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# Standing Committee on Official Languages

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Chair: Yvan Baker





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• (1100)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)):** Good morning, colleagues.

Welcome to meeting number 13 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Before we begin, I would first, on behalf of the committee, like to welcome Mr. René Arseneault, who is with us today. He is a former MP and the former chair of—

**Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Who?

**The Chair:** Mr. Arseneault. The fellow who responded to your points of order during the last Parliament.

**Joël Godin:** He was the one who corrupted me.

**Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Do you feel the pressure, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** I feel even more pressure than with Mr. Godin.

Welcome, Mr. Arseneault. Thank you for visiting us today. We are honoured to have you here with us. We miss you a lot here in Parliament.

Secondly, before we start the meeting, I wanted to take a moment to mention that the draft regulations on administrative monetary penalties under the Official Languages Act were tabled in the House of Commons yesterday, and they have been referred to our committee.

If you agree, I propose to set aside 15 or 20 minutes at the end of this meeting to discuss the approach the committee wants to take to study the regulations in the upcoming meetings.

Do you agree with this proposal?

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Does that take time away from us?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, it does.

I propose to remove 10 minutes of speaking time for each group of witnesses. We have two groups of witnesses. So it would remove 10 minutes for each group of witnesses. So, we'll have 15 to 20 minutes to—

**Mario Beaulieu:** You can remove that time when the Liberals and Conservatives ask questions.

**The Chair:** Does that—

**Marc Dalton:** No, we need to start with him.

**Joël Godin:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry, but Mr. Beaulieu is right. If you take away speaking time, it will be the Liberals and the Conservatives who lose it. We'll need to allocate speaking time.

Mr. Beaulieu, you've said too much.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I propose that we do what we did during the last meetings. I know we tried a different approach last time. If there is consensus, we could come back to that.

I will go back to the old approach, meaning I will reduce the speaking time proportionally for all parties each time they take the floor. That way, no one will be penalized. Everyone will have proportionally less speaking time.

Do you agree with this procedure?

**Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.):** For our part, we believe it's reasonable to distribute the time fairly. I trust my colleagues, who always ask good questions. I prefer this way of proceeding so everyone can have more time during question period rather than focusing on one person when adjustments need to be made. I would prefer to maintain our rule of good distribution.

• (1105)

**The Chair:** All right.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Joël Godin:** In fact, I want to understand what's being proposed. We have always maintained and applied the rule of fair distribution. When a longer period was granted to group two question periods for the same party, it allowed us to go more in-depth during the question period.

That said, if we want to share our speaking time with another person, as Ms. Chenette just pointed out, I think it's legitimate.

Maybe it's up to us to handle this.

**Madeleine Chenette:** Basically, I'm saying that we maintain the principle of distributing speaking time.

**Joël Godin:** Absolutely.

**Madeleine Chenette:** If one of the parties decides that it prefers that a single person ask questions, that's their choice. In our teamwork, the principle is more about distributing speaking time.

**Joël Godin:** You're saying the same thing in different words.

**The Chair:** To make it clear for everyone and to avoid any confusion during the question period, I want to clarify that, in the second round of questions, five MPs will speak in the following order: one Conservative, one Liberal, one Bloc Québécois, one Conservative, one Liberal. That's the plan. I will continue using this distribution, but I will reduce the speaking time for each party proportionally.

That said, I would now like to hear from the witnesses.

Before we begin, I would like to say a few words.

In accordance with paragraph 108(3)(f) of the Standing Orders and the motion adopted by the committee on September 25, 2025, we are meeting today to begin our study of the quota of French-language music imposed on French-language media.

For the first hour, we welcome Jean-François Leclerc, vice-president at Leclerc Communication.

Welcome, Mr. Leclerc. Thank you for being with us.

You will have five minutes for your opening statement. We will then proceed to a question-and-answer period with committee members.

Mr. Leclerc, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Jean-François Leclerc (Vice-President, Leclerc Communication Inc.):** Mr. Chair, committee members, good morning.

During the latest public hearings of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, we stated that the ability of French-language music radio to survive was seriously compromised in the disrupted media ecosystem in which we operate. For radio to remain a strong cultural vector, the federal framework must restore the flexibility it deserves and correct the structural inequity that exists between traditional radio and online platforms, and do so in depth.

