



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 012**

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Friday, January 29, 2021

---

Chair: Mr. Scott Simms





## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Friday, January 29, 2021

• (1245)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

I'm going to go through a few things before we start. As you know, we were waiting for the minister right now. Due to technical difficulties, we cannot reach him.

I'll update you after I read through these notes about the newer form of how we deal with this version of virtual Parliament.

Welcome to meeting number 12 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a motion adopted by the committee on November 16, 2020, the committee is meeting on its study on the relations between Facebook and the federal government.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021, and therefore members are attending in person in the room and remotely using Zoom. Proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

The first meeting, today's meeting, is also taking place in the new webinar format. Webinars are for public committee meetings and are available only to members, their staff and witnesses. Members may have remarked that the entry to the meeting was much quicker and that they immediately entered as an active participant.

All functionalities for active participants remain the same. Staff will be non-active participants only, and can therefore only view the meeting in gallery view.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants to this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen are not permitted.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations, we are also maintaining practices within this physical room.

For those participating virtually, I would like to outline a few rules as follows.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of "floor", "English" or "French". With the latest Zoom version, you may now speak in the language of your choice without the need to select the

corresponding language channel, of which I'm sure all of you are aware.

Of course, as I mentioned before, and as you all know, please address all your comments through the chair. Because we are in a virtual format such as this, let's be careful. I ask that if you are asking questions, please mention the person to whom you are asking the question. It makes things a lot easier, given the virtual format.

I've just been told that the minister is online, so let's go to our first guest.

Minister Guilbeault, I'm glad to see you. You have five minutes.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you very much. My apologies for the lateness of my arrival. It seems that events are conspiring against my participation in this committee meeting. We had a fire alarm where I am right now, so we had to exit the building.

That being said, we actually explored the possibility of my joining by phone outside. That was technologically complicated, it seems.

I am joining you from Montreal, on the traditional territory of the Mohawk and Haudenosaunee peoples.

[*Translation*]

I want to start by acknowledging that, four years ago today, a gunman took the lives of six people at the Quebec City mosque and seriously injured 19 others. They were Muslim fathers, husbands, loved ones and friends. Their sudden and tragic deaths were heart-breaking not just for their families, but also for Muslim communities around the world and all Canadians.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, I am very happy to be appearing before you again today.

With me is the deputy minister of Canadian Heritage, Hélène Laurendeau; as well as Jean-Stéphane Piché, senior assistant deputy minister.

[*Translation*]

The pandemic continues to weigh heavily on Canada's heritage, arts, culture and sport communities. We are all committed to helping them get through the crisis and supporting them in their recovery.

I want to thank the committee for pursuing its important work despite the difficult circumstances. Your study on the challenges faced by the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors caused by COVID-19 will be a valuable asset in these efforts. Canadian Heritage was pleased to participate.

I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work you have done on Bill C-5, which seeks to establish the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday.

When we met for the main and supplementary budget estimates review, I had just tabled Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts. It will be referred to your committee shortly, and we will welcome your input on this legislation as well.

As I indicated before the holidays, I look forward to better understanding your perspectives and how the bill could be improved.

[*English*]

Like many Canadians, our government is concerned about the current imbalance that favours the web giants at the expense of Canadian businesses. The economic and social stakes resulting from this situation are too important for us to stand idly by.

That is why the Speech from the Throne mentioned that things must change to ensure more equitable sharing of revenues with our Canadian creators and media.

Mr. Chair, our government is committed to regulating digital platforms and putting them to work for Canadians. One of the objectives of Bill C-10 is to require those platforms to invest in our creators, our music and our stories, which could lead to more than \$800 million of additional money being invested here in Canada every year.

This bill has been positively received by the community and stakeholders. I must share the credit for this success with the employees of Canadian Heritage, as it would not have been possible without their supporting work. I would like to salute their expertise and professionalism. As you know, it is up to elected officials to lead the development of public policy, and our government has been very clear on how we want to tackle social media platforms and web giants. The Canadian Heritage team is providing excellent evidence-based support in this regard.

[*Translation*]

Our government will also complement these efforts by levelling the playing field on the tax front, as we proposed in the 2020 fall economic statement. Digital businesses will now be required to collect and remit the GST. We will also ensure that digital corporations pay their fair share of taxes in respect of their activities in Canada.

I must also note that we are currently studying a made-in-Canada formula to ensure fair remuneration of news publishers by online platforms, similar to what you might have seen move ahead in certain other countries.

We have seen during the pandemic that digital platforms are more than ever at the heart of communications between Canadians, and are keeping us connected. Unfortunately, some Internet users are also exploiting these platforms maliciously to spread hate,

racism and child pornography. There is currently illegal content being uploaded and shared online, to the detriment of Canadians and our society. This is simply unacceptable.

My apologies, Mr. Chair, but I'm having some technical problems.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Could you do a quick summary, Minister? We're just closing in on your time right now.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm going to stop here. I'm sure I'll be able to tell whatever I need to tell as I answer questions from my colleagues from the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister, for those opening remarks.

We're now going to questions.

I believe Mr. Louis is up first, for the Liberals.

Mr. Louis, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.):** I don't think it's the Liberals' turn.

**The Chair:** Oh, I'm sorry, it's the Conservatives. I apologize.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I believe it is the Conservatives' turn.

[*English*]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** It's also six minutes, not seven, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Right, I know. I'm sorry, I confused this with the last one.

Go ahead, Mr. Rayes. Are you up for six minutes?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to ask questions.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Before I get to my questions, I would like to thank the minister, as well as the senior officials with him today, for making time to meet with the committee for its study—a study on the possible ties between Facebook and their department, a study that must be completed quickly. We found out that an email was sent. It has raised questions, so your being here will help us get clarity on the situation, I have no doubt.

I want to take this opportunity, Minister, to discuss the last time you appeared before the committee. On November 5, I asked you a fairly simple question. I wanted to know how your department had arrived at the calculation that an additional \$830 million would be invested in Canadian content, both televised and digital, by 2023. You were here with your senior officials then, as well, and you seemed to say that it was fairly simple information to provide us with. You even shared it publicly on *Tout le monde en parle*, in front of a large audience.

It would appear, then, that the information is known. At any rate, calculations were done to arrive at the figure, and yet, in my various meetings with major players in the digital and TV world, I realized that no one seemed to understand the math behind the figure.

On December 7, we still hadn't heard back from you or your department. The committee, including your fellow Liberals, adopted a unanimous resolution, calling on you again to make the information available to us. As you know, we are starting a prestudy on Monday. There was agreement across the board, despite the fact that the debate on Bill C-10 is still under way in the House. As I see it, the information is pretty important, if only to ensure transparency. We want to be sure we have all the information available pertaining to the bill—a bill that is giving rise to quite a few questions as we speak.

Next week will mark three months since you told us you would provide us with the information, information you shared publicly without providing details.

Here's my question. Is it possible for us to have the information now?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you for your question.

Perhaps I should turn to Mr. Piché or Ms. Laurendeau, but I believe we can get you the information on the calculation or formula behind the \$800-million-plus figure. Either a public servant or someone from the department could appear before the committee, or we could provide the information in writing. I should also point out that it's a projection, not an exact figure.

We can certainly provide the information to the committee. You're right that it's entirely appropriate to share the information with the committee members.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** If I may say, Minister, the information is known, and according to you, it's appropriate for us to have it. That is exactly what you said on November 5, when you looked to your senior officials, who claimed that it wouldn't be too complicated to get the information to us.

That was three months ago. We then asked you again by way of a unanimous motion on December 7. That was nearly two months ago, and we still do not have the information. Can we expect to have this important information in hand by Monday, before we begin our prestudy? You, yourself, said it's one of the key elements of the bill you brought forward.

