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## **Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, May 30, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin**



## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Thursday, May 30, 2019

• (1530)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.)):** Good afternoon.

We are now starting the 161st meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Today marks the beginning of our study on the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada as it relates to the Broadcasting Act.

We are welcoming Catherine Tait, President and Chief Executive Officer of CBC/Radio-Canada, Barbara Williams, Executive Vice-President of CBC, and Michel Bissonnette, Executive Vice-President of Radio-Canada.

Ms. Tait, you may begin your presentation.

**Ms. Catherine Tait (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):** Thank you very much for that welcome, Madam Chair.

And thank you to the members of the committee for inviting us to meet with you today.

We have been looking forward to this conversation. It is an important time to speak about public broadcasting in the context of Canadian culture and democracy.

CBC/Radio-Canada is a vital part of a \$55-billion Canadian culture industry made up of both public and private players, each doing their part. Remember, every dollar invested in the public broadcaster generates \$3 in economic activity.

Over the past few years, thanks to the talent of our employees, and an important investment from Parliament—thank you, again—our digital transformation has been showing results.

[English]

Today, over 20 million Canadians use our digital platforms each month. We are Canada's number one podcaster and have become a global leader on this emerging audio platform. We have more programs reflecting more of Canada, including shows like *Unreserved* with Rosanna Deerchild on CBC Radio, *Pour l'amour du country* from Halifax, and the recently announced *The Cost of Living*, a new weekly business show out of Calgary that will cover the country's most compelling business stories.

We play an essential role, knitting together our vast country through celebratory events like the Olympics, the Paralympics, the Junos, *ADISQ* and, of course, the *Bye bye*.

Our digital content platforms like CBC Gem, ICI TOU.TV, Espaces autochtones and CBC Indigenou are reaching more Canadians in new ways, ways in which they want to consume content.

While news coverage in Canada has been shrinking, particularly in many local communities, we have maintained journalists in 60 locations across the country. At a time when disinformation is undermining trust in our institutions and democracy, we remain Canadians' most trusted source of news and information.

We want to build on that trust and on our success for the benefit of all Canadians.

[Translation]

Our new three-year strategy, launched last week, is about putting the audience at the heart of everything we do. Thus, the tag line: Your Stories, Taken to Heart.

That plan also focuses on the following objectives: preserving the trust Canadians have in us, which we never take for granted; deepening our engagement with Canadians; and leveraging our leadership in digital service delivery. Those are all reinforced by our steadfast commitment to showcase the best Canadian stories.

[English]

We are focused on the following five priorities.

First is more customized digital services. We'll serve people's needs more directly, especially on our streaming services, ICI Tou.tv and CBC Gem, as well as our audio services.

We'll build lifelong relationships with Canadians. By engaging children and youth with content that connects them to each other and their country, we aim to grow social cohesion and pride in our nation.

We'll strengthen our local connections. This is our core strength. Our proximity with Canadians is what really sets the public broadcaster apart.

We'll do more to reflect all of the richness of contemporary Canada—multicultural, indigenous, urban, rural and regional. We'll do this in the stories we share on our airwaves and through our digital services and, very importantly, through our hiring, so that Canadians will see themselves in their public broadcaster.

Lastly, we'll ensure that great Canadian stories are seen and heard by Canadians and find audiences around the world.

[Translation]

We know our industry is facing real challenges. We want to work with Canadian partners, both public and private, because today our competition is not with each other. That competition is Google, Facebook, Amazon and other foreign digital giants. They are part of our lives now, capturing our attention and our information.

[English]

These giants know the economic potential of culture. For example, Netflix, Apple and Amazon together will spend \$18 billion U.S. in content production this next year—nearly 90 times what we're able to invest at CBC/Radio-Canada.

It is the globalization of information and entertainment content that has fundamentally disrupted the Canadian media landscape. The challenge is to ensure that Canadian stories and Canadian shared experiences are available and discoverable in this sea of foreign content choices.

Let's be clear: we're not against these companies. They've helped us all discover incredible films and series such as *Roma*, *Transparent*, or *The Crown*. They can give Canadian stories global visibility, as Netflix has done with *Anne with an E* and *Kim's Convenience*, or as Amazon has done with *Annedroids*.

They, however, are not devoted to supporting or nurturing the development of Canadian artists and creators, Canadian amateur athletes, or Canadian perspectives. That's our job.

• (1535)

[Translation]

This is what our strategy is about.

We want to build partnerships with media in local communities across the country to strengthen news and democracy. We want to deepen our engagement with Canadians and connect them with each other. We want to create more content for young Canadians on all platforms. Finally, we want more programs that reflect the richness of Canada.

[English]

We also want to strengthen Canada's voice in the world and ensure that Canada's creators have a place on the world stage.

It's a strategy that will benefit Canadian businesses, support jobs and our creators, and strengthen our culture here at home for Canadians.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to taking your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We will now be beginning our question and answer period, beginning with Mr. Long for seven minutes.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.):** Thank you, Madame Chair. Good afternoon to my colleagues, and thank you very much for coming in this afternoon. It's very much appreciated, and it was a very interesting presentation.

I have a confession. My background is hockey and sports as part owner of the Saint John Sea Dogs, the hockey major junior team in Saint John. I grew up in a sports culture, and I remember as a young adult—I'm dating myself here—my father making me watch *Tommy Hunter* on CBC and *Hockey Night in Canada*, of course. That was my early experience of CBC.

I will say this. When I started campaigning in 2015, going door to door and seeing a lot of "Save the CBC" signs on different lawns and attending a few events, I quickly became aware of the unbelievable significance of CBC coast to coast to coast and of how it ties our country together, how it brings communities together and how it is somewhat of a unifying organization for all of Canada.

Certainly in New Brunswick I'm a fan of Harry Forestell, on CBC News New Brunswick; I'm a fan of Julia Wright, the new host of *Information Morning* on CBC Radio; and I recently have become concerned because, literally a couple days ago, the leader of the opposition made a statement that CBC should stop covering international news.

He seems to think that international events don't affect us as Canadians, that Canadians do not care about what's happening abroad. Obviously, we're not alone in this world. Maybe he doesn't realize that Brexit and the humanitarian crises all over the world and wars in the Middle East can have an impact on our society in Canada and our way of life.

My first question for you, Ms. Tait, is, do you think the CBC should stop covering international news?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Thank you for the references to New Brunswick. We're also very proud of our people across the country, and you absolutely nailed it when referring to our importance in local communities. It really is the case, and we hope that in our new strategy, we've underlined that very strongly.

When I said in our remarks that our proximity to Canadians makes us strong, the key strength of this public broadcaster is in a world of global competition.

To your question on international news, everybody has something to say about the news and CBC/Radio-Canada's role in news. We are the most trusted media brand in the country, both in English and French. This trust is built on the journalistic standards and practices that our journalists and reporters adhere to, separate from government, separate from any political process, and as a result, we have earned that trust. As I said earlier, it's a trust that we don't take for granted. We work on it every day.

So if news is happening around the world, our journalists will continue to report on it because it's important that Canadians have the Canadian lens on what's going on around the planet that could affect our lives as Canadians.

• (1540)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you for that.

Can you also give me your thoughts, at 50,000 feet, as it were, on government's job to tell a broadcaster what and what not to cover?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** As you well know, the Canadian public broadcaster was founded on a pretty profound principle of independence. It's enshrined in the Broadcasting Act, and pretty well the history of this organization has been about maintaining that independence. It's fundamental to the difference between a public broadcaster and a state broadcaster. As a result, we live that independence and we protect that independence every day. So to the point about political interference or government interference, we are obviously respectful of the democratic process that we live within, but independence is core to providing Canadians with fair and balanced news and points of view. Plurality of opinion and diversity of opinion is extremely important, and that, again, is enshrined in the journalistic standards and practices of the organization.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Just on that point, how does CBC ensure that you protect that independence?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** As you're well aware, we've made a number of recommendations on the revision of the Broadcasting Act to strengthen the legislation to ensure there is that protection of the independence of the broadcaster, specifically on how our board is comprised and how the CEO could be appointed, but those issues are on the public record. I invite you to refer to them.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Okay. Thank you for that.

Certainly, something that I became very aware of during the 2015 campaign was the cuts to CBC under the Harper government.

Again, I want to go back to a couple of days ago when journalists asked Mr. Scheer if he'd reduce government funding for the CBC if he got elected. He wouldn't answer that directly.

