$675 million, that's far from 60%.

Hon. Ed Fast: No, with respect—

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I understand that there has been an important reinvestment, and we're really proud of that reinvestment.

But if I may answer your question in particular regarding what the CBC presented, the CBC is independent and can present what they want when it comes to their own point of view of what to do when possibly studying the scenario of going ad-free. They decided that it had a cost and they presented to the population what that cost would be.

Now it's up to my department to study their report, which was presented yesterday. We will do that when studying all the points of view, not only of CBC but also of different media outlets, journalists, groups, and various stakeholders. I won't prejudge anything at this point, because it's important that we look at and give attention to all the points of view of everybody who has participated in this important consultation.

This is the first time in 30 years that we will have done this, so I want to make sure that we do it well.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Your time is up, Mr. Fast.

Ms. Dabrusin, you have five minutes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for coming to speak to us today.

It gives me an opportunity to raise an issue that has been flagged in my community quite a bit. My community is home to many people who work in the creative industry, particularly film and television. There was a lot of concern expressed about the CRTC decision that came out at the end of August, which reduced the Canadian content points from eight to six for access to CIPF funds.

Because this is something that's causing quite a bit of concern in my community, my question for you is this. What is the government doing to promote Canadian content creators?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I understand the anguish that lots of people in the industry—Canadians, of course—felt when that decision came about. I've said clearly that when it comes to our own public funding, we had the clear expectation that this public funding would go to Canadian content creators. My position hasn't changed.

As mentioned, we are looking into the entire system to understand what the impacts are of these decisions, but more than that, how to support and enhance and export Canadian content.

I think we're extremely strong in Canada. As I have mentioned many times, we are the third biggest producer of video games in the world and the third biggest exporter of musical talent in the world. The film and television industry generated seven billion dollars' worth of revenue in 2014, and \$3 billion of it was exported. We're nearly number one when it comes to virtual reality, because of the work of the NFB.

Because of all these strengths, I am very confident that we can support Canadian content creators, but more than that, have a much more entrepreneurial approach and be able to enhance risk-taking, and that will help in general the ecosystem to have a bigger piece of the international market pie.

● (1325)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

We mentioned briefly the local media study that we've been working on, but we also looked at museums for a period of time. In some of the conversations I've had with people working in the museums, the importance for museums of the Young Canada Works program has come up.

I notice that you mentioned in your opening comments that \$1.9 million will be going to the Young Canada Works program. Could you expand on exactly what it is, what we are doing with that program, and what our plans are for the next year?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Certainly we're working hard to develop an even better response. You have to understand that the Young Canada Works program didn't support the heritage sector in the past, so this is good news. Also, it's supporting jobs for official language minorities, because part of it, \$300,000, is for green jobs, but for official language minority groups. There are 140 more internships in the heritage sector; concretely that's 140 young people who are gathering important, relevant, and also paid experience that will follow them through their entire career path.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That's wonderful.

I don't have very much time left. I wanted also to thank you. You mentioned in your opening comments the \$1 million in funding for the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto. Being from Toronto, I know what an important role the Harbourfront Centre plays in our community, so thank you for that. That's an important part.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: My pleasure.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I saw that Telefilm now has a policy to promote greater gender equity in its film production. I was wondering if you could comment, in 20 seconds maybe, on that.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Telefilm and the NFB have both decided to embrace the importance of gender parity. They've decided independently to develop specific programs.

I'm very happy with the leadership of the two CEOs, Claude and Carolle, on this important file.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nantel, you have three minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Minister, you are certainly aware of the fact that a group of Anglo-Canadian creators—including the biggest names in Canadian culture—are asking to be heard under the current process and in the consultations on copyright reform. I imagine that an association in Quebec representing the same kinds of people will make a similar request. As outlined in the very à propos question asked by my colleague Ms. Dabrusin on how to interpret exactly what Canadian content means, and what deserves to be labelled a co-production or not, and what can help a production be exported or not—all of this is at stake.

For me, it is very clear that there is no clear answer to this question, but I would like to know how you will address the fact that there are two very distinct production realities in Quebec and in the rest of the country, where export levels—I do not have the number in front of me—must be excellent. Canadian heritage, Canadian content, telling our stories, all of this is clearly stronger in Quebec. Just think of the unbelievable popularity of Quebec programs, which rank among the top 10 or top 50 best, and the fact that it is the opposite situation in the rest of the country. How do you reconcile these two new realities in the digital universe?

• (1330)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: It goes without saying that the francophone and anglophone markets are studied both together and separately. The reality for each market is different, but they operate in the same ecosystem and are facing the same digital challenges.

In my view—and I say this every time I have the opportunity to do so, as I did at the six round tables we organized in Iqaluit, Vancouver, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Edmonton—our country is based on a social contract that has three pillars. The first pillar is the importance of our two official languages, French and English. The second pillar is the importance of multiculturalism, and I include in this pluralism, which basically means supporting and protecting the rights of minorities. The third pillar is reconciliation with first nations. In these circumstances, these three aspects of the social contract will be taken into account when we develop our future cultural policy.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Of course, no one is against motherhood and apple pie.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I just want to tell you that, in Montreal, many people wanted to participate in the consultations, and there was a feeling of urgency, which is certainly stronger in Quebec. Even the night before, there were people who wanted to take part in the consultations and who managed to do so.

Was it the same elsewhere in Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes. There was a lot of enthusiasm in Toronto. In Iqaluit, the consultations took place at the same time as a summit on the arts. There were leaders from organizations throughout the north, from the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern Quebec and Labrador. There were about a hundred people in attendance. So I was very happy. Thirty thousand people took part in our public consultations, which made them some of the most successful organized by our government.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

I want to thank the committee, and the minister for being open and frank with their questions, and thanks to the minister for entertaining some questions that were slightly marginal.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: It's a pleasure.

The Chair: I appreciate this.

The meeting is adjourned.

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