The representatives of the organizations we've consulted are all wondering where the figure came from; none of them are able to

work it out, so they have concerns. It would be a good idea to take some of the pressure off before we even start the prestudy.

• (1300)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Ms. Laurendeau, Mr. Piché, could one of you round out my answer to Mr. Rayes?

**Ms. Hélène Laurendeau (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage):** I would say two things.

First, we have nothing to hide when it comes to how we came up with the modelling behind the figure.

Second, I defer to Mr. Piché, but I think it might be helpful for the committee to receive an oral explanation to go along with the documentation. Forwarding the documents without providing further details could lead to confusion, so it might be helpful if we could provide the committee with not only the documentation it has requested, but also a clear explanation—similar to technical briefings we've done in the past. That would be with the committee's permission, of course. We would be glad to do that.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Rayes, I think Mr. Piché can provide you with more information.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** All right.

**Mr. Jean-Stéphane Piché (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage):** The figure was calculated using the assumptions on which the current regime is based. I think we explained that once before when we appeared before the parliamentary committee. Canadian broadcasters have to spend a certain amount, not just in direct contributions to funding, but also in production-related operating funding. According to estimates for a company like Netflix, we can estimate a certain amount will be generated based on a similar figure.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Mr. Piché, sorry to cut you off, but I don't have a lot of time.

You've told us that already. We spoke to the people at those organizations, and the numbers don't add up. The stakeholders don't come up with the same figures.

We asked you, three months ago, for an explanation in writing. You, along with the minister, said yes; you said it was doable. Then, we asked you again by way of a unanimous motion on December 7, and now you are telling us that you can provide the information, but it needs to be supplemented by an explanation. Give us the documentation and come before the committee with an explanation, then. I can assure you we will be very glad to hear what you have to say. It will help us do our work, especially since we are starting the prestudy on Monday.

As I see it, the least you can do is hand over the documentation three months after we asked for it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rayes.

[English]

I've been a little bit generous over the time, so I'm going to have to move on to the next question.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** I apologize to everybody. I do have the right list now.

[Translation]

Mrs. Bessette, it's your turn for six minutes.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for being here today. As you said in your opening statement, six worshippers who gathered for evening prayers at the Quebec City mosque lost their lives four years ago today. I want to offer my sincerest condolences to the families of the victims.

The heinous crime was motivated by Islamophobia and xenophobia. Soon after we learned that the perpetrator had been radicalized on social media. As we all know, Canadians using digital platforms are often exposed to content that promotes hate, violence, extremism and even radicalization.

Since your mandate letter calls on you to create new regulations for social media platforms and since you said you would be introducing corresponding legislation in the House soon, I would appreciate a progress report on the very important work the government is doing to protect Canadians online.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for your question.

This morning, I read an excellent piece on Radio-Canada's site about how the shooter had become radicalized on social media before doing what he did on January 29. A few months ago now, we undertook a joint initiative with several departments and ministers. The Department of Canadian Heritage is working with the Department of Justice, the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Department of Innovation. We are preparing to bring forward a bill that will set out a regulatory framework to control hate speech, child pornography, incitement to violence, incitement to terrorism and the non-consensual disclosure of images.

Not many countries have tackled the problem, but a few have. Meetings and discussions have been held with representatives of those countries, at both the working level and the political level. The idea is to see how we could adapt existing models to Canada's reality and needs. Just last week, I was talking to Australia's eSafety Commissioner in an effort to really understand how the country went about implementing its system and what to watch out for.

Like anyone who endeavours to introduce these types of controls, we are concerned about protecting freedom of expression. In the real world, however, we established rules over the years to control freedom of expression, through both laws and court rulings. We are working to determine how we can replicate the framework that already exists in the real world and apply it to the virtual world.

• (1305)

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you very much, Minister, for all the work you are doing each and every day to better protect Canadians on digital platforms.

While we recognize that everyone has the right to freedom of speech, rules are in place to limit speech when it becomes hateful, offensive or racist. Social media have played a major role in amplifying hateful messages aimed at the most marginalized communities, violating their rights without being held responsible.

Could you please tell us how you plan to hold social media platforms accountable and make them answerable for the publication and distribution of unacceptable content?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The purpose of the bill is to establish a new regulatory framework in Canada, one social media platforms will have to abide by.

A regulator will be created to enforce the new regulations and monitor the efforts made by platforms to combat hate speech in relation to the five categories I mentioned earlier. The broadcasting legislation, Bill C-10, will provide more clarity, including the various tools at the regulator's disposal to impose fines for non-compliance.

You're right. It is an issue of concern to a growing number of Canadians. As you probably know, the results of an Abacus-led survey commissioned by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation came out earlier this week. The findings show that the vast majority of Canadians have witnessed or directly experienced violence on social media. Women and racialized groups are much more likely to be targeted than other segments of the population. A very large percentage of Canadians want the government to do something.

There is no doubt. We are going to do something. We are introducing a bill soon, and we would be pleased to return to discuss the legislation in support of the committee's work.

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette:** Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Bessette.

Mr. Champoux, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, Ms. Laurendeau, Mr. Piché, it's a pleasure to see you again. We're always happy to have you with us to answer our questions.

Mr. Minister, you said in your opening remarks that the collection of the GST is now being imposed on large Internet service providers. The media has been calling for the implementation of regulations for content publishers for a very long time.

The last time we spoke, you said you were looking at different models. That was a long time ago. In the meantime, News Media Canada, which includes the vast majority of news content publishers, has taken a strong stand on the model they would like to see in Canada, and it's the one that would be based on the Australian model. Given the unanimity in the industry, I wonder why we're still waiting to push this idea, to implement it, to adapt it to the reality of the Canadian market.

What's holding you back, Mr. Minister?

• (1310)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for your question.

Our approach to the web giants consists of three pieces, if I can put it that way. We've already introduced the first piece, Bill C-10, which concerns the cultural component. Shortly, in the spring, we'll introduce a second bill, which will deal with online hate speech, and then a third bill, which will deal with the media issue.

You asked us what's holding us back. As you know, as legislators, we can't copy and paste a model that works in one country and import it to Canada. Every country has its own laws, regulations, institutions and practices, whether cultural or legal. Models really need to be adapted to reflect these differences. For example, we have a free-trade agreement with the United States, but not every country in the world does. It's important to realize that there are countries that, in the space of just one year, have decided to regulate the web giants with respect to culture, online hate and media. I know of only one that hasn't, and that's Canada.

Other countries are doing different things. For instance, just before the holidays, Britain passed its online hate speech law. Canada isn't the first, but it is certainly among the first in the world to address these issues, and to do so on these three fronts at the same time.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Mr. Minister, are you able to tell me if you have a formula that can be implemented? I understand that you're talking about everything that's coming up and all the issues around the Broadcasting Act, social media management, web giants and the rest. Meanwhile, regional weeklies are suffering and closing down. It was already critical before the pandemic; you're well aware of all this. These weeklies are wondering why this law isn't being passed as a priority so that they can get royalties from those who distribute their content and profit from it.

Have you identified a model that is being worked on for implementation? At the moment, there's a great void. Can we tell publishers that something is coming soon?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I don't agree with you, it isn't a void. We recognize that there's a problem, and have done so for a long time. That's why we've given hundreds of millions of dollars to the media. We started doing that before the pandemic, and we continue to do so. We've even increased that support to media in times of pandemic. It's true that for some media, it's difficult, but for others it's different. You may have seen, as I did, the results of *La Presse* published recently. For some, it's going pretty well, despite everything. This won't prevent us from acting as quickly as possible.

As you know, in a parliamentary system in a democratic society, you can't pass laws that have been drafted hastily. It takes a few

months. A few months ago, I announced that we were working on this and that we'd be introducing a bill this spring. It's going to be done in virtually record time.