For over 10 years, we have been alerting the CRTC about the imbalances in the current system and their harmful effects on French-language music stations, whose listening times are declining at an alarming rate. In Quebec City and Montreal, nearly 60% of listening times have been lost among listeners aged 18 to 54 in 15 years. The trend is relentless. Unless an in-depth and structural change is initiated right now, the listening times dedicated to music stations will continue to decline. Many French-language radio stations can no longer afford to fulfill their mission, as their advertising revenues have plummeted dramatically in recent years. The French-language radio market in Montreal has not been profitable since 2023.

Meanwhile, Spotify and Apple Music are freely building their dominance without being subject to any content obligations. These platforms capture an exorbitant share of listening and revenue, while French-language music stations are collapsing under the weight of regulatory constraints.

When the idea of imposing a quota on streaming giants is mentioned, the CRTC states that content requirements do not work for online platforms. The result is a blatant double standard. Traditional radio is tied to a regulatory ball and chain that dates back to

the 1970s, while foreign platforms are free to broadcast whatever they want.

It is precisely this regulatory imbalance that jeopardizes the viability of French-language music radio and the vitality of Quebec culture. Indeed, the current system no longer protects our culture; it marginalizes it. It is causing a growing disinterest among listeners for radio stations that should be promoting local music.

Without questioning the noble objective of a quota, we believe that maintaining the status quo, without considering the profound transformation of music consumption habits, paradoxically takes us further away from the goal. A quota is only effective if it actually reaches the audience.

When 65% of French-language music is imposed in a market where listeners' natural preferences are lower, the opposite effect occurs: listeners disengage and turn to foreign platforms where Quebec music represents only 5% of their listening, or even less. We believe we're protecting the language, while in reality, we're diverting the listener from the only francophone showcase that still belongs to us, namely the traditional radio stations here.

We found no comparable regulations in the world. There is no regulation that requires commercial radio stations to broadcast more than 40% of songs in a given language, a ceiling that belongs to France. Our quota of 65% French-language music is nothing more and nothing less than a global anomaly that it is high time to correct.

In that context, we proposed targeted and reasonable adjustments to the CRTC, inspired by the French model, namely to reduce the francophone music quota to 40%.

We understand that some may view this proposal unfavourably. Understand us well: It has now been 13 years since my brother and I became owners of radio stations out of love for music and local culture, but the last 13 years have taught us that the consequences of maintaining the highest linguistic requirements in the world are far more serious for our culture than a relaxation of those requirements.

When music radio stations lose listeners and listening times, it weakens the discovery of local music. Maintaining a quota of 65% at all costs makes no sense if it directly drives the public to foreign platforms that are indifferent to our cultural goals. An audience that stays with radio is an audience that is still discovering.

Defenders of a rigid framework often forget that the concept of the reach of francophone music and culture goes far beyond the number of songs broadcast on our airwaves. Our stations do every day what foreign platforms will never do, and they do it in French: providing context for songs, interviews with artists, coverage of local festivals and cultural events and shows dedicated to creators and emerging talent from here.

However, radio cannot bear all this cultural responsibility alone. The modernization of the quota must therefore be part of a broader set of solutions, such as imposing content and discoverability requirements on foreign platforms, revising section 19 of the Income Tax Act, providing clear obligations for public broadcasters concerning the discoverability of local artists on these various platforms and adopting a government policy for advertising purchases that favours local media.

• (1110)

We want to continue doing our part for the vitality of French, but to do that, our stations must first survive. Modernizing the quota is not harming the culture; it's ensuring that French-language music will continue to be heard for generations to come.

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

We will now move on to questions from members.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Leclerc, thank you for being with us today. Your presentation covers the same concepts as those we heard earlier in the remarks from another entrepreneur in the communications field.

According to what I understand, you're sticking to your position, which is to reduce the quota from 65% to 40%. To put it simply, we're talking about a 25% cut.

Shouldn't we make some adjustments?

You talked about providing context for French songs on your stations, interviews, shows and other promotional activities to highlight francophone songs on your radio stations.

Are these elements currently accounted for in the 65%?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Those elements are not included in the 65%. It's an interesting solution to explore.

However, I still want to clarify the reasons that would support a quota of 40%.

If we compare the quotas internationally, we find no language quota that high anywhere in the world. Our current quota of 65% is 62.5% higher than the second-highest quota in the world, which is that of France. We are very far from the quotas imposed internationally.

In 2015, French-language broadcasters conducted a study with 2,029 French-speaking respondents from Quebec. They were asked what percentage of francophone music their ideal radio station would play. The result was 34% among respondents aged 16 to 44, and 43% for all respondents, including those aged 55 and older.