We all have in mind this promise to axe the news division of CBC. Our government, on the other hand, has reinvested \$670 million in support of the corporation. Would you say government funding is essential to the functioning of CBC?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Yes, it is essential to the functioning of CBC. It represents the majority of our funding, as you well know. We depend on public support for the organization, and ongoing public support allows us to do more of the good work that we do.

I mentioned 60 local communities. Is every community in this country being well served by CBC/Radio-Canada? No. There are communities where local papers have retreated for all sorts of reasons, and we would love to be in more communities, doing more of the great programming that we do.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We will now go to Mr. Dreeshen for seven minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Thank you very much.

Certainly, I too grew up on CBC. I'm from Alberta. While driving the truck when I was hauling grain, I'd be listening to programs all night.

Coming from the Red Deer area, I will say that we were very disappointed when CBC decided to pull out. That was decades ago, but we did listen to some of our local people, such as Ron MacLean. These are folks who have had and continue to have a great passion for CBC, but a lot of us have felt that perhaps the focus has changed. In shows like *As It Happens* and so on, the things we grew up on, and with the people we had, we could see the difference between reporters and editorialists. I think that's one of the issues. That's one of the things we see right now.

With the 24-hour news cycle, there's not a lot of opportunity to deal with the specifics. It would seem counterintuitive that you couldn't do that, but that isn't the way it looks on news shows. It used to be that there would be half an hour of news and then something local that was presented. When you lose that.... As was mentioned, you are in 60 communities, but you've had to pull out of a lot of them.

In terms of some of the issues, some of the things I've seen, this is why sometimes you're going to take a bit of a rap on this. I've been up to places like Fort McMurray when there were big stories there. CBC would roll in with a couple of trucks and six or seven people. All of the other newsgroups would have their one truck and their one person or maybe two. People look at that and say, "Well, I guess that's our tax dollars at work." It's a perception that you have to realize is out there.

On the other thing that was brought up by the honourable member, I don't think the quote was exactly what he said, but he did talk about CBC's sometimes being too carried away with American stories and not focusing on Canada, or at least the way in which Canada is affected. We've seen that. We don't hear the stories about how Australia, for example, had a carbon tax and decided to get rid of that because it had lost all of its competitiveness. We don't hear the stories about how Germany has had to make major changes because of the issues it has had with its renewable resources and how that has fit in.

We don't hear the stories about the disastrous trade decisions that have taken place. We know what happens. I'm a farmer, and I'm also on the ag committee, so when you talk about the durum wheat in Italy and how that non-tariff trade barrier has affected us, or Saudi Arabia, where an errant tweet by a government has caused major disasters as far as a whole commodity is concerned.... South America has similar types of concerns and, of course, there was the disastrous trip to India, and the pulses and the opportunities to have done something. People are starting to see this in terms of, "Where's the reporting on that?"

We hear about Donald Trump. We hear about the associated issues there and how the Democrats and the Republicans are back and forth with each other, but who cares? What we need to be talking about is how Canada ties into the world. Yes, the United States is an important part because they're a major partner, but they're not the only partner, and we have to make sure that story is being told.

I'm wondering if, when you look at this, there is a way forward, where the corporation could be looking at more of the Canadian component of these national stories instead of simply saying, "This is what was said in the U.S."

• (1545)

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** That's a multi-faceted question. Let me take a moment to reflect upon it.

I will say on your point about Fort McMurray—because that one touched my heart—that our teams from Edmonton spent a lot of time at Fort McMurray, and we were sharing news with our colleagues. It was an incredibly important story. Quite frankly, if we could have sent more people there, we would have, because they worked around the clock, so—

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Yes. I'm sorry. If I could just mention it, this was actually prior to the fire. I do understand that.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Oh, I beg your pardon. That was a very special event.

To the point about representation in Alberta, we talked a little earlier about the importance of local and government funding, and if there were additional funds supporting CBC/Radio-Canada, I assure you.... We have a map of where we would like to be but where we had to pull out in the past because, just to be very clear, even though we did have the reinvestment from government, we had ongoing financial pressures at CBC/Radio-Canada because we are not indexed to inflation on goods and services, and we have declining ad and subscription revenue. That is compounding every year despite the reinvestment of about \$20 million per year, and that adds up year after year.

We're constantly working under that kind of pressure—just to give you the context. It's not that we want to pull out. We would put much more into local...if we had the means to do so.

To your bigger question about our coverage of world events, again, from our point of view, we are covering the planet with very few resources. We have eight foreign bureaus, and—again you can correct me—I think our budget is probably in the range of \$10 million for the entire world that we cover.

We are not in Africa, a continent that profoundly affects the future of Canadian economics—just some of the issues that you raised. We're not in India. We're managing the news coverage of those very important issues as best we can, oftentimes with what we call "pop-up bureaus". We'll have our people in Paris or London fly in to try to cover a story.

It's not for want of trying to give Canadians the most fulsome world view. We're working on it each and every day. There is no denying that the United States holds a very important role in the Canadian reality, and not to report on what is going on in the United States would also be an oversight.

Again, as I said earlier, balance and fairness are core to our journalistic standards and practices, and our journalists understand that. We have an ombudsman in both English and French to ensure that they do. I think we respond very well to that challenge.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Monsieur Nantel, vous avez sept minutes, s'il vous plaît.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nantel, you have seven minutes.

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

Thank you very much to our three guests for being here.

Concerning international coverage, at the beginning of every year, I look forward to watching the round table show with all the foreign correspondents. I assume you do the same thing at CBC. On countless occasions, I have found that Radio-Canada, contrary to the rather dusty picture painted of it by the Conservatives when they were in power, is very modern. Its platform ICI TOU.TV has opened the door for catch-up television.

I think that Radio-Canada remains a standard in many respects. We all remember Bernard Derome, who never wanted to hear that the "Canadian radio" way of doing things in terms of information was to be questioned, and he was right.

Ms. Tait, I had the opportunity to hear your presentation on the current paradigm shift. You hit the nail on the head when you said we all had to work together. We are all facing people's new viewing habits, which lead to tremendous amounts of content importing. This has never been seen before.

You talked about your budget. Obviously, the bidding has started to determine who likes you the most or who hates you the most. What I know is that the Liberals have brought the budget to a level where it would be without the previous Conservative government's cuts. In reality, your operating budget has been higher in the past, right? How are you managing this situation? Your budget is lower, but salaries must increase and you must maintain quality standards. You are still the standard in many respects. In addition, inflation must be taken into account. How are you managing?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I must say that it is a major challenge. I would add that we are managing two different services.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Of course.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** We are managing linear television and radio services at the same time as digital services. We always try to reach out to Canadians, especially young people, for example through Snapchat or YouTube. That is a tremendous amount of work.

Mr. Bissonnette, do you want to add anything on the way we are managing the problem?

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette (Executive Vice-President, Radio-Canada, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):** I often joke that it is easier to manage growth than downsizing. Unfortunately, we are in a downsizing environment, and we have to maintain our service for all our audiences. So linear services are still important. Digital services are also very important if we don't want to skip a generation. As a result, we reinvent ourselves every year to try to find new ways to do things because we have to offer more, but with a smaller budget. So that requires visionary talent.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** You put your finger on the issue I am most passionate about, but that is at the very end of my questions. So you are forcing me to jump several pages.

Your are taking about skipping a generation. Millennials rarely watch live television. That said, in her presentation, Ms. Tait mentioned *Bye bye*, which has once again broken world records, I am sure of it.

Allow me to take a few seconds to remind the committee members that all the Numeris surveys on television shows in Canada and in Quebec more or less confirm that, from week to week, 25 of the 30 most popular shows in Quebec are produced in Quebec, while the situation is the opposite in English Canada, where at least 25 of the 30 most popular shows are not Canadian. In both cases, these are world records. It is always good to remind people that, as much as there may be no interest in local content on one side, there may be a great deal of interest in it on the other side. However, the next generation will change that.

You have made a few announcements concerning children's television. I think that we have already lost the current preschool generation—children who will soon be entering kindergarten. In fact, chances are that they are watching the same shows little ones in Connecticut are.

• (1555)

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** May I answer, Ms. Tait?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Please do.

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** Last week, we unveiled our strategic plan for the next three years. One of the realization we have come to is that the CBC/Radio-Canada programming is very good for young children—those between the ages of three and five—but that we have given up on the rest of youth programming.