Is there one model that we like more than another? France and Australia have taken two very different approaches to tackling the same problem. France has focused instead on copyright by creating the notion of neighbouring rights. Australia, on the other hand, relied instead on market forces and recognized that there was an imbalance in the market. It created a forum for economic arbitration, so to speak.

These are two very different models. We are working with our colleagues at Canadian Heritage to determine which model would be the most relevant and would yield the best possible results, given our laws, regulations and institutions.

• (1315)

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Mr. Minister, I have mere seconds left.

Could you tell me when this year it will be introduced and set up for the media in Canada?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It should be this spring. We want to introduce this bill during the current parliamentary session.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Ms. McPherson, you have six minutes, please.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you so much.

It's nice to see everyone. This is our first meeting of this committee. We are looking at the relationship between the heritage department and Facebook. I want to thank the minister, the deputy minister and the senior assistant deputy minister for joining us today.

I'm going to stick to the questions that are related to the study, so I'll ask a few questions around that, if you wouldn't mind.

First of all, could you tell us whether, since 2015, your department has agreed to circulate job offers from other web giants such as Google, Amazon or Netflix? If so, do you know how many times your department has done this?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I said in my introductory remarks, I've been minister for a little over a year, but my experience with the Canadian civil service preceded my arrival in politics. As many of you know, I was an environmental lobbyist for many years.

We have one of the best civil services that this world has to offer. It's one of the most professional, talented and dedicated. I knew that before coming into politics. I didn't know the ministry of heritage so much. I knew others, but my previous experience and my actual experience just confirmed what I knew from the outside. That's the first thing I'd like to say.

In terms of a specific job offer that would have been sent to the ministry, I don't have that in front of me. Perhaps H el ene or Jean-St eph en might be able to provide a bit more clarity on that.

**Ms. H el ene Laurendeau:** This is not a practice that is vastly happening within the Department of Canadian Heritage. There is sharing of information for professional development purposes. There are some jobs within the government that are sometimes.... In fact, in recent years, for the pandemic where we have sent these *appels   tous* or calls for everybody—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I really do hate to be rude, Madam, but we're now three minutes into my six minutes and I haven't had an answer yet. I'm wondering if it has been done and how many times. I'm sorry.

**Ms. H el ene Laurendeau:** It's not a practice that is happening in the department.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** It hasn't happened any time, then.

**Ms. H el ene Laurendeau:** No.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Okay, so that hasn't happened. Political staff have never circulated a job offer from Facebook, Amazon, Netflix or Google since the minister took office as the Minister of Heritage.

**Ms. H el ene Laurendeau:** I wouldn't know about political staff, but from public servants, this is not a practice that has been happening.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Okay, thank you.

Minister, when you learned that your executive director had agreed to share a job offer from Facebook, did you investigate whether this practice violated the values and ethics code for the public sector? If you did, what were the conclusions of that, please?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I did ask the department to look into the matter. Obviously this is not political staff. Since it's someone from the ministry, I turn to the deputy minister for answers on that.

H el ene, you could provide the member with the response that you gave me on that.

**Ms. H el ene Laurendeau:** I reviewed a fax associated with that email as a first step. I can assure the committee that we came to the conclusion that sharing publicly available information is not a reprehensible act.

I would also add that we are taking to heart issues regarding values and ethics. We have a very solid framework of prevention and follow-up on those matters. I am very confident that my staff are meeting the highest standards with respect to conflict of interest, values and ethics.

• (1320)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madame Laurendeau, could you clarify too, in terms of your conclusions from that, whether you have advised the staff to not share these sorts of postings in the future?

**Ms. H el ene Laurendeau:** My conclusion was that sharing publicly available information is not a reprehensible act. While I had a conversation with staff, there was nothing that needed to be addressed specifically with respect to that information.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Not reprehensible, but perhaps not advisable, I would argue.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** She just told you that it doesn't violate any code of ethics or best practices from the government, so I think that from that you can't say, well, it may not be advisable. Does that violate any code of ethics—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I think you could—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —or code of conduct? The answer is no. How many times did it happen in the last year? Once, that particular instance.

I take issue with the fact that we would question the ethical value of our civil service in Canada based on something that's simply not there and that we would—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** With due respect, Minister, it is there. That's why we're having this meeting.

**The Chair:** Minister and Ms. McPherson, I apologize, I'm going to have to stop right there. I've been somewhat lenient.

For the benefit of our colleagues, we're going to go through a complete second round. We are going to surpass our scheduled time by five to 10 minutes, but given our late start I thought that would be the equitable thing to do.

Now, we go to Mr. Waugh for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Thank you, Minister, and department heads.

I just wanted to pick up on the conversation here of Mr. Kevin Chan and his email to Owen Ripley, a high-up official in the minister's office.

Minister, with all due respect, your introduction today talked about what you're going to do with BillC-10, hate speech and media. Directly, when you look at it, Facebook is involved in this. There are major potential implementations to Facebook in the work of your department.

That's why I think we brought it up today—we just flagged it for you and I have the conflict of interest framework in front of me—and that's all we're asking. The values and ethics code applies to all staff, regardless of level, and most of the provisions, as you know, are based on the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.



We're not questioning anybody civil service-wise. We're trying to, in this case...“report in writing to their deputy head any conflict of interest resulting from firm offers of employment and other activities related to their duties”. It's in here.

That's what we were just talking about. You're dealing with Facebook more than anybody in the government and we're concerned when we see a personal email from Kevin Chan to one of your employees in the department. This is too cozy.

As opposition members we're concerned with this. I would like you to comment on that. I know you've only been a minister for a year or so, but this does not look good. If you don't mind me saying, it smells when Facebook, which you will have a major implementation with in the coming months, is sending personal emails to your staff.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Of course, we in the department talk with Facebook on these issues, but we also speak with the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, la Fédération des femmes du Québec, the World Sikh Organization, the Chinese national council for social justice, Amnesty International and the Anti-Hate Network. When drawing up legislation, we try to gather as diverse as possible points of view and opinions on an issue so that we can better inform the legislation that we will do.

I am a strong believer in the benefits of technologies, but we also have to recognize that many technologies have a perverse impact. We've seen that throughout the years. I think our role as legislators is to maximize the benefits to society of these technologies while trying to minimize those perverse impacts. I am on record saying that when Facebook threatened Australia with cutting ties with the Australian public on Facebook because of what Australia was trying to do in terms of legislation, it was no less than bullying. In fact, we have an upcoming meeting with France, Australia and Germany to see how we can work together on issues relating to GAFA.

Yes, we meet with these companies, but we meet with a whole range of different intervenors on these issues. What we're working on with the department is what will be in the best interest of Canadians, regardless of what the social media platforms, Facebook or others, think about it.

● (1325)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I think the issue here was that Facebook went through your office looking for recommendations from your office, Canadian Heritage, saying that they had a job opening and could you recommend anyone. That's the issue that I think the NDP member from Edmonton brought up here. That's what we're talking about here today, or a bit of it, and the media picked up on it. You know and I know that the Toronto Star and The Globe and Mail had articles on this.

Facebook is a big multi-platform in the world. You've pointed that out. At the same time, we're wondering how cozy Facebook is with you when they do a personal email to a member in your office asking if you have any recommendations for a position that is opening in Canada Facebook.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I can tell you there is no coziness, plain and simple.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Minister. I have to leave it at that. We have to move on.

We'll go to Ms. Dabrusin for five minutes, please.

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

Minister, we have crossed a year, at this point, since the pandemic hit Canada. Over the pandemic we have seen our public service rise to the challenge when we have talked about emergency funding and making sure that we deliver to and support Canadians through this pandemic. In addition to dealing with the emergency, we have also seen work being done and continuing on such legislation as Bill C-10 and the truth and reconciliation day. A lot of work has been happening alongside it. It has been really quite impressive, considering we've been working under these conditions.