The quota of 65% is therefore much too far removed from the actual needs and interests of our listeners at this time, especially when considering the music consumption of Quebecers on online platforms. Right now, we mustn't kid ourselves. When our listeners leave French radio and move to foreign platforms, they're exposed to less than 5% of Quebec music. That's what's happening right now.

It is essential to give broadcasters more flexibility to allow us to be more in tune with the tastes and needs of listeners.

• (1115)

**Joël Godin:** What I understand is that the government, or rather largely the CRTC, has not kept up with the evolution of media. The situation of streaming platforms is not the same today as it was 10 or 20 years ago. I would compare it to the phenomenon of video rental stores. In the past, there were video stores on every corner. Today, that industry no longer exists due to accessibility. We no longer have control over anything in the field of television broadcasting.

We shouldn't repeat the same model for radio. There's still time to act.

It's the same problem as the decline of French in Canada. We need to act quickly. In your industry, the situation is clear.

What do you suggest to the government so it becomes aware of the situation and acts quickly?

What could the government do to quickly realign and protect our businesses that are very important to our regions? These companies generate economic activity and disseminate French-language content.

I have something in mind. If you don't tell me, I'll suggest it to you.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Your observations are good. All the indicators are in the red. We should not wait for radio stations to close before taking bold action.

The most important measures that can immediately give breathing room to French-language broadcasters are twofold: reducing the quota for French-language music and regulating foreign platforms.

We need to quickly impose discoverability and content obligations on foreign platforms. Right now, there's no reason to play on two completely different fronts. Those platforms are taking our listeners, our listening times and our advertising revenue. They can broadcast whatever they want without any obligation, while it's the opposite for us.

**Joël Godin:** If I understand correctly, it's unfair competition.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** It's absolutely unfair competition, and it has been for over 10 years. We see it, but we can't do anything.

The two solutions I mentioned are certainly the ones that will allow you to act quickly to help us retain the listeners still on our airwaves. That's what we want to do. The decline in the listening times curve will continue unless we make bold decisions.

**Joël Godin:** I will tell you two things.

First, we should quickly create a forum for the industry to work together, which is the purpose of the motion here at the committee. I suggest that we form a committee of stakeholders and experts in broadcasting platforms to regulate and provide tools to broadcasters.

In addition, the government should lead by example. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government made significant investments in advertising to help you financially, which was an interesting tool. This week, we were told that \$78 million was invested in advertising. I haven't checked the numbers, but it's the order of magnitude that matters. Of the \$78 million in radio advertising, \$2 million was invested in private radio stations and \$76 million in platforms. It's illogical.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, but the time is up.

Mr. Leclerc, please give a brief answer in five seconds.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** One advertising dollar invested in a Canadian media outlet supports local jobs, content, local news and the discoverability of artists. One dollar invested in foreign platforms leaves the country.

It's shocking to see that the government is insensitive to this reality.

**Joël Godin:** Thank you.

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

Mr. Villeneuve, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Thank you.

Mr. Leclerc, thank you for being with us this morning. You are a well-prepared man. I understand what you are saying.

We talked about the concept of prime time. You're not the only one who has mentioned this to us, and I'd like to understand it better.

What is the connection between prime time and vocal music programming in French?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Right now, the quota is working in a particular way. We must broadcast 55% of French vocal music during prime time, between 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM, from Monday to Friday. We therefore need to broadcast a specific percentage to ensure the discovery of francophone music during the most important hours.

One of the interesting points raised on Tuesday concerned a credit system. If we want to move towards credits, one option would be to provide benefits to broadcasters who air French-language music at the right time. It would therefore be about giving an additional credit during times when there are more listeners, and an even more advantageous credit when we broadcast French music during prime time shows, namely the flagship morning and drive-home shows.

These initiatives could certainly encourage the broadcaster to feature French-language music during prime time.

• (1120)

**Louis Villeneuve:** Earlier, you mentioned France. Don't worry, I'm not trying to put you on the spot. I really want to understand.

You made a comparison with France in terms of the quota needed to keep our radio stations. You mentioned reducing the quota from 65% to 40% because France had the second-highest quota, at 40%.

How do you see the difference in terms of the geographical environment? France is different from Quebec, which is surrounded by an anglophone sea. France doesn't experience that.

Wouldn't having a higher quota here than in France be justified?

I'm throwing you an open question.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's an excellent question.