So we have made a commitment to provide, as of next year, programming targeting children aged three to five, six to eight, nine to 12, and 13 to 17. We cannot establish connections with an audience of young children and then forget about them for 15 years, while hoping to attract them once again after that.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I know that you or those behind you in the Radio-Canada team are competent. I am curious to know whether you agree with me that this year's incredible ratings for *Bye bye* are explained by things such as the fact that one of the new stars of the show was someone who millennials—those who are now aged 30 to 40—grew up with. I am talking about Claude Legault, who was part of a children's show called *Télé-Pirate* or *Radio Enfer*. He then grew with the show *Dans une galaxie près de chez vous*. Later on, when it was time to go to the bars, he was in *Minuit le soir*. Then there was 19-2.

Do you think there is such a thing as a “Claude Legault effect”? It is not attributable to a simple call from Claude Legault's manager. It is rather because he is a star who grew up with people. Do you think that attachment has affected ratings?

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** My answer may cost me when we next negotiate with artists.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** As far as Claude Legault goes, at least. We will ask him whether that is the case.

Don't you think there is something of a phenomenon here?

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** To tell you the truth, this is a phenomenon that is unique to the Canadian francophonie—in other words, the Canadian star system. It leads to the success you referred to. Out of the 50 most watched shows, 46 are Canadian; that is the figure I use the most. It is very much based on the strength of that star system.

As for *Bye bye*, that show was watched by over 4 million people. While the end of linear television has been predicted for a number of years, those ratings are still the highest ever recorded for a show in French in Canada.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** It is incredible.

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** So I think there is still a future for linear television, just as there is a future for digital content.

I would like to add something concerning a point you raised earlier. The public broadcaster does not really have to do different things than the private broadcaster, but it must do them differently. When we produce a dramatic series like *Trop* or web series available on ICI TOU.TV, it is because we want to draw the interest of an audience in their twenties and thirties. Although that is a more restricted audience, it is our role as a public broadcaster to offer those people content.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I congratulate you on your role as a champion.

Of course, private broadcasters will—

Is my time already up, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, your time is up.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Oh! That's so sad.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** May I add something?

**The Chair:** Yes, briefly.

[English]

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I just want to say one thing for the English side of the table. There is no doubt that Radio-Canada has a very, very special place, but I want to also say that *Anne with an E*, a CBC show, is among the top 10 most binge-watched shows on Netflix in the world. Therefore, it's not to say that CBC does not have success in telling its stories as well.

**Ms. Barbara Williams (Executive Vice-President, CBC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):** The challenges are uniquely different in the two markets. To the earlier part of your question, one of our opportunities is to find partnerships that can help us extend the dollars that we have. We make those decisions about partners' content first, whether they be in the news world or in the entertainment world.

This isn't about chasing money and then back-ending in a content idea. This is about finding a story that we think really needs to be told in Canada and that we are uniquely positioned to tell, and then scanning to see who else might be interested in exploiting that story with us and in bringing some money to the table. That can be Netflix. *Anne with an E* is a terrific example of how they've been able to share that incredibly beautiful series with the world.

We also look to our other public broadcasters around the world—who often are in sync or aligned with us creatively—and find shared projects there because we do need to find those opportunities to extend.

● (1600)

**The Chair:** That was great.

We're going to Mr. Hogg now for his questions please.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.):** Thank you.

I think we're metaphorically working our way across Canada. We started in the Maritimes; we've been to the Prairies and to Quebec, and I'm from British Columbia. We're hitting the bookends with respect to this.

I was very interested in the global concepts of what's happening with media and media coverage, the issues of disinformation or misinformation and the identity-based realities that we're dealing with. That's within the context of state-owned versus public broadcasting, which we constantly hear about in different parts of the media.

Could you talk a little about being founded on the principle of independence and how we combat the type of criticism that we sometimes hear in the marketplace around independence and being state-owned?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I'm not sure what the connection is with the fake news part of your question. We can go back to the independence question, but....

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Looking at some of the European and state or publicly owned broadcasters in a number of countries that are not democracies, there's a lot of what we're deeming to be biased information or misinformation. That's the connection.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I see. I beg your pardon.

I immediately went to altered news, but what you're talking about is disinformation.

It's a complicated world we're living in now. We live in an overabundance of information and content, and an overabundance of disinformation. Then you have deep fake news in the mix and you have algorithms that cause people to go down filter bubbles. In the last five to 10 years, it has just completely changed the way a public broadcaster has to respond. I would say, as said in Montreal and everywhere, in my mind, one of the reasons that I accepted this wonderful job is that I believe that public broadcasting has never been more important than it is today.

When I meet with other public broadcasters in Paris and London, or by telephone with Australia, we're all facing the same challenge,

which is how to protect and defend our citizenry from this unbelievable tsunami of disinformation.

In a sense, we become a beacon for truth. The key to your question—in the notion of a public versus a state broadcaster—is that we need the public to feel safe and to know that we are a beacon for that truth and that they know....

We may make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes, but the journalistic standards and practices state very clearly that we measure, we research, we're transparent, we weigh and we try very hard to present both or all sides of a particular subject. That is the nature of the public service and the mandate. We take it very seriously.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I'm a big fan of John Stuart Mill, whose notion was that you may understand your position totally, but unless you can talk about the other position equally well, you don't have a right to make a choice between them.

I think that I'm interpreting what you're saying as being in support of the utilitarian notions of John Stuart Mill. Thank you for that. Thank you for reinforcing my belief system and my bias. I will be much more comfortable in my bias when I go to bed tonight.

I just recently met some friends of CBC who are here. Can you tell me a little about your relationship with them and how that functions?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I think they're Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, just to be accurate.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** What did I say?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Friends of CBC. Of course, we've followed the work of Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, but, again, they are a political advocacy group, and as you know, part of what I just said to you was that we do not get involved in political positions because we absolutely have to stand free from any influence. To the extent that we try to distance ourselves from any particular bias, we work very hard to do so.

● (1605)

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** Two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I'll share with my friend Shaun.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chen.

**Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.):** Thank you very much to our witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Tait, I know that you were appointed to the CBC in 2018 and that what I'm about to raise is something that happened before your time, but it's important because there's the saying that we can always learn from the mistakes of the past.

In 2012, the previous government cut \$115 million in funding for the CBC. Although I know you were not at the helm of the organization at that time, what would be the consequence if that type of cut were made to CBC? How would that affect your organization?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** It's something I, of course, ask myself and my colleagues here today. We are very cognizant that history can repeat itself. Hopefully, it won't in this instance.



There are a couple of things. Most recently, in our strategic plan that we launched, we talked about the need for the public broadcaster to maintain its diversified revenue model. I'll bring that right upfront to say what it means. Every public broadcaster in the world has a diversified revenue model and seeks commercial revenue to balance their government revenue, whether it's a parliamentary allocation, a licence fee or whatever model their funding from the public might be. For us, we consider that to be a key insurance policy for the vicissitudes of the future, whatever they might be.

To your question directly on what we would have to do, we would have to cut, we would have to look around all elements of our business and we would have to reduce service. Just so you understand, there are parts of our business where, perhaps in our television schedule for example, where we make money, with a show like the *Bye bye*, but there are services that we deliver to minority communities, francophone communities outside of Quebec, that simply would not be business ventures at all. They're entirely dependent on the public dollars we receive. It's the same on the English side and for certain services to the north. The reason we're the only ones there is that the privates would never go there because these services simply don't make any money at all.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** One of the great services—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but you're out of time. Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Arnold for five minutes.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here today. This is a really interesting conversation.

I hear from you time and again that you're non-political, yet our colleagues across the way seem to be making this meeting very political.

I want to get back to the purpose of the study as it was laid out here, which is to review the mandate of the CBC and Radio-Canada as it relates to the Broadcasting Act. In the brief that we received, it specifically mentioned paragraph 3(1)(m) of the act and the subparagraph 3(1)(m)(i) that says that it “be predominantly and distinctively Canadian”. In this changing world of digital accessibility, where media outlets are having to reinvent themselves—private media in particular basically reinventing itself daily, weekly and yearly to keep up with the changing access to information from all over the world—can the CBC both continue to be competitive for listenership and fulfill its current mandate driven by the Broadcasting Act?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** One of the reasons I believe the government invited a review of the act is to address the issues of digital media and to modernize the act. Our submission is pretty clear about that. We're not just a television and radio broadcaster anymore. We are obviously trying to reach and serve Canadians where they are through digital media.

If your question is: Do we think the act should be modernized? Absolutely. Do we think the CBC and Radio-Canada can maintain its competitiveness? As to competitiveness, we don't think of ourselves in those terms because we exist not to compete; we exist to serve.