I would note, on the motion that we're here about today, that with this motion the member from the New Democratic Party has chosen to actually challenge the credibility and the professionalism of our public service. Given everything we've seen in the States and in other countries, how do you feel about that chipping away at the credibility of our institutions, at the fundamental trust in Canada's public service, and at the institutions that support the very important work that is being done in our country?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I agree. I said it earlier: I think Canada has a world-renowned public service, and it's integral that we not attack them to try to score political points. We saw on January 6 where that can lead, just south of the border.

It's interesting that many of us would condemn the fact that social platforms were instrumental over the past few years in the escalation that led to what we saw on January 6. We would condemn those media platforms for sowing doubt in the population in regard to public institutions among our neighbours to the south.

I hope no one is under the false impression that we're somehow shielded from that result in Canada and that what we saw there couldn't happen here.

I think everybody in this country has a responsibility, a duty, and especially elected officials, to ensure that we protect our institutions. The last thing we should try to do is to somehow diminish them in the hope that we could score points. There are other ways we can score political points. Of course we're political adversaries—I understand that—but certainly not at the expense of our institutions.

● (1330)

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I think that distinction between the institutions and the public service and the political realm is important.

I wonder whether you might also share, as far as policy decisions are concerned, what we will do by way of legislation—what forms legislation on online harms, for example, would take.

Who ultimately makes those decisions? Who is ultimately responsible for putting forward those policy decisions?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Obviously we are as legislators, under the advice of our civil service.

Bill C-10 is a very good example. I will be the first to admit that the bill can be improved. The team and I are looking forward, to the proposed changes we will hear about starting next week on Bill C-10.

When I look, however, at the way the bill was received by the vast majority of people in the sector, I see that it was widely well received. Some talked about a historic day; others talked about a significant step forward. It was from coast to coast to coast, or as some of my indigenous friends say, from sea to sea to sea.

I would like to tell you that it was all due to the amazing work of my political team and me, but it wasn't. I would hope to think that we worked well at the political level, but we would not have been able to do any of this if not for the amazing work and input from our civil service.

You spoke earlier about the pandemic. I hope there's no illusion around this virtual meeting that we could have done CERB, helping more than nine million people, without the help of our civil servants in Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. We appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Champoux, you have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll keep it brief.

Mr. Minister, you were talking about Bill C-10, and I see that it doesn't appear on the projected order of parliamentary business. According to your government, this bill is close to your heart and needs to be passed quickly, but I don't see it on the projected order business for the next two weeks.

Knowing that the preliminary study won't be proof of anything, when will we be able to vote on this bill?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's an excellent question. In fact, most of us would agree that the bill could be sent to committee. Some hon. members still want to speak in the House.

Procedurally, a number of bills are unavoidable. The bill on the economic statement is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, it will be very bad for the country. So some priorities are higher than others, and can't be sidestepped. However, I am hopeful that we will have a moment in the House to quickly conclude debate on Bill C-10 so that it can be referred to committee.

Thank you for doing a preliminary study even if the bill isn't yet before you. This will allow us to speed things up. Once again, thank you.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** I heard you talking about the situation regarding the email exchange between an official from the Department of Canadian Heritage and Mr. Chan from Facebook. You didn't seem to think it was a big deal. Don't you find this situation worrisome?

In a CBC article this morning, journalist Elizabeth Thompson talks about Facebook, which is calling on the government to regulate hate content on the networks. I view this with a bit of doubt and cynicism.

What is your impression of this and how do you think it's perceived?

• (1335)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Earlier, I told your colleague that I made a quick inquiry with the deputy minister to find out whether this action violated a code of conduct or a code of ethics and whether it had ever happened before. This was not the case for either the first or the second question.

Are we losing employees from the Department of Canadian Heritage who were recruited by these platforms? This isn't the case either. Perhaps Ms. Laurendeau can tell you more about this.

Facebook is calling on governments to regulate the issue of online hate. If this is the case for all platforms, between you and me, not to mention everyone listening to us, it's perhaps to share a little bit of the pressure that these companies are under because of everything that's going on. The more governments intervene, the more this pressure will be shared between them and us.

This appeal to the government to intervene is not completely disinterested.

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

[*English*]

Ms. McPherson, you have two and a half minutes, please.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a few questions. First of all, I take deep offence to the idea that I am in fact trying to score points. I'd like to point out that as a member of the opposition, my goal in my role and my job is actually to hold the government to account and to ensure that there are no unfortunate or inappropriate relationships. That's my job. I'm not scoring political points. Considering the work that this committee will be doing and considering the close relationship with Facebook, it is vital that I actually do take that on.

I want to just be very clear. This is a question for the minister. I would prefer if he answered.

Has your political staff ever circulated a job offer from Facebook, Amazon, Netflix or Google since you took office as the Minister of Heritage?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Not to my knowledge.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

The other issue that I take a bit of offence to as well is that when my colleague from the Conservatives asked about your relationship with Facebook—or the department's relationship with Facebook—and the consultation being done with Facebook, you compared the consultation with Facebook to meeting with the NCCM. I find that very problematic.

When we see the vast amount of hatred towards the Muslim community on Facebook, to compare those two is massively problematic, I think. One of my questions is about, for example, the Proud Boys, which was recently labelled by this Parliament as a terrorist entity. We know that Facebook has allowed the Proud Boys to organize and share their content on its platform, as well as to promote their posts to their users.

Knowing this, why do you think that it is acceptable for you or your officials to have meetings with Facebook about legislation such as Bill C-10 and presumably the legislation that will be seen on hate speech?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm not sure I understand the question.

If we're doing legislation, we should gather as wide an array of opinions and points of view as possible to ensure that we have all the information we need as legislators when we do move ahead with legislation.

As an environmentalist I would talk to people in the oil and gas sector all the time to understand what they were thinking. Should we only be talking with these people—that would be hugely problematic. That's not at all what we're doing. We've consulted about 50 to 60 organizations—and we'd be happy to share the list with you—specifically on the issue of online hate. That's not broadcasting or what we're doing on media, but specifically on online hate.

Yes, we spoke to Google and Facebook, but we spoke to a bunch of other organizations as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

I'd like to thank the minister and his staff for being with us today. I'm going to have to break very quickly and suspend and get ready for our next guests.

Thank you.

• (1335)

(Pause)

• (1340)

**The Chair:** Thank you, folks. We're now back in session for the second part of our Facebook issue here, which is the motion that was passed back in late 2020.

I'm going to introduce Mr. Chan first.

Mr. Chan, if you wish, please introduce the folks with you who are from Facebook. Following that, we'll proceed with your five minutes for opening remarks.

Thank you again for joining us.

**Mr. Kevin Chan (Global Director and Head of Public Policy, Facebook Canada, Facebook Inc.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm Kevin Chan. I'm the director of policy for Canada. I am pleased to also be joined here today with my colleagues: Marc Dinsdale who is the head of news partnerships, and Rachel Curran who is a policy manager at the company.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed for your five minutes, and then following that we'll go into questioning.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I thank you for inviting us to this meeting.

My name is Kevin Chan, and I'm head of policy at Facebook Canada.

[*English*]

I understand the committee would like to discuss a job opportunity we had open last year. The facts are the following. The job was publicly listed and openly advertised on the Facebook careers site, shared widely on social media and with a broad set of public policy professionals in the private, non-profit and public sectors. Interested and qualified candidates were required to apply online and then went through a rigorous interview process. I am pleased to share with you that Rachel Curran is the successful candidate from that process, and she is with us today. She is the only one who received an offer of employment, and she accepted it.

I also understand that some committee members are interested in the flow of people from one sector to another. Public policy professionals regularly cross over between the private, non-profit and public sectors. This kind of cross-sector experience helps build a better understanding of complex and nuanced economic and social issues.