Today, the reality is that competition from online platforms is unbounded, meaning it no longer has geographical limits. All the countries in the world are experiencing the Americanization of music. All the countries in the world are experiencing the repercussions of the actions of Spotify and Apple Music.

Despite everything, several French-speaking countries have decided to revise their quota system to take our new environment into account. Recently, France significantly adjusted its quota. Today, everyone lives with this same reality.

I understand that Quebec is surrounded by English-speaking regions due to its proximity to English Canada and the United States, but that doesn't change the fact that listeners will enjoy listening to an English hit, just like in France.

**Louis Villeneuve:** Exactly, I'd like to know how the situation would be different. What we often hear is that people go elsewhere because they want to listen to what they feel like listening to.

By better regulating online platforms, how can we ensure the retention of French-speaking audiences?

Do you really believe that it would have the desired result? Should we instead look elsewhere or do it differently?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That would be one of the solutions.

It's true that adding discoverability requirements to online platforms would help level the playing field a bit more, but it's going to be difficult.

The CRTC is still right. Since we don't have the same model, it will be difficult to ensure that online platforms and traditional radio stations operate under the same regulatory obligations.

This is yet another reason to give traditional radio broadcasters some breathing room. If we can't regulate online platforms and provide the same playing field for online platforms and traditional broadcasters, we need to relax the current regulatory model.

**Louis Villeneuve:** What you're telling me is that there's inequality and that it needs to be balanced out.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's exactly it. There's a great inequality at the moment, and that's been the case for over 10 years.

**Louis Villeneuve:** You mentioned amending section 19 of the Income Tax Act.

If you had a little magic wand today and could change that, what would you do?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** It's not complicated. Section 19 of the Income Tax Act was adopted in the 1960s, and it didn't explicitly include foreign digital media in the non-eligible media for tax deductions. They wanted to protect traditional media by ensuring that foreign television and radio could not be considered for a tax deduction.

However, that section was adopted before the digital age. This means that digital media have not been taken into account in that law. Online platforms and foreign digital media are therefore also targeted by the deductions at this time. That's where there's a problem. I think this law needs to be revised to exclude foreign media from this measure.

• (1125)

**Louis Villeneuve:** Okay.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have five seconds left, Mr. Villeneuve.

**Louis Villeneuve:** I have five seconds left to say thank you, Mr. Leclerc.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Thank you.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for six minutes.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Leclerc, you say that there's a decline in listening to French-language music.

Isn't it symptomatic of the decline of French in Quebec?

There's a decline in the consumption of cultural goods, a decline in French as the language used at home. All linguistic indicators show a decline.

Don't you think it's related to that too?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's a challenge. We can see it in television. It's a whole environment that's changing. However, one thing that doesn't change is that traditional radio still remains a kind of common ground for culture today. It's a place where tens of thousands of listeners still go every day to hear their music, news and stories.

What I want today is for us not to lose that essential link for francophone culture. However, my impression is that we are going to lose it if we don't make bold decisions. Stations will close and we'll lose this common ground that is still strong today. There's still time to save it.

**Mario Beaulieu:** I'm not sure it's bold when there are other ways.

Let me explain. The more we hear French-speaking music, the more we appreciate it and the more we develop a taste for it. However, if we lower the quota even further, we enter a bit of a vicious cycle. This percentage of 40% will be too high in a few years.

You talked about digital platforms. That's major. The government has decided not to impose a tax on digital platforms. What could be done is to implement that tax and ensure that a portion of

this \$1.2 billion per year is used for private French-language radio stations.

Do you agree with that?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** It's a measure that would be interesting. However, that would not be enough. That's the problem. I understand your logic very well: the more we expose people to music, the more likely it is that people will like it. You're absolutely right. The problem today is that an increasing number of listeners no longer even listen to music on the radio.

Ask the young people around you what they think of radio. They'll say that we're completely out of touch. We've lost nearly 60% of our listening hours in 15 years. A music quota, even a very high one, protects nothing if no one is there to hear it.

**Mario Beaulieu:** If they no longer listen to music, they won't listen to English music any more on French-language radio stations.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** In fact, they still listen to music, but they no longer listen to it on traditional radio. They're turning to online platforms, where they're no longer exposed to Quebec music.

**Mario Beaulieu:** If we taxed online platforms, would it be possible to regulate them, in your opinion?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** If you want to tax the digital giants and online platforms, you can do so, but that won't help us continue retaining our listeners.

**Mario Beaulieu:** The revenues could, however, be used to promote French-language music and to implement incentive measures for private French-language radio stations. I think it's primarily a matter of money. If you tell me that you're on the verge of dying, it's because your income is not sufficient.