●(1610)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** But you are competing. You're competing with private broadcasters in the same service areas; you're definitely in competition with them.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** If you're talking about competing for advertising dollars or audience share, those are different things. What we do is provide services across the country to Canadians who would otherwise, in many cases, receive no information and no programming, because the privates have simply had to retreat in the face of a whole lot of financial pressures, and we understand that.

We do not want to be the sole voice in those communities. We're working hard with private media to try to figure out ways to work with them to solve that particular problem.

With respect to advertising, it's important for you to know that we represent, on the digital side of the equation, less than 1% of the digital ad dollars in the Canadian system. Google and Facebook are hoovering up 75% of those dollars, and we represent less than 1%, so that's—

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** That's why I ask my question. Can the CBC continue to be competitive under the current mandate?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I would say that as long as we are given the flexibility and maintain the independence and flexibility to serve Canadians the best way we possibly can, yes, we can continue, but we're going to have to be creative and smart about how we fund those activities.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you.

Again, getting back to this quickly changing world around us, with the assimilation of global markets and global connectivity, we are seeing Canadian companies being bought up by foreign entities, absorbed into U.S. firms and so on, simply because of the size of our market being 10% or less than that of the American market. In fact, in one industry I know of we're less than 2% of the world market. We're being pushed more and more to be assimilated into that U.S. culture. How can CBC or Canada stand up against that? How do you see that being possible?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** One thing we say in our buildings across the country is that the best antidote to fake news is real news—truth. I believe, and I wouldn't be here and I don't think my colleagues would be here either, if we didn't believe as an organization that as long as we're focused on truth-telling and serving Canadians in their communities and reflecting Canadians in their local communities in the regions, no international company is going to be, I don't think—not yet, anyway—interested in delivering services to Iqaluit or to Red Deer or to Fort McMurray, or to any of these small communities. There's no business in it.

As long as we stay focused on that, I believe that Canadians will continue to want to support us.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Picard, go ahead for five minutes.

**Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.):** Good afternoon, Ms. Tait.

My comments are somewhat along the lines of what was brought up in the beginning. You are making efforts to diversify your platforms, for example, with TOU.TV. On the one hand, is the obligation to diversify leading to additional costs, as it compartmentalizes your services? On the other hand, has this enabled you to reach a broader audience, or is your audience simply more segmented or more specialized, depending on the medium?

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** That has increased our viewership. The programming we offer on platforms does not really vary from one platform to another. There are just more broadcast windows. Very often, a televised show has its first broadcast window on TOU.TV and ends up on ICI Radio-Canada Télé six months later. We are seeing that the conventional television audience has not decreased. We are reaching more people than before by offering products on a number of platforms.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** I assume that the segmentation of the offer leads to higher costs, and thereby an increase in public investment.

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** Exactly.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** You said earlier that you were not a competitor like other television networks or other media. You still provide all kinds of news programs. You're not the ones investing directly in that. The public is, and it wants to know how the return on investment is assessed.

When a service is provided instead of bargaining, how is the return on investment assessed?

• (1615)

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** As the public broadcaster, our objective is not to make money, but to provide a service and fulfill our mandate. As I was saying earlier, our criterion concerning the return on investment is not that we have to do something else, but that we absolutely must do it differently.

For example, a private broadcaster may not have taken the risk of producing a show like *Unité 9*, which takes place in a female prison. Producing *Les pays d'en haut*, a historical show that costs more than a regular show, is also a risk taken by the public broadcaster.

For us, return on investment is the ability to offer programming that is different from the programming private broadcasters can provide.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Since more platforms make it possible to access a broader audience, do you plan to add platforms for which new investments will have to be made?

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** No, not in the short term.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** I will discuss something else now.

In entertainment, we have choices: television, cinema, outings, bars, and so on. The situation is a bit more restricted in terms of current events. We need to watch the news.

In Canada, is there a trend in news delivery? In the United States, some networks follow certain directions more than others. There are trends. However, it seems that some networks in Canada provide news that, if not skewed, is at least biased.

Are you noticing that kind of behaviour? Is that reflected in your news?

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** I would say that there is a balance in news coverage that private broadcasters and the public broadcaster in Canada can provide. I feel the same neutrality and objectivity on both sides. I don't feel that the American trend is currently manifesting itself on the Canadian side.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** One of the problems that we will have to deal with and that is being discussed in other committees is the issue of fake news in the election context. You have proposed real news as a remedy to fake news. For me, the problem is not in knowing whether real news can be the remedy to fake news, but in knowing how I can determine whether the news is real.

**Mr. Michel Bissonnette:** This is greatly a matter of brand trust. That is what we are seeing in all age groups. When we present the Radio-Canada brand, people know they will receive quality information they can rely on. During the election campaign, we also add fact checking. Every day, we check what has been said and confirm what the truth on the matter is. Next fall, we will launch something new that will really help people distinguish between fake news and real news. That will help Canadians be better informed and better prepared to deal with that situation.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** I have no further questions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's all? Okay.

[English]

We are now going to Ms. Wagantall for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to be here today. For three of us sitting here, this is not the committee we're normally on, so I'm playing a little bit of catch-up here. I have to admit I've gone to Google to get some information, but I've used the CBC news app, just so you're aware.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Well done.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** It's very important to me that, as you say, the facts be straight. We have heard some reflections on past cuts to the CBC. I thought it was important to look that up and to try to understand the dynamics involved there.

You said, Ms. Tait, that you don't want to see history repeat itself.

Huge debt is a problem, and that's what our country found itself in in 2008-2009 and into 2010 with the great depression that hit the entire world. That was the dynamic under which that particular government—the Conservative government at the time—was functioning. I saw here that it said—

**The Chair:** Ms. Wagantall.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Yes.

**The Chair:** She can't comment on government policy as far as—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** That's fine. I'm not expecting her to. Thank you.

The federal government cuts, it said, will mean that the CBC will lose \$115 million in funding over three years, according to the budget release at the time. So the public broadcaster saw 10% taken from its current \$1.1 billion budget as part of a \$5.2 billion cut overall to federal spending over three years. The CBC budget was trimmed by roughly \$36 million per year for those three years.

I'll read this comment from the CBC: "As part of the government's plan to cut spending, all federal departments, agencies and Crown corporations had to submit budgets showing five per cent and 10 per cent cuts".

Now this is interesting to me, because I remember this happening. I wasn't involved in government at the time, but I'm from rural Saskatchewan, and I listen to CBC Radio all the time. At that time, I don't know who was representing the Canadian broadcasters, but the individual who was responsible for dealing with this for the CBC was on radio and made the comment that she found it to be an incredibly helpful exercise to work through that and to determine how to deal with those circumstances. The article says: "A statement by the broadcaster said it will implement the reduction 'in a way that doesn't overly compromise' its strategy for increasing local coverage".

That says to me that this entire country had to work together through a very difficult time, and the CBC was doing its part and yet was still determined to increase local coverage.

I appreciate hearing your concern for continuing that mandate. I live 90 kilometres from the the one large community in my entire rural riding. My large community is 16,000 people, and as I drive from my home into Yorkton, I cannot get the CBC.

You're talking about making a priority these areas of our country that don't get other coverage—or where you are our coverage. Where in your plans or how high a spending priority is that for you, including the \$675 million invested now, which I applaud. Where do our rural areas fit in that priority? Can you give an percentage for the expected improvement in growth across Canada in rural ridings?

•(1620)

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Those are a lot of questions.

I wasn't there when that particular quote was given.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I can appreciate that.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** But I like that glass-half-full approach of whoever that person was.

I think it's important for everybody to understand, and if you're new to this committee, that CBC/Radio-Canada ranks 16 among 18 public broadcasters in the OECD family. The \$1.2 billion that we receive means practically, very roughly, that Canadians pay about \$34 per capita for their public broadcaster. When you look at the funding of the BBC, when you're into \$5 billion for countries that, by the way, are much smaller... We operate in six time zones, two official languages, eight indigenous languages, all of that—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Yes, I applaud that, and I understand it. So how do you plan to fulfill this mandate going forward?

**The Chair:** I'd like to flag that Ms. Wagantall's out of time, but I do want to give you time to respond to that, if you can just provide a quick answer.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I can't give you a percentage off the top of my head, and I don't want to mislead you. Going forward, we have made local and regional representation and representing contemporary Canada, meaning all of the diversity of Canadian voices, the top priority in our strategic plan. We will manage that within the resources we have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will now go to Mr. Long for five minutes.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I have a business background and had to balance budgets and make cuts and meet payroll and all of those things. One of the comments my colleague across the room made was that the CBC said the cuts wouldn't overly affect coverage.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I didn't say it; the CBC said it.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** The point is that "overly" meant that coverage would be affected, I would say. I was with the Saint John Sea Dogs and if I doubled my prices, it may not be overly, but it's....