The public service of Canada facilitates this practice. Interchange Canada, a cross-sectoral career mobility mechanism, has, since 1971, offered public servants opportunities to “build a better understanding and improve networks between the core public administration and other business sectors”.

The specific allegation that Facebook tried to recruit directly from Canadian Heritage is false, as was noted in our letter to the editor of the National Post, as was a headline about the matter that appeared in the print edition of that publication.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

We will of course be happy to answer any questions you may have on this subject, but first we would like to tell you what we've been doing to support Canadian arts and culture since the beginning of the pandemic.

[English]

A recent New York Times headline referred to a “Great Cultural Depression” in the wake of COVID-19, and that is not an exaggeration. Many performance halls, venues and festivals across our country have been closed since March 2020, and the impact on the performing arts has been devastating. In the early weeks of the pandemic, I reached out to officials at the National Arts Centre to see how we could work together quickly to help. On March 19, 2020, Facebook and the NAC launched #CanadaPerforms, a \$100,000 relief fund to support Canadian artists for their live online performances.

#CanadaPerforms has now grown beyond our wildest imagination, bringing in additional financial support from other partners, growing the relief fund to \$700,000. In those very difficult first months of the pandemic, we were able to support 700 Canadian artists and published authors, and their performances reached 4.75 million people who tuned in from coast to coast to coast.

I'll now turn it over to Marc Dinsdale, our head of news partnerships.

**Mr. Marc Dinsdale (Head, Media Partnerships, Facebook Canada, Facebook Inc.):** Thank you.

We are all aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the revenue pressures faced by news publishers. In response, we moved quickly to try to help. We announced a grant program for 85 Canadian local news publishers for emergency expenses associated with COVID-19 reporting, totalling more than \$1 million. We also invested \$1 million in a partnership with the Canadian Press to launch the Facebook-Canadian Press News Fellowship, creating eight new journalism positions across Canada that are directly adding capacity for reporting from local communities. We just announced two additional indigenous news fellowships.

My role and the role of my team is to partner directly with news publishers to maximize the value that free Facebook tools provide for their businesses. This includes free distribution that sends people directly to their websites, a value we estimate to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year for the Canadian news industry.

[Translation]

In addition, over the past four years, Facebook has invested more than \$10 million in Canada's information ecosystem, and we look forward to continuing these partnerships. We're committed to doing this not because information is an important revenue generator for us—it's not—but because it's good for Canadian society and democracy.

[English]

I'll turn it back to Kevin now for some closing remarks.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Thanks, Marc.

I'd like to end with some thoughts on Internet regulation.

Facebook welcomes more regulation.

[Translation]

We support strong privacy laws that provide citizens with clear protections and hold companies like ours accountable when they make mistakes. We agree that multilateral tax agreements should be updated through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, process in which Canada participates.

[English]

We agree that regulations could set baseline standards for what kind of content is prohibited online and require social media companies to build systems to enforce these standards. The status quo of having private companies decide what is and isn't acceptable speech online is not sustainable longer term and lacks transparency and accountability.

Finally, we agree that more needs to be done to support the future of journalism. That said, we do think it's important to clarify that people and publishers choose to share news links on our platform, not Facebook. Requiring Facebook to pay for this, as proposed in Australia, doesn't recognize this fact.

We look forward to working collaboratively across sectors to develop fact-based frameworks to ensure a thriving Canadian news ecosystem.

With that, Mr. Chair—and apologies for the technical troubles—we are happy to answer any questions from the committee.

**The Chair:** That's all right, Mr. Chan. Thank you for that.

Mr. Waugh, you have six minutes, please.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you Mr. Chan, Mr. Dinsdale and Ms. Curran.

Ms. Curran, I wasn't here when you were in the PMO. I got here late in 2015. You were in the PMO for a long time.

Is it typical when you get an outside organization, like Facebook in this case, to send a note to an employee of Canadian Heritage asking if you could circulate this job application around? I believe personally that there is a conflict of interest in this because Facebook does so much with the Government of Canada, and Canadian Heritage in particular.

Either you or Mr. Chan can answer that, then we'll move on to a couple of other things.

• (1350)

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Go ahead, Rachel.

**Ms. Rachel Curran (Policy Manager, Facebook Canada, Facebook Inc.):** No, go ahead, Kevin. I was going to refer that to you.

The public policy talent pool in Canada is quite small. Kevin can explain more about this, but it's quite common for job postings to be circulated widely in the private sector and the public sector, among government employees.

Kevin can talk a little bit more about that, but this is common practice.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** This was a public job poster. It was circulated widely. As I indicated, there are actually instruments within the public service of Canada to very much facilitate this kind of cross-sectoral mobility.

I think the goal is to come to better outcomes for the country. That is why we have people who go to different sectors. I've done it and Ms. Curran has done it. This is actually something that helps create better understanding and bridges those divides that I think I heard expressed earlier as concerns.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Thank you.

I just finished *The Tangled Garden*. That was an interesting book. You've had some input on that, along with Richard Stursberg.

I noticed yesterday that the independent Oversight Board overturned four of five of Facebook's decisions to remove posts with controversial content, including two cases of hate speech.

Can you comment on that? The minister before you started talking about hate speech and what's coming forward. Yesterday was the first time, I recall, that the independent board overturned four of the five cases they had in front of them.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** You are absolutely right. This was the first time the Oversight Board has issued decisions. It is still a very new board. It is a supranational governance structure that oversees and is the final board of appeal on all content decisions Facebook makes.

You are correct that yesterday, of the five decisions the Oversight Board issued decisions on, it overturned four of our decisions. As per the arrangement that we are bound to with this independent Oversight Board, we will honour and implement the decisions the Oversight Board made. We will take their policy recommendations and advice as advisory to our own content policies going forward.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Mr. Chan, in your introduction you talked about the millions of dollars Facebook contributes to Canadian media.

We've heard from coast to coast, as you know, and the newspaper industry does not share your excitement. Talk about the newspaper industry.

Everybody watched France. It has an agreement with Google and, I think, Facebook. Australia does not. The minister was before you a couple of moments ago. We don't have an agreement yet. We don't have a made-in-Canada agreement, which we desperately need.

The concern through the newspaper association—rightfully or wrongfully in your mind—is that you're stealing their content and paying nothing for it. That has been an issue for a number of years. Would you please address that today?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Absolutely, sir.

Specifically on this question of stealing, Facebook does not steal the content of newspapers and news publishers. As I indicated—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Do you pay for it?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** We do pay for some news where there is a voluntary arrangement with that.

As I indicated, I think the challenge for us is very much an Internet mechanical problem. This is to say that if a publisher shares content onto Facebook and we are not able to control how much and how often they share, and if we are then required to pay for what they share, then I think you can appreciate how quickly that breaks down and we're unable to accommodate.

Having said that, as my colleague Marc Dinsdale said in the opening statement, on the flip side of this value proposition is the free distribution that we provide to publishers. As Marc said, we are looking at something in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars in value to the newspaper industry though free distribution on Facebook in Canada. We do think it's important that this be acknowledged and recognized.

● (1355)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I would agree with you there, “acknowledged and recognized”.

Yet, I do see the bottom lines of Postmedia, Torstar and such, and they would not share in the excitement. They see their product exclusively on Facebook and they're not getting their due share of revenue from it.

Going forward—and it doesn't have anything to do with Bill C-10, the Broadcasting Act—there is a media component here that the minister said we'll bring forward in the coming months. Newspapers are dropping like flies in this country. This is one of the biggest issues, if not the biggest issue, right now in that industry. They're getting nothing from you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Waugh.

We now to our next questioner. Mr. Housefather, for six minutes please.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chan, Mr. Dinsdale and Ms. Curran, it's great to see you here. Thank you for coming.

I have three quick things. First, I think the email between Mr. Chan and Mr. Ripley has been adequately dealt with.