There was also talk of tax credits. Right now, there are tax credits for businesses that advertise on major digital platforms. We could simply say that we no longer provide tax credits for advertising on these platforms, but we do provide them for advertising on French-language radio stations.

There could also be a government policy. You talked about advertising purchases. Several measures could be taken to support private French-language radio stations.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** These are good points, but it's not a viable long-term solution.

The business model of traditional broadcasters is based on advertising revenue. I don't see a promising and sustainable future where broadcasters depend on public subsidies to survive.

We need to find ways to ensure that the business model continues so we can keep reaching our goals and reaching listeners.

**Mario Beaulieu:** We're talking about redistributing grants. It's not the same thing.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Even if there's a distribution of grants, I don't see how it can help broadcasters survive. Yes, there are different things that can help, that's for sure, but it won't be enough. We need to explore other options as well.

**Mario Beaulieu:** We're told that the Quebec government has taken a whole series of measures and that it could surely do much more to promote francophone music. I think that there is indeed a way to do much more, because the real challenge is the future of French.

It's a decision to be made. Do we want to ensure the future of French? Or do we go with the decline and quietly disappear? That is what we are currently heading toward. We must therefore find all sorts of ways to strengthen French. It's not artificial. All governments do it. It's largely a matter of regulation.

Do you have other ways in mind, besides lowering the quota, that could be used to help private French-language radio?

• (1130)

**The Chair:** You have 35 seconds left.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** We have listed a few means. There are the credits that we could talk about in more detail. Without easing certain criteria, there are things we can do to allow us to give more weight to an emerging song, for example, or to cultural content, which would serve as incentives for traditional broadcasters to put in more effort in terms of discoverability, even though we are already doing a lot.

I stand by the fact that we can find an environment that would allow us to be more competitive. We can't have a regulatory burden that imposes a quota of 65% on us, while online platforms aren't regulated and can broadcast whatever they want. We won't be able to keep radio alive in that environment.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Could online platforms be regulated?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Beaulieu, but I have to interrupt you as your time is up.

We will now move on to the second round of questions. Since it's 11:31, I will have to shorten the second round in proportion to the representation of each party. Mr. Dalton will have three minutes, Ms. Mingarelli, three minutes, Mr. Beaulieu, one and a half minutes, Mr. Bélanger, three minutes, and Ms. Chenette, three minutes.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor for three minutes.

**Marc Dalton:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Leclerc, you are clearly fighting a great battle for the vitality and survival of radio stations in Quebec.

I think there's inflexibility, even rigidity at the CRTC. It's not just in French. Even in English, it's very strict when it comes to Canadian content. Céline Dion, Justin Bieber, Drake, and Bryan Adams were not included in Canadian content. Inflexibility is one thing.

The question is if the CRTC really wants a commercial radio station in the province.

What do you think?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** I believe we're an important pillar of the system, just like community broadcasters and CBC/Radio-Canada. I think the CRTC wants healthy radio. However, it faces challenges from all sides and is having difficulty knowing how to act with respect to this situation.

I don't think it doesn't want strong and healthy commercial radio stations. I believe it doesn't know how to handle everything we're going through right now.

**Marc Dalton:** That's true, especially since the emergence of the Internet. For decades, listeners have been able to go wherever they want and listen to the songs they want to hear. We can't force them to listen to something else. There's real tension.

Besides imposing a quota on French-language radio stations, how can the government make French vocal music more popular and discoverable to young Quebecers who do not listen to it?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's—

**The Chair:** You have 55 seconds.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's a good question.

In the environment we live in, the lever of discoverability is foreign platforms. They're the ones who control it. It's no longer the radio quota from 50 years ago.

If we really want to help promote the discoverability of local artists, there are measures to be taken in relation to Spotify, Apple Music and all the other major platforms. We could impose content and discoverability obligations on them. On Spotify, for example, instead of only having hits or songs in English, why not have French songs included in their playlists?

There's no reason it can't be done today, in my opinion.

• (1135)

**Marc Dalton:** Thank you very much.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Mingarelli for three minutes.

**Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Leclerc. Thank you for being with us this morning.

You claim that your company is one of the only independent broadcasters in French in the major markets.

What specific challenge does your status as an independent business create compared to large integrated groups?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's a good question.