I want to focus again on Mr. Scheer's comments or lack of comments about axing the news division of CBC. How many people work in the news division of CBC coast to coast to coast?

•(1625)

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** It's thousands. I'll just give you the top line number of employees at 7,500, and of those probably about 900 people are associated with technical services and all of the back office work. It's hard to say how many people work in news because there's all the infrastructure and the uplink and the managing, and the buildings, even, and then you have to divide it between English and French. I would say you're looking at probably about 5,500 people related to delivering our core service, which is news.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** You can't break that down to how many—

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** We could. I can't do it off the top of my head now. I could do it.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Maybe you could give us that information.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Sure thing.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Are you able to tell me how many jobs were lost after the Conservatives made the decision to cut the budget in 2012? You talked about, as the head of an organization, having to make hard decisions if you're faced with a budget cut. I've been through it, on a much smaller scale, of course, but you go line by line, division by division and what have you.

Are you able to tell us how many jobs were cut or what that cut in funding did to you?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I believe it's on the public record. It was in the range of a thousand people.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** A thousand people were cut. Obviously that had a major impact on the delivering of news or programming.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Again, to the quote that your colleague across the way mentioned, I think what we did was to try to privilege local service at the time. Again, I wasn't there so I'm just trying to be generalist here. I think we tried to privilege the boots-on-the-ground journalists whom we have. That's the core of what we do. The beating heart of CBC-Radio Canada is the boots on the ground. In programming we may be spending on independent producers or others, who are also impacted by cuts, by the way. It's not just our own workforce; it's the whole industry. There would have been cuts in those areas as well.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Would the cuts to the news division also affect the programming division?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** As I just said, yes, it was across. And by the way, it would have gone to corporate; it would have gone through overhead; it was throughout the corporation. I'm assuming, again; I wasn't there

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Mr. Scheer also called the organization bloated. One of his advisers promised to go for the jugular when dealing with the media. It's pretty clear to me that some people on the other side don't trust the work and the ability to fulfill the mandate independently.

Do you feel Canadians have lost trust and confidence in the CBC?

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** I think I said earlier that we are the most trusted brand in the country, and that's done by third party research firms. It's not a figure that we come up with. There's the Edelman report that reports on trust.

Again, just to remind you, I would say that we experience an ongoing decline in our top line revenue that has nothing to do with cuts. It has to do with not being indexed for inflation, as well as forces in the media industry today, which have to do with the commercial realities of declining ad revenue for conventional television and decline in subscription revenue for specialty. I really think it's important to look at this holistically and to say, yes, there are pressures on the industry and it's not just one part of our world that we struggle with.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I appreciate your taking the time to speak with us today. It was very helpful and informative, so thank you very much.

**Ms. Catherine Tait:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're going to suspend briefly to give us time to move to our next panel.

• (1625) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1630)

**The Chair:** We are starting the second block of this committee. We are with Friends of Canadian Broadcasting. We have with us Daniel Bernhard, executive director, and Jim Thompson, communications adviser.

Thank you so much for being with us. Please start.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard (Executive Director, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting):** Thank you very much.

My name is Daniel Bernhard. I am the executive director of the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting and, as Ms. Dabrusin said, I'm joined by my colleague Jim Thompson today.

Friends is the citizens' voice for Canadian journalism and storytelling, in which public broadcasting play such an important part. We enjoy the support of hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are also our sole source of financing. Friends is 100% non-partisan and, for the record, we are not affiliated with any corporation or broadcaster, including the CBC.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Friends of Canadian broadcasting are working on protecting and defending our cultural richness and the healthy democracy to which it contributes. CBC's strength, journalistic audacity and our common history are at the heart of our identity.

[*English*]

Today's discussion requires some context. This week I attended a meeting of the International Grand Committee on Big Data, Privacy and Democracy, which basically highlighted the extent to which tech companies, predominantly Google and Facebook, are designed to supplant democracy and to erode individual autonomy itself.

These companies sell one thing: our personal, private data. They acquire it by spying on us, often without our consent. They use this data to profile us and then sell access to those profiles to advertisers. We generate more data with each passing second, so these companies spend billions of dollars to keep us online longer.

Facebook's number one incentive, therefore, is to publish content that retains our attention. They don't actually care what it is—hate, misinformation, even a mass murder in Christchurch, New Zealand—so long as we click, like, and share it.

Facebook understands that human beings have evolved to take a particular notice of threats. As danah boyd, a researcher at Microsoft, put it, we are biologically programmed to be attentive to things that stimulate; content that is gross, violent or sexual; and gossip that is humiliating, embarrassing or offensive.

Facebook is Canada's number one source of news, and so I'd like to ask a question. Who among you thinks that it's a good idea for us to get most of our information from a company whose business model depends on publishing the largest possible amount of content that is gross, violent, sexual, humiliating, embarrassing or offensive? Who thinks that this is healthy for our society?

Facebook has a mandate to shock, spy and profit. CBC has a mandate to inform, enlighten and entertain. That mandate is more than simply appropriate for the digital age; in this era of unbridled surveillance capitalism, public service media are more imperative than ever before.

The issue before us is not, therefore, the suitability of CBC's mandate but rather whether the corporation is equipped to fulfill it. At present it clearly is not. As Ms. Tait said before, at \$34, CBC's per capita budget remains among the lowest in the developed world. I'll just add that adjusted for inflation, CBC's current budget is lower than it was at the bottom of the Chrétien cuts when the budget was cut by \$400 million in the 1990s.

Of course, to make matters worse, the Government of Canada is actively subsidizing the very forces of misinformation that CBC exists to counteract, essentially diluting its beneficial effects. As the members of this committee know well, a loophole in the Income Tax Act subsidizes the price of ads sold by companies like Google and Facebook by exempting their products from long-standing penalties. This loophole cost taxpayers \$1.6 billion in 2018. In 2017 this committee very sensibly called on the government to close this golden loophole. The reason for the government's inaction remains a mystery to me.

[Translation]

This is a matter of priorities. We just have to look at where we are spending our money to understand what our true priorities are. The value of exemptions and subsidies Canada grants Facebook, Google and Netflix represents 250% of what it has invested in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

[English]

Canada must catch up to other countries by imposing its laws, its rules and its taxes on Facebook and other digital giants whose business interests harm the public interest.

We must also substantially increase CBC's budget—and quickly. Even more importantly, we must ensure that CBC becomes ever less dependent on the two sources of revenue that most constrain its ability to deliver on its noble mandate: government and advertisers.

Ultimately, the key is independence, and independence begins at the very top. We strongly recommend legislative changes to ensure that CBC's board members have no partisan affiliation and that the government has no say whatsoever in their selection and appointment.

New legislation must also grant the board complete and exclusive authority to hire and fire the corporation's CEO.

When it comes to funding, the simplest approach to increasing CBC's funding is already provided for in existing law: prohibit the deductibility of foreign digital advertising expenses. In 2018, this would have generated up to \$1.6 billion, enough to increase CBC's parliamentary appropriation by 145% without costing the government a dime. This approach would alleviate pressure on public finances, and it would also serve to address very reasonable concerns about our public broadcaster's independence.

• (1640)

[Translation]

In addition, a surtax on targeted advertising is very necessary. If your company pollutes democracy, you should be responsible for cleaning it up. A 5% surtax on targeted advertising supposedly generated about \$385 billion in 2018, which is enough to cover all of CBC/Radio-Canada's advertising revenues. Asking Netflix to collect sales tax would generate an additional \$130 billion. Once Disney, CBS and other foreign corporations come here, to Canada, that figure will increase considerably.

[English]

On the eve of the general election, we know that public opinion research shows that voters support these proposals overwhelmingly. For some parties, reviewing the CBC's mandate appears to be code for eliminating whole services, or even killing it completely, but I can assure you that such policies would be very, very unpopular with the voters who you are now working to court. I'd be happy to discuss the results of our latest Nanos poll with you, if you'd like.

The world is currently embroiled in an existential struggle for democracy in which information and cultural industries are the ultimate prize. CBC doesn't need a new mandate; it needs a new commitment to fund it properly, sustainably and responsibly. To be ready for those funds, it needs to be financially and administratively independent of both political and business concerns.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Hogg for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Thank you very much for that presentation. I love your phraseology about how, if your business pollutes democracy, it should pay.