Second, I greatly appreciate Facebook's recent decision to ban Holocaust denial on its platform. I also appreciate your quarterly transparency reports. I wish that other platforms would do the same.

Third, many of my constituents and I share a real frustration about the growing amount of anti-Semitism on the platform and the lack of response with respect to complaints that are made. I'd request to have a call with you guys on that, separately, if that's okay.

I have a lot of questions. If you can answer in one word yes or no, or briefly, that would be great. If not, I'll ask you to follow up in writing.

There are about two and a half billion people who are regular users of Facebook and about 23 million in Canada. A number of those people do post messages that violate Facebook policies. Would you agree that Facebook has an obligation to deal with that content, Mr. Chan?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** We have a responsibility to remove anything that violates our community standards, yes, sir.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** You'd agree also that the people you employ in content moderation play a very important role in that. Is that correct?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** There are 35,000 people who work on content moderation at Facebook. Yes, they do play an important role.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** You'd agree of course that nuance is important. It's important for people to understand the language the post was made in and the political realities of that country when they assess whether something violates the policies. Is that correct?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Correct. That is why you have a public policy team in Canada, sir.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Of the 35,000 people who do content moderation, how many of them are based in Canada?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I'm not sure that I'm able to give that answer. As I indicated, I think what you're asking is who at Facebook actually is making sure they understand the nuances, for example, in Quebec where you represent, but also elsewhere in the country.

In fact, in terms of the public policy team in Canada, while many have speculated about where we spend most of our time, I am pleased to share with you that the team in Canada is actually the tip of the spear, if you will, on understanding these things. We are the ones who bring back the local, political and cultural context to ensure that our community standards are enforced accordingly.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Mr. Chan, I'm sure you'd understand that if Mr. Zuckerberg were before the U.S. Congress and were asked how many of the content moderators were based in the United States and wasn't able to give an answer—for example, I could argue that probably fewer than 100 and probably fewer than 50 of the content moderators who have a lot of discretion are based in Canada—I think you'd find that unacceptable. I would make a request that, going forward, Facebook tell head office that we need more content moderators in Canada.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** We will undertake to do that.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chan.

Does Facebook control what is in my newsfeed, through your algorithms?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** No, sir. Actually, the way it works is that people positively connect—they choose to connect—with friends and family or to organizations; for example, perhaps to your Facebook

page. Then what the newsfeed does is sort the content that individuals have already chosen to connect to.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I understand that. However, if for example I choose to search for “white supremacy” or for “swastikas”, Facebook is going to have an algorithm—or whatever you use, but I would think it's an algorithm—to determine that this is my area of interest. Would that not mean that Facebook would—on some occasions, and inadvertently, of course—be proactively amplifying hate speech or incitement to violence?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I don't think so, but let me turn to Rachel, because she's been working very closely with CIJA and other organizations on this matter, concerning searching for these kinds of terms on Facebook.

Rachel, would you care to answer?

• (1400)

**Ms. Rachel Curran:** That's a great question, MP Housefather.

What we have done, and we announced this on Holocaust Remembrance Day this week, is this. If you search for those kinds of terms, terms related to the Holocaust—“swastika”, “white supremacy”—you are going to get a notification that directs you to an off-site website developed with the World Jewish Congress, that gives you credible information on the Holocaust.

Users will, then, get a notification on Facebook that says to go to this site, and they will get good and accurate information on the Holocaust that explains what actually happened and the horrific events around the Holocaust. They will immediately have access to that information when they search for those kinds of terms.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** That's really appreciated.

I note, and I'm sure you guys read, that there was a Wall Street Journal article in 2016, which a number of my colleagues in the U.S. Congress referred to, that talked about an internal Facebook study. It said that 64% of members of violent groups became members because of the platform's recommendations.

Mr. Zuckerberg stated that Facebook had changed its policies and that Facebook was now proactively referring such threats to local law enforcement.

Would you be able to tell us how many threats, over the last 12 months, Facebook has proactively referred to local law enforcement in Canada?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** We don't have that information with us. I think much of this is actually available in our transparency reports concerning how many takedowns and requests we've done with law enforcement.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I couldn't find it, but if you could give it to the committee, that would be great.

On November 5, 2020, Steve Bannon, President Trump's former strategist, did a Facebook Live session in which he called for the beheadings of FBI director Christopher Wray and Dr. Fauci. The video was removed, but I saw yesterday that Steve Bannon is still allowed on Facebook.

Wouldn't you say that calling for the assassination of public figures would be grounds to remove somebody from your platform?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Again, I did not see that report, so I cannot comment on it. Certainly, if you wish to forward it to us, we're happy to take a look at it.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Champoux, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today.

I'd like to continue on a topic that Mr. Housefather brought up. I'd also like you to talk about your moderator teams, Mr. Chan.

Are there moderators in Quebec on the team that monitors Facebook activity? Is the mother tongue of these moderators French?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I just want to be very clear. We don't surveil people. There's nobody watching when people are posting. We just want to be very clear, so that people don't misunderstand—

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** It was already clear, Mr. Chan. You understood my question.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Okay, thank you.

[English]

As I indicated earlier, we don't share the exact location of content moderators. You can appreciate that sometimes there is risk to their personal safety for a lot of these sorts of things. However, I can assure you, sir, that we have people who speak French and who are engaged in the community operations work you're referring to.

[Translation]

I want to be clear: it's the public policy team in the countries where we operate that helps to understand the cultural and political nuances of the countries in which we operate.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** So it may take some time before content that Quebecers would find offensive is removed from Facebook, until your analysts who are not francophones or Quebecers whose mother tongue is French can understand that it is offensive.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I don't know that it's exactly how it is. I think we have different ways of doing this. To get to your point, we use automated systems with some of the machine-learning technology that has actually been pioneered out of Canada. We have an AI lab in Montreal.

A lot of the groundbreaking work they're doing there is to automate these things, so there are some things we can remove very quickly: for example, terrorist content, child nudity and child exploitation. I can tell you that proactively these systems find and remove over 99% of that kind of content that people try to put on Facebook.

The second door, which is a door that we're talking about here, is where context and nuance are important. Where context is important, we have humans look at it. We don't want to have just an automated system remove something and deny someone's speech, just because, without understanding the context. There, we do rely on humans; and there, I agree with you that it does take some time, but I think we generally are pretty fast at it. We can always improve and certainly we are working on it, but again, the statistics are upwards of 99% proactive removal before any human sees it.

● (1405)

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

I'd like to come back to the main reason for your appearance before us today.

Earlier, we talked to the minister and senior officials at the Department of Canadian Heritage. You don't seem to see a problem in the email exchange with that department regarding the job offer. You don't seem to see any reason for the discomfort we feel with such a close relationship.

If I understand correctly, you don't have a problem with that, do you? Would you do it again the same way?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I think the truthful answer is that we have business and professional relationships with all organizations that have a presence on Facebook, and also, obviously, with organizations having an interest in framing rules for Facebook.

First of all, this job description was public, and it was shared broadly with various and many different organizations and people across the public, private and non-profit sectors. There are programs within the government itself, in the public service of Canada, that facilitate this. In terms of a public job description that was broadly shared on social media and with many different contacts, is there a problem with sharing that with individuals in a particular organization? No, I don't believe there's a problem there.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Okay.

Let's talk a little about the news. Earlier, during the exchange of information, I heard your response to my colleague Mr. Waugh concerning the possibility of news publishers using your platform. There's always a nuance that's misunderstood in the problem that this represents. The problem isn't the platform and the fact that you allow them to get visitors to their online platform through yours. The problem is really the ad revenue grab. We know very well that the more traffic you generate, the more advertising revenue you're going to generate, at the expense of those you say you're helping.

Could you explain how you can benefit the media financially? Right now, the opposite is happening, despite what you seem to be claiming.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I'll turn it in a moment to Marc Dinsdale, who can maybe answer this question better because he's the expert. However, as we indicated earlier in our opening statement, in fact, newspaper publishers in Canada benefit from free distribution on Facebook, which we estimate to be in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars, so that is the value of that distribution.

Marc, do you want to weigh in a bit more on this?

**Mr. Marc Dinsdale:** Certainly.

When we look at this question of value, it is a very complicated one. As Kevin said, there's the distribution value of Facebook putting content in front of people who are interested in that content. There's the referral value of sending them to the people at the publishers' websites. Once they're on the publisher's website, it is the publisher who monetizes all the advertisement that they sell on that website; it is they who monetize any relationships they build to sell subscriptions, to solicit donations, to sell membership models, and so on.

I think those are the numbers that we don't see reported in all this, and we don't have the visibility into that side of the publisher's business as to what this means, but it isn't insignificant.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dinsdale. We have to move on from there.

[Translation]

Mr. Boulerice, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today.

You have become a key player in the public debate. Indeed, you have a considerable influence on millions of people. As the saying goes, "With great power comes great responsibility". From our point of view, you can, but more importantly, you must do better in many ways.

I'm going to ask you some very specific questions and ask you to keep your answers fairly short. Facebook spokesperson Meg Sinclair told the *Toronto Star* that it is Facebook's standard practice to seek our political analysts with government experience.

Mr. Chan, since you've been working for Facebook, have you or anyone in your organization asked other officials or other federal government departments to circulate a job posting for Facebook? If so, could you tell me which department and which position?

• (1410)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I can't speak for everybody at Facebook. All I can say is that as I indicated, this publicly available job description was shared far and wide in the public, private and non-profit sectors. I can tell you that nobody from Canadian Heritage was interviewed for the position, although we did interview people for the position from various political parties, including yours, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Chan, have you ever asked political staff to circulate a job posting for Facebook? If so, in which department and what was the position?

I hope to get an answer this time.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I gave you a perfectly good answer last time, sir. I'm happy to say that I did not do that, to my... We circulated it far and wide, but there was no purposeful attempt to say please circulate this or that to specific people. This was a public job description, so again, I do not believe it to be the case. That's the best I can give you in terms of an answer, because it's been a year.

Again, I try to be as open and honest as I can. I hope you can believe me on that, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Many people are wondering about the close relationship between Facebook and the current government. There are a lot of lobbying meetings. Do you think it's ethically acceptable to ask Mr. Ripley to post a job offer on Facebook while the government is considering legislative changes that will affect you and could affect your business and even your revenue? For a lot of people, it's all pretty shady.

Do you think it's ethically acceptable to do this while legislative changes are being considered that will affect you?



**Mr. Kevin Chan:** No. I don't wholly agree with your use of the word "louche".

[English]

Once again, we are calling for regulation. Our posture is not the one that you are, I think, with all due respect, implying. We welcome regulation. We're calling for more of it. We are prepared to work with government on it.

The world, as I think you know, is complicated. We need to work together to solve hard problems. Facebook is here to do that. I am here to do that with you and with other members of Parliament. We are not adversaries. The idea that we would share a public job position to various people across sectors, the fact that many people applied, that we interviewed only a very few set of people, including people from your party—I think that speaks to the fact that we have to work together.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** I'm going to switch to another subject and ask you to give me a very short answer to a very simple question.

How much income tax did Facebook pay in Canada in 2019-2020?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I'm afraid I don't have that number with me.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Did Facebook pay any income tax in Canada in 2019-2020?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Yes. My understanding is that we do. In fact, we do pay payroll taxes. We pay income tax through Facebook Canada. We pay all sorts of different taxes.

I think what you're asking is whether we pay enough taxes. If I may, again, this is not something that we are resisting. This is something that other...that countries around the world have to agree on a new way to allocate tax from multinational digital companies. There is an OECD process, as I indicated, that's under way. We certainly support that. We hope they will come to an agreement. I think we heard from member states, I think just yesterday or the day before, that they too are optimistic on a deal by 2021, sometime this year. We look forward to that conclusion, because we are obviously prepared to work on compliance with any new rules that will be created through this process.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** I feel that this may end up like the play *Waiting for Godot*. I hope that it does not and that I will be pleasantly surprised.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** You claim that you are making efforts to limit hate speech on your platforms, but we can still see a huge amount of it. Your algorithms are creating echo chambers

where people become radicalized, sometimes even inciting them to resort to violence.

What do you think about the idea of having a public regulating body that would force you, within certain limits, to moderate and limit things posted on Facebook that could never be published in an ordinary newspaper?

• (1415)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** As I have indicated in the op-ed with Mr. Stursberg, but also more recently in the opening statement, we welcome more regulation.

You're right, sir. Right now it's private companies like Facebook that are deciding what is and isn't allowed on Facebook. We think that doesn't sit well with many people, and they want public rules where there is legitimate public and democratic accountability. To the extent that law-makers can agree on where that line should be drawn, and then impose those lines on us, I think that would be certainly welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chan.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

[English]

We have Mr. Aitchison for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate everyone being here.

I actually really do accept the explanations that I've heard about these emails that have gone back and forth, and I appreciate the representatives from Facebook being here.

I'm actually a little frustrated, though, in that we've had some discussion here already about emails going back and forth between the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Facebook, and then there was some suggestion by some of the members from the governing party on this committee that, in fact, questioning these emails was tantamount to questioning the integrity of the public service and that's the kind of thing that we should never do.

My question is for Ms. Curran.

You seemed quite content, along with your colleagues, to come here and answer questions. Would you agree that healthy questions about the public service and their political masters are good for a democracy?

**Ms. Rachel Curran:** Of course. Yes, absolutely, I think opposition parties should hold the government to account, and part of that includes holding the public service to account and asking them the appropriate questions.

I think deputy minister Laurendeau answered the questions well and sufficiently, but you should absolutely have the ability to ask those questions and to get responses.

**Mr. Scott Aitchison:** Then, if I can follow that up, I think it's important for us to be respectful in our dialogue at these committees and when we do ask questions, to do so in a respectful way. To question the integrity of somebody asking a question seems just irresponsible to me.

Obviously you're looking a lot at managing speech on Facebook. I would assume that's a big part of your exercise, trying to make sure there is respect on all sides.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I believe the answer is more correctly for you if you thought that a question was out of order, not for a witness on a second panel.

**The Chair:** I just want to remind members to try stay within the realm of what we're talking about here. I can read the motion out again, but I think it's all in front of you. Have a look at the motion, please, and try to stick to the confines of the intent of what we're trying to explore today.

Mr. Aitchison, we go back to you.

**Ms. Rachel Curran:** If I could just respond to that, though, I think MP Aitchison's question is a good one. It's about respect on both sides.

Facebook's community standards actually set out rules for engagement on our platform. They deal with bullying, with harassment, with disrespectful conduct, and we set out very clearly what is and isn't allowed on the platform.

I think you're absolutely right. We need to get at this question of uncivil and disrespectful debate. We are at least attempting to do that with our community standards and enforcement against those, and we look forward to further engagement with the government on how to make sure we're drawing the right line there.

**Mr. Scott Aitchison:** Thanks very much.

Mr. Chair, that's all I have. I'm happy to share my time with Mr. Shields if he has questions as well.

• (1420)

**The Chair:** Mr. Shields, you have one minute.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Well, I think it goes back to what was referred to quickly, and I'll go to that.

When the oversight committee has overturned four of five, who do you have in that background group? Do you have legal advisers? Who is in that group of people that you have making the decisions to take down...?

You're making decisions in a grey area that obviously is going to be a huge challenge.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I think you're absolutely right. This is a very complicated and very difficult task; we have to appropriately moderate speech and govern speech on our platform. Thank you for that nuanced position on this. It is very hard.