You made reference to a Nanos poll. Are there some anecdotes or some highlights on that on which you can provide us comments?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Sure. I'll turn it over to Jim Thompson.

If you'd like to see the full results of the poll, you can see them there on friends.ca, but Jim will have some more specific information for you.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Maybe just give us a couple of highlights, because I don't want to have too much of my time taken away.

Thank you.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Jim Thompson (Communications Advisor, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting):** Sure. I give just a couple of highlights.

If you asked your constituents, about eight in 10 would advise you to increase or maintain CBC funding. That's 79%. CBC is the institution that is most trusted by Canadians to protect Canadian culture and identity on television. Seventy-seven per cent of Canadians hold CBC in that kind of regard, and 84% agree that, with the decline of traditional media, it is as important or more important to have a strong and independent CBC. In the last 10 years, 250 publications and media outlets have closed across Canada, mostly in small- and medium-sized communities. Those are some of the highlights.

I'll just finish up by saying that social media's influence on our democracy is seen as very negative. Sixty per cent say that Canadian democracy is weaker today than it was five years ago because of the influence of social media.

• (1645)

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Thank you.

Certainly you talked about being 100% non-partisan, about wanting to have a healthy democracy and working towards a healthy democracy. It seems that for half a century, our democracies, our governments, were becoming more liberalized, our economies becoming more universal, and in the past seven to 10 years there seems to be a reversal of that.

Do you see the equivalent happening in some of the things you referred to in online media and the influence it's having?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I think it's important for us to be precise when we use terms like "liberalize" and "deliberalize". We're not talking about becoming more like the Liberal Party or less. I know that's not your sense.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** No, I had no intent of making a political reference.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Absolutely. I just wanted to be clear about what we're referring to.

I think that when you look at some of the leaders around the world with more authoritarian tendencies, you will notice a consistent disdain for facts and for the journalists who work tirelessly to produce and disseminate those facts.

Platforms like Facebook are extremely helpful to people who would like to escape scrutiny and deliver their version of the truth or their preferred narrative directly to people, as though the truth and these untruths were somehow just different opinions that should be regarded equally. We've seen this not just around the world; we've seen this in Canada as well. The fact that platforms like Facebook have no standards and no responsibility of quality, of truthfulness or of integrity in the same way that, for example, Canadian broadcasters do...

I'll just give you one little example. Can you tell me what you think would happen if CBC or CTV live-streamed a mass murder in progress? There would be a riot, but Facebook did exactly that with the Christchurch shootings.

These tools, I think, are very dangerous for a society that requires people to be informed.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I understand you've launched a campaign called #WeChooseCanada #WeChooseCBC to help make Canadian

journalism and support prominent issues, perhaps even in the coming election. Can you tell me a little bit about that, and what your intent is with respect to that?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Absolutely.

As Mr. Thompson said, support for CBC is very strong across the country, and that support extends to people of all political persuasions, and the numbers really support that. Our job is to put that support on prominent display.

Right now, whether it is leaving open the loophole in section 19 of the Income Tax Act or foot-dragging on having Netflix declared a broadcaster for the purposes of Canadian programming expenditures, the government has demonstrated a strong preference, perhaps through inertia or by default, for foreign companies that make negligible or even negative contributions to our society and democracy over Canadian broadcasters, especially the CBC, that exist to enrich us and serve us.

We've also found that some of the opposition parties have not made their positions on these things known publicly. Our attempt is to serve this clear public desire for strong and credible Canadian journalism and storytelling, including in small and rural communities, to get politicians in key ridings to come clean about their views on these subjects, and also their party's views. We're hoping to extract strong and clear commitments from all the parties to make their positions known. Canadians expect it, and I think Canadians deserve it.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Thank you.

How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have [*Inaudible—Editor*].

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** My buddy, Shaun.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** Thank you.

Our government chose to do things differently, and in 2017, for the very first time, individual applications were accepted by an independent advisory committee on appointments, which was then tasked with making recommendations for new board members. You did raise in your testimony a concern about partisan appointments to the board. Can you speak to whether or not this new process has made a difference? It sounds like you might have other suggestions as to how to improve that process.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I think that's a great question. Thank you for that question.

I think the new process is definitely a step in the right direction. What we would like to see is for that process to be enshrined in the law so that it's not just a choice of the current government on how they will choose the board and the management. That's the first thing. The second thing is that the government should have no say in who the CEO of the corporation is. The CEO was chosen through the same process as the board. We think the board should be appointed by this independent process, and that board, like any corporate board, should have the sole authority to hire and fire the CEO at its discretion.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** That completes the end of your time, in fact, so we will not be going to Mr. Arnold for seven minutes.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here today. Those were great presentations. As Ms. Wagantall mentioned in the previous hour, all three of us are actually not regulars on this committee, but it's always very interesting to take part and sometimes bring in another outside view.

Your organization is obviously very supportive of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I grew up in a rural area where CBC Radio and CBC television were the only choice we had for many years, and I still listen in occasionally, especially in the morning to get the early morning news, so it's very important to me.

Mr. Bernhard, I want to bring up a quotation of something you mentioned in your early presentations. You referred to the online or the digital social media organizations as “spying” on us.

Could you qualify that as spying, or are they really making their business model exploit information that is freely given to them?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Do you have a Gmail account?

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Yes.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Did you ever sign on a dotted line to say, Google can read all of my email in order to sell me stuff more efficiently?

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** You click on the terms of agreement.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Okay. I would challenge you to read the terms of agreement of all of these services and see whether you're still alive by the end. It's an incredibly long process that I think people are not.... We cannot reasonably expect people to agree to those things.

The other thing is that companies like Facebook and Google will follow you around the Internet even if you don't consent. If you've been to any website that has a Facebook “like” button, for example, on it, Facebook will take information about you. They'll be able to digitally fingerprint you and determine who you are and create a data profile on you even if you have never signed up for a Facebook account, never consented, never opted in.

This is called surveillance capitalism by Professor Zuboff from Harvard University. She has a fantastic, albeit thick, new book on the subject, and it is very aptly named. This is about surveilling you and turning your private experience into raw material for profit.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I believe you said you were here, either taking part in or observing the testimony in committee earlier this week.

The owners of Facebook have refused to appear and ignored the subpoena to appear.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Yes.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Would you care to comment further on that?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** When representatives of countries containing 400 million people ask a very important company to explain itself and its impact on democracy and that company decides not to appear, I think that speaks volumes for their respect for the people's will.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Okay. Thank you.

I want to get back to the study motion, as I did in the last hour. The study is to review the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada as it relates to the Broadcasting Act. I'll quote again from that act, out of the briefing note that was provided to all the committee members today: “Canadian Broadcasting Corp's legislative mandate is outlined in sections 3(1)(l) and (m) of the Broadcasting Act”, and from out of paragraph 3(1)(m), item 3(1)(m)(i), which says that it should “be predominantly and distinctively Canadian”.

I'll ask the same question of you that I asked of the CBC representatives who were in during the last hour.

In this changing world of digital accessibility where anyone anywhere who is digitally connected can receive news or information almost instantaneously from anywhere else in the world that is connected digitally, can the CBC continue to be competitive in that market? That is what it is. Even though CBC says they're not trying to compete with other broadcasters and so on, everyone in the media business competes for listenership, readership, followings and so on.

Can they continue to be competitive and remain predominantly and distinctively Canadian, when we have such minimal content to provide compared with the rest of the world?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I would say they can, and more than that, they have to; they must. Entertainment programming and news programming are not like other industries. They shape our sense of what's possible. They teach us who to empathize with. They help inform our ideal of what the normal society looks like. I don't want my children to be informed about what a normal society looks like by a country where it's okay to take a gun to a preschool. I don't think that's a good idea.

If we want to maintain our independence and our independence of values, we need to have a strong Canadian voice that expresses our culture and our society. That's what independence looks like.

However, that's not free. With such a small per capita budget as Ms. Tait said, the CBC broadcasts in six time zones, with one sixth of the budget of the BBC, which is only in one time zone and one language.

That stuff is not free. If we want to have it, we need to find ways to pay for it. The independent methods of financing that I'm referring to are really important for the committee to consider not only because of pressures on public finances that currently exist, but also because of the need to ensure that the corporation is fundamentally independent of government. That will allow them to be distinct, because they're not depending on advertising.

● (1655)

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Can I interrupt? I have only one minute left for a further question here.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Sorry. I apologize.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you. We always run out of time.

I just want to make sure that we're open and transparent here. I believe you said you're a not-for-profit organization.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** You're non-partisan.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** That's correct.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Could you provide the committee with the list of elected federal officials whom you have lobbied over the past four years?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** That's a matter of public record. It's all in the lobby registry. We don't need to, but we do.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Could you provide it to the committee?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Sure. We can.

**Mr. Jim Thompson:** Yes. Our audited financial statements are online as well.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** I'd ask the clerk to circulate that to the committee members once it's received.

**The Chair:** Yes, it will be circulated once it's given to us.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Nantel, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here.

I have been fighting for eight years for the issues you have just raised. I have been using the same arguments as you, but certainly not as effectively. Congratulations. It is really good to hear.

Frankly, the NDP often fights alone on these issues. Earlier, you actually said that the opposition parties must take a stand. What did you mean by that, especially in light of the questions my colleagues have just asked you?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Some parties have not taken a position. You are right, the leader of the NDP announced twice, last August and again a few weeks ago, that he supported a series of policies, including closing the tax gap in section 19 of the Income Tax Act. So

there is a degree of support on the NDP side. We are pleased to see that some parties are convinced of how important these issues are.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I'm glad to hear you say that. For some time now, I have had the feeling that there is a sort of apathy towards all-powerful lobbies. As I'm saying these words, I realize that they are very predictable, because we are used to reading them.

We grovel before companies like Google and Facebook that do business here without paying taxes. They control more and more things. However, it is incredible that Canada hosted the meeting earlier this week.

Some countries are taking the bull by the horns in terms of legislation. I often refer to France, probably because of my bias as a French-speaking Quebecker. That country has sought a percentage not only of profits, but also of economic activities. This simply means that the companies are present, with local content and contributions.

How do you explain the fact that Canada is doing absolutely nothing? The Conservative government did nothing for 10 years. When the Liberals were elected in 2015, they said it was an absolute priority, but four years later, they still have done nothing.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I can't explain why exactly. However, I can say that the signs are promising. For example, the Government of Quebec, which tends to be middle-of-the-road, has passed legislation to collect sales tax from foreign digital service providers, such as Netflix. Even here, at home, we have examples of actions that the government can take.

I would like to add that applying tax laws and rules equitably is not a matter of ideology or politics. A number of political theories are based on these principles, including those of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the NDP. Those principles are outside the realm of politics, in a sense.

I hope all parties can agree on these issues. They have the opportunity to take advantage of the very strong public support. It is up to the parties to seize this opportunity.

● (1700)

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I personally had two areas of concern when I arrived in Ottawa eight years ago: the fight against climate change and the defence of cultural industries. There are many parallels to be drawn between the two. In both cases, we can say that no one can be against motherhood and apple pie. Of course, we want to preserve our planet. Of course, we want to ensure our presence on the screens. However, in both cases, it seems that the government does not want to take the necessary measures.



In terms of web giants, the first thing to do is to ensure that, if a transaction takes place in Canada, the GST is applied. However, every time we ask the Minister of Finance a question, he gives us the runaround, tells us that it is complicated and assures us that he is meeting with the representatives of these multinationals in the G7 and G20.

As you pointed out, the Conservatives' way of thinking is that everyone must pay their taxes, and that's a given. We expect that rigidity from them. We can imagine that the Liberals want to maintain the services that go with those taxes.

How can this attitude be explained, if not by a short-sighted view of the election? In other words, they do not want to increase Canadians' bills by 50¢, even though Netflix has increased its rate by 33% this year.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** They have increased it twice.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** How can we explain that? Is this a case of a short-sighted view because of the election?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** These companies are not charities. They therefore charge the highest price they think they can get. This includes taxes.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Of course.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I have left economic theory behind in the past, but I agree with you that all parties, Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats, have the opportunity to adopt this policy. It makes sense and can help us to fund public services.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Hasn't the Netflix tax issue been blown out of proportion? It has become a sort of phenomenon. As soon as we talk about a tax or increase, everyone is in a state of shock. However, this is actually perfectly normal. After all, I pay GST on my summer tires.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** People are opposed to the Netflix tax; no one has ever proposed it.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Yes, there is no such thing.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** People are opposed to it. So it's political.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you very much. I think my time is up.

**The Chair:** No, you have some left. It's just that I wanted to bring the discussion back to the CBC. We were getting a little off topic.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Okay. So I will talk about the CBC.

The CBC has mentioned the possibility of replacing its advertising with public funds.

How do you see the situation with advertising funds, for the CBC and for all general-interest broadcasters?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Advertising revenue is in decline for all media, both for broadcasters and newspapers.

However, for the public broadcaster, this is of special importance. To provide something different in order to stand out from private broadcasters, it must have a specialization, as Mr. Arnold mentioned. Eliminating or reducing the dependence on advertising revenue can provide a different direction for programming. If your content is intended to attract the attention of, and be sold to, companies, that's one thing. If you have another objective, the programming can change and it's possible to create a different approach.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** You produced a video that has provoked a lot of discussion this week—

**The Chair:** Mr. Nantel, your time is up now.

I'll give the floor to Ms. Dhillon for seven minutes.

● (1705)

[*English*]

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you for taking the time to be here.

You mentioned during your statement that our government has allowed companies such as Netflix and others to give negative messages in Canada. Can you explain what you meant by that statement, please?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I wouldn't include Netflix in that statement, but companies like Facebook, for example.

The example I gave in my prepared remarks was with reference to the massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand, which was live-streamed on Facebook to a potential audience north of 2 billion people. Retransmission of a hate crime is itself arguably a hate crime in Canada, and also a violation of just about every principle in the Broadcasting Act.

There are new realities in the media world, such as Facebook Live being a broadcaster and YouTube effectively being the largest radio station, and there are copyright rules, standards of quality, truthfulness and decency, and application of tax. I could give you a very long list of a number of provisions that are not applied to these foreign digital companies in the same way that they are applied to their Canadian competitors, which are offering essentially the same service, and when it comes to things like Christchurch, the example is pretty damaging.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** That's fine.

**Mr. Jim Thompson:** All of these things have a value, as well. This goes to this question of competition. The value of the exemptions and direct subsidies for just Google, Facebook, and Netflix is \$2.7 billion a year. It is a significant tilt of the playing field.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** We have this negative aspect, but there are many positive aspects, too. Do you not think Canadian consumers are entitled to having a diversity of opinions?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Yes, I do. For sure.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** To get their news from different sources, to—

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Absolutely. Journalism is something that somebody does. It's not a licensed profession or anything like that. A diversity of perspectives is very important, but I would like to draw a line between the act of saying something and the act of having that thing retransmitted and promoted to a huge audience without any sort of context.

If someone sent a letter to the editor of a newspaper or to a television station saying something racist, harmful, misogynistic, or whatever, they can do that. They have the right to speech. That's not a crime. The editor putting that letter on the front page, however, is a slightly different story. We're talking about platforms that are effectively putting this stuff on the front page, and making a lot of money doing it, with total impunity. That's a competitive disadvantage, and I don't want to live in that society. I don't know if you do, but I don't think that's a good idea.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** What can your organization do to help itself? What can the CBC also do to be competitive?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** If the problem with Facebook is that they're basically prepared to do anything and everything in order to maintain attention, including showing some of this vile, awful stuff, which is bred into our evolution, then having a broadcaster or a media company like the CBC, which has a whole different set of incentives, be strong enough to be a counterweight or a complement is really important.

I'll give you an example from the 1920s. The CBC was created in 1932. In the 1920s, we were getting almost all of our news and ads from the United States. The most popular radio show in Canada was the *Amos 'n' Andy* show. When *Amos 'n' Andy* eventually went on TV, it was two white guys in blackface.

That was not funny here. So at the height of the Great Depression a Conservative Prime Minister created the CBC, because they said, that's not who we are and we are not going to let this incredibly powerful technology take us down that road. I think we're at the same moment here. We need a strong counterweight in the media sector that can reflect our values and allow us to be independent of countries that think it's okay to take a gun to a preschool. I don't think we want to go down that road, and with media you are what you eat, to some extent.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** You've spoken about the CBC and your organization helping to preserve and reflect the face of Canadian society. I don't see much ethnoculturally sensitive programming. Are you doing anything to help improve that situation?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** We are not part of the CBC and we don't participate in production decisions, which is probably a good thing. But I agree with you that programming needs to reflect all of Canada as it is, and where it's going, to challenge us to be a better country.

Here I would come back to what I said earlier: new programming of high quality is not free. If you wanted to hold CBC properly to account, for example, for not taking diversity seriously and not reflecting Canada's current face back to itself, I think it would be much more appropriate to do so if they really had the resources to produce that stuff and yet didn't.