As you can see, despite the fact that we have 35,000 people who are doing content moderation around the world, despite the fact that we spend billions of dollars a year on automated systems to detect this, and despite the fact that we have policy people who construct these community standards and then try to interpret them locally,

such as the team you have before you, you are right that not everyone will agree with us. Some people say we take too much down; some people say we don't take enough down. It is perhaps sobering to see the Oversight Board, our own independent oversight board, has overturned four out of five decisions.

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

Ms. Ien, for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chan, Mr. Dinsdale and Ms. Curran, thank you so much for joining us.

I want to delve a little further into something that my colleagues have addressed today. On a day where we commemorate six lives lost in a Quebec City mosque, in a week where through International Holocaust Remembrance Day we observe the lives lost, and a year where we have seen anti-Black racism at the fore, I want to ask a bit more about hate speech and understand how Facebook delineates between hate speech and freedom of speech.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I think you've hit the nail on the head. This is perhaps the hardest one for us. That is because speech is nuanced, so we do want to make sure we take a nuanced approach, that we don't over-censor people. Obviously the way we look at it is if there is speech that is directed at a particular group, that is an attack on a particular group, whether by race or by sexual orientation, for example, then those things would be prohibited by our community standards.

I would also say, though, what we've discovered as we work through these issues is that in fact, depending which community you're talking about and what the local contexts are, sometimes people might actually use code words, or even emoticons, to represent something. It would be a slur if we knew it were a slur, but it actually is known in the local community, not more broadly to the public. That's the real challenge. The work we're undertaking now is to work with local partners to better understand what are the kinds of specific words in specific communities that are equally damaging, hurtful and hateful and try to remove those.

One example, I can tell you, is the word spelled S-Q-U-A-W, which is a word that's used in a derogatory manner to attack indigenous women. That is one of the words that we have through our consultations picked up and used to refine our list of slurs so that we can more properly enforce our community standards in Canada.

**Ms. Marci Ien:** Mr. Chan, it's good to hear that Facebook is involved in that important work.

I'm going to veer off in another direction right now and ask about privacy and protection of personal information of the users of Facebook.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I think on the privacy front we have been clear, and I indicated in the opening statement as well, that we support stronger privacy legislation. That should include financial penalties for those who are going to be in non-compliance. I believe the government has tabled such legislation. It is obviously for parliamentarians to decide whether it is the right configuration to become law, but I think we have been on the record saying that we support strong privacy legislation.

• (1425)

**Ms. Marci Ien:** Mr. Chair, those are the questions that I have. I'm willing to share any time left with any of my colleagues who need it, or I will hand it back over to you.

**The Chair:** You have approximately one minute and 15 seconds left.

Mr. Housefather.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thanks very much, Ms. Ien.

I want to come back to a couple of other questions that I didn't get a chance to ask.

Facebook recognized that there were foreign actors who sought to interfere in the U.S. elections in both 2016 and 2020. Is Facebook aware of any foreign actors currently seeking to influence the next Canadian election?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Obviously we had that top of mind for the 2019 election. I can tell you that to date we have not found any such foreign interference or coordinated inauthentic behaviour on our platform with respect to the 2019 federal election.

We are certainly turning our minds to the next election, whenever it may come. We have already begun conversations with the various lawful authorities to be ready. Again, however, we don't have any specific information that would lead us to believe that the posture in 2021 or 2022 would be different from that of 2019.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** In the last U.S. election, Facebook assisted in registration of voters and recruitment of poll workers and helped to provide voter information. Mr. Zuckerberg and his wife actually donated \$400 million to help support safe voting.

What is Facebook planning to do by way of supporting voting in Canada? If there's \$400 million somewhere to give to Elections Canada, I'm sure they would be very grateful.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I don't think I'm in a position yet, obviously, to announce what our integrity measures will be for the next federal election, but I can tell you that the team has already turned its mind to this subject, both internally and externally with external partners.

Again I think this speaks to the need for us to work across sectors to make sure that we get what we all want, which is free and fair elections.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Housefather, I'm sure the Minister of National Revenue appreciates your enthusiasm on that point.

[Translation]

Mr. Champoux, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chan, I am going to go back to the issue of hate speech and Facebook's good conduct, as you state it, while you are still asking the government to establish some regulation. The Criminal Code governs behaviour a lot and serves as our guide for the ways in which we behave. It should also apply to our behaviour in social media.

If we want to enforce the Criminal Code, or any other regulations, we must also be able to catch the guilty. On Facebook and on a number of social media, many people use false profiles, false names and false identities. They are almost impossible to find.

If we wanted to enforce the Criminal Code, for example, would Facebook have ways to identify users with fake profiles, or those hiding behind a identity abroad, or even a bot? Do you have ways of identifying people?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** There are a couple of things on this.

"Fake accounts" is the term we use at Facebook. Fake accounts are prohibited on Facebook. They are a violation of our community standards, and we do remove them. We've removed, in the last quarter, well over one billion fake accounts.

We believe we are finding more than 99% of fake accounts before anybody interacts with them. This is absolutely something we want to work very hard at and get even better at.

I think your question is with respect to law enforcement. Where there are law enforcement entities that have the lawful authority to request information about particular users and they are exercising that lawful authority, it is absolutely the case that we will comply with and work with them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** So with fake accounts, do you just wait for complaints about them? For example, my neighbour has three Facebook accounts under different names and she is active on all kinds of platforms. If, at some stage, she went off the rails—if you don't mind me using that expression—you would be able to find her easily. I could report her fake profile and you would be able to locate it. Is that correct?

• (1430)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** If you report a fake account to us, we're happy to investigate it and remove it—if it indeed is a fake account.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Mr. Chan.

[English]

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

[Translation]

Mr. Boulerice, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chan, earlier, you said that you did not have the amount of income tax that Facebook paid in 2019-2020 at hand. Would you agree to provide that amount to the committee?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Again, this is beyond my ability to say. I'm happy to take it back and see. I'm just not aware of what the rules are for that and the proper way to do that. Obviously, there are commercially sensitive things, so I'd have to take it back.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** I don't feel that we are going to see that figure anytime soon.

I would like to talk about Facebook's use of external content. You use it quite frequently. It makes discussions and sharing possible and it also helps the algorithms to micro-target advertisements to users. It lets you make a huge profit. But you don't pay for that content, especially journalistic content. I find it troubling, not to say indecent, that you use content produced by journalists in newsrooms at no cost, and that you make money from other people's work.

Don't you see any problem there?

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** Once again, let me be clear, sir. Facebook does not use the content of people working in publications. They use the free distribution of their content that Facebook provides.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** But Facebook then makes a profit.

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** No. That's how the Internet works: when a newspaper publishes an article on Facebook, it shares a link. Let me give you an example. My wife is from Quebec City and she reads *La Presse* and *Le Devoir* every day. If she wants to read an article, she will click on the link to go directly to the *La Presse* site or the *Le Devoir* site. The newspapers are making the money.

[English]

They will monetize the advertisement on their website.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Could we not consider a model like the one in Australia, where collective negotiations go on between those who produce the news and the social media that use them. MSN does it. You're not the only ones, there are a lot of others also. It would provide a degree of fairness and allow that work to be paid for.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Chan:** I think that your suggestion of having publishers and platforms talk is a very good one.

I was personally a bit troubled that those conversations had not happened before we heard very loud and aggressive commentary about our stealing content, which was false.

I think that if we had had productive conversations earlier, and if we had actually talked to each other, we'd probably be in a much better situation than we are today.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chan.

Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

[English]

That brings this to a conclusion.

I want to thank everybody involved.

I want to thank all those at Facebook. Ms. Curran, Mr. Chan and Mr. Dinsdale, we appreciate your time here today.

Colleagues, we are going to have to suspend to go in camera.

I'd like to remind everybody to check your emails because there is a different link and a different password to come back into this in camera meeting.

[Proceedings continue in camera]







Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>