Right now they simply don't have it, and when they're dependent on deals with Netflix, for example, to pay the bills, then they're going to do what Netflix wants, which is generic stuff that could be set anywhere, that doesn't reflect the issues and the dynamic that exist here.

I agree with you. We need more ethnicity and ethnic diversity. We need to reflect Canada as it is, but in order to do that, we need to finance that kind of programming.

●(1710)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** But how come other channels are able to do it and the CBC cannot do it?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** What example do you have that are different?

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** There are other ethnic channels. They give their time to other ethnic programming and kind of open that door. It's not just today that we have ethnocultural people; they've been here for centuries. For me, what I see is not reflective of Canada.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Are you referring to something like OMNI, or a broadcaster like that, which has...?

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Yes. Why can't CBC do a little bit of something like that? They're doing other programming, so why not that?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I think there are a lot of good examples like OMNI, which is a strong public service. There are a lot of other broadcasters that are trying to get in and are now doing things like IPTV, because they can't sell ad dollars. There's a lot of opportunity for us to use the broadcasting system to advance Canadian values. The direction you're going in is a positive one; I think we need to go further, just as you say.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Yes, okay.

**The Chair:** That's all of your time.

We're going to Mrs. Wagantall now for five minutes.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Thank you so much.

I really appreciate your being here and that I have an opportunity to hear you and learn.

I have one question. It's just a quick yes or no answer, because I have more after that. It was mentioned that in the 1990s, Chrétien cut \$400 million from CBC. Did you exist at that time?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Yes—me personally, and the organization did.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Thank you.

I'd like a little feedback on what happened in September 2017. The Minister of Canadian Heritage made an agreement with Netflix to create Netflix Canada. Netflix Canada announced that it was going to put \$500 million over five years in Canadian content—into production here to support Canadian creators, producers and Canadian expression on a global platform. They're investing \$500 million because of this opportunity, but then they immediately raised the cost of that service to every Canadian who had it, to the point where this \$500 million became our expense, truly, rather than theirs. Given the context, I find that quite frustrating. The appearance is that they are doing something to work together with the government on producing Canadian content, but then what I said happens.

Is that a danger, quite honestly, in this kind of scenario where Canadians end up paying for it regardless?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** No one's seen that deal because it's a cabinet secret under the Investment Canada Act, so I can only speak to the press announcements that you talk about. Canadian broadcasters that are licensed by the CRTC have something called a Canadian programming expenditure requirement. It's typically set at about 30%. Netflix makes about a billion dollars in Canada. Their Canadian programming expenditure requirement is zero, so the government tried to say that they were bringing them into the regime. In fact, what we've learned is that this is \$500 million over five years. It's not \$500 million new dollars.

They invest in Canada already, so we may have actually done this deal for zero new dollars. This is money that should go back into the production ecosystem. Potentially, there are opportunities to do things like telling Netflix that they have to spend money here to produce shows and that those have to run for the first two weeks on the CBC.

There are ways for us to finance public broadcasting creatively and to work with these platforms without costing the government money.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Another thing that I've noticed—and I don't care about what the particular issue was—is that this behaviour of announcing punitive action against specific jurisdictions for their political perspectives is something that Netflix has done recently.

• (1715)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I raise a point of order about relevance. Thank you.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I am coming back to the CBC.

**The Chair:** I've kind of let it go because there was a link being made for a little while as to funding for the CBC, but we are moving far away.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** I'll make the link, Madam Chair.

I totally appreciate the very important role that you play. It's broadcasting across the picture in Canada. I really like this and I think there needs to be that kind of accountability and transparency. I'm very supportive of Canadian broadcasting, and that's what we want; however, Canadians still need to know that fact-checking is taking place.

Canadians are wonderful, but I work in a place called the House of Commons and across the floor, beside me and around me, all of us will present totally different truths. One of us could be right or we

could both be wrong, but there's no way we're both right, so this is something that we need even within our broadcasting systems.

I had an individual during the last election stop me at their door before I even spoke and said that she'd been a journalist all her life and wanted to apologize for her profession. How do we make sure that fact-checking is taking place even within our own content? This is greatly disturbing to the students I meet. I go to so many schools and there's a lot of concern about making sure that facts are being presented in news.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I can't speak to—

**The Chair:** Within the context of the CBC....

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I can't speak to this journalist's journey of repentance—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** No, I know that.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** —but what I can say is—

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** She wasn't repenting.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Okay.

Within the context of the CBC, if there is a concern about bias or anything like that, it can be addressed by making both the administration and the funding independent of the whim of Parliament. This is something that we do hear from opposition parties. We hear it from government, too.

There is an old joke. I think it was Turner who said that if he could walk on water, the CBC would say he couldn't swim. That's the old thing.

The need for independence is big because that way, even if there is an adversarial relationship, no one can say that the CBC is hewing to the whim of the government; it's important.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** But you represent Canadians.

**The Chair:** I'm going to say you're out of time.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** You're going to say it, or I am?

**The Chair:** You are out of time. You are at 5:06. You're out of time.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I have a little timer beside me.

We're going to Mr. Hogg, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Thank you.

Certainly the values you reflect, I think, are Canadian values and wanting to maintain that level of independence.

I was interested when you talked about the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting and your initiatives. Can you tell me a little bit about those initiatives across Canada and the types of things you're doing to reflect the values you've talked about?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Sure. We engage in public policy research; for example, this whole issue of the tax loophole in section 19 has surfaced, in large part, due to research that we have financed.

I referenced a recent Nanos poll, for example. We also paid for that.

We gather our supporters together for local non-partisan political actions of the kind I referred to earlier.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Can you talk a little bit about those and where you hold them? Are they right across Canada?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** They're right across Canada in the areas where we think we have the ability to make a difference. That's a result of a combination of the polling situation and the number of people we can contact in a given place.

**Mr. Jim Thompson:** An example is the Vaisakhi Parade in your constituency of South Surrey. We're active in London West as well. The honourable member for London West is at the table. We're active there. We'll be at the Leslieville tree festival on June 15 in the riding of Madam Chair.

These are activities that we engage in to show support for public broadcasting and support for de-fanging FAANG and in the promotion of these kinds of initiatives and values.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I'm interested in your comment that you hold these events in areas where you think you'll have an influence. How would you make that determination?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** It's public opinion polling and voter intention. I think it's something that all of you are very well familiar with. We try to find places where the races are close and where we have a large enough number of families that we think we can make a difference and be heard.

• (1720)

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** Would that be the majority of ridings across Canada?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** In the run-up to this election, we'll be active in 23 ridings. We have aspirations to be active in 23.

**Mr. Jim Thompson:** There are about 364,000 people who support Friends' work through their financial contributions or their action.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** I'd also just like to say once more that this is a strictly non-partisan effort. We are trying to show that there is a base of support for these policies and to encourage any and all parties to go after that base of support.

Yes, we have views on the government's policy. We have views on the policies of the opposition, because we are an issue-based

organization, but our goal in these things is not to get any one candidate elected or defeated. We will never, ever tell anybody whom they ought to vote for. We will simply put the support for these issues on display and try to help politicians within their own parties to show that we can make the case that supporting these things not just as the right thing to do but also the expedient thing to do.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** In the targeting of the ridings you made reference to, it's a reflection of those values in areas where you think you're going to have some impact. Is that a fair interpretation?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** In terms of influence across Canada....

Thank you. That's very helpful.

**The Chair:** You have about a minute and a half.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** My colleague Anju has made reference to an Air India documentary and that it is biased and harmful to their community as a whole, and they deem it to be unacceptable.

How come the CBC doesn't have money to show positive cultural programming, but this documentary has been seen as negative and discriminatory every October for the last 20 years? Could you make a comment on that in terms of the balance that she is referencing there?

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Again, I can't speak to the editorial decisions—

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I'm talking about the values.

**Mr. Daniel Bernhard:** Yes. I can't speak to the editorial decisions of the public broadcaster. Its independence is really important to us, so I'd like to respect it. I can simply say that I think the public broadcaster is always well served to listen to Canadians. Having more resources to consult with Canadians is definitely important. I don't agree with that kind of content, but I am not in a position to change it.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that's the end of your time.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I'm pretty much done, eh?

**The Chair:** We are pretty much done. In fact, I let us go over time by a couple minutes since we started a little late, but we're now at the end of the meeting.

I want to thank you both for your testimony. It was very helpful. This was an interesting conversation.

The meeting is adjourned.







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