It's difficult, especially because what allows radio groups to survive today is consolidation. As Arsenal Media is doing right now and as Bell and Cogeco have done, it's by purchasing several radio stations in different markets that we can further develop synergy and reduce operating costs across all radio stations. That's how we're able to survive.

A model like ours is becoming increasingly rare, even across Canada. We're proud to be the worthy representatives of independent radio companies. I think it's important that there are still some, because it's often in independence that there's the most creativity, where we try to think outside the box.

There are also local roots. We bought stations in Quebec as citizens of Quebec. We had a vision for our stations that stemmed from a local reality. I think that's what distinguishes what we do today from what large integrated groups do.

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** Thank you very much.

Why do you recommend a one-month period rather than a week to measure compliance?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** It's about having more latitude.

On Tuesday, you were talking about credits for cultural content. If we go in that direction, measuring over a week would become extremely difficult. Imagine that a host does a cultural segment on a Friday at 4:00 PM, just before the end of the compliance audit period. How many minutes is it? How do we account for that? All of that would become extremely difficult.

This example shows that a longer period allows us a bit more latitude to better provide what the listener wants to hear when they want to hear it. It also allows us to ensure predictability and compliance with our obligations.

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** Thank you very much.

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

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** I'll stop here. Thank you.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mingarelli.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor for one and a half minutes.

**Mario Beaulieu:** I'll talk a little more about the measures.

What incentive measures can be taken to support you, aside from a quota reduction?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** As I was saying, we need to think about regulating online platforms and giving them discoverability obligations. It's urgent.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Is it feasible?

Is it done elsewhere?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** I couldn't tell you. I don't have any information in that respect. However, it's one of the main solutions that can really help our community. There's also the idea of credits, if we want to help French-language radio broadcasters and give them a bit of breathing room. It's possible for emerging music, music broadcast during prime time, for the cultural content we provide. These are possibilities.

There's also the revision of section 19 of the Income Tax Act and the assignment of a clearer discoverability mandate to Radio-Canada across all its platforms. I think these are things that can be done quickly to help with the discoverability of content here in Quebec. There's also the advertising purchasing policy that favours local media. I think these are all examples—

**Mario Beaulieu:** Do you mean that CBC/Radio-Canada gives more space to francophone music?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Yes.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds left.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** There is no reason they shouldn't do it with all the means they have. We're talking about a budget of \$2 billion for CBC/Radio-Canada.

**Mario Beaulieu:** What about the quota for French music on English radio?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's an excellent point, Mr. Beaulieu.

I've always wondered why there's no French music playing on English stations in Canada. We're considering a 5% Indigenous music quota for all stations, but why have we never thought about a 5% quota for English-speaking stations in the rest of Canada?

I find this question interesting. I understand that there's a historical and cultural context, but why don't we hear French music elsewhere?

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Bélanger for three minutes.

**Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Leclerc, first of all, we recognize the importance of the francophonie and the responsibility in relation to the cultural aspect. Furthermore, as you said, it's important to understand the importance of being able to survive. It may be just as important, if not more important.

If you didn't have a quota to meet, what direction would a company like yours take to preserve the francophonie?

• (1140)

**Jean-François Leclerc:** That's an excellent question.

As broadcasters, we want to reach the widest audience possible and be in tune with the tastes, needs and interests of our listeners. Nothing else will guide the actions of a commercial radio station.

The study conducted by the Substance organization tells us that listeners want to hear 30% to 44% French vocal music from their traditional radio station. There isn't a broadcaster in the world that wouldn't want to talk to its listeners and reach them. For a radio station, there are francophone hits as strong as anglophone hits. That's for sure.

No broadcaster will tell you they won't play French music in Quebec. It's impossible. It's part of our roots. It's important. People love their Cowboys Fringants, love their Charlotte Cardin and are discovering Billie du Page. It's important for radio to nourish that link between artists and their audience.

**Jim Bélanger:** I see.

Today, the quota is 65%. Tomorrow, it might be 40%.

In the future, it may be 20%. What do you think about that? This concerns people.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** I understand your fear of a slide. However, we must take into account the environment we're in. The environment has changed a lot. Will we eventually go from 40% to 20%? That's a discussion that takes us further.

It's been 50 years since the quota for French vocal music has changed. You are being asked for one quota change in 50 years. We're not saying that there will be a second one in five years.

It's a pragmatic and socially responsible measure because we want to continue playing French-language music. That's why we're asking you for the highest quota in the world. That's what we're asking you for today. We're here to ask you for the highest quota of francophone vocal music in the world.

However, it feels like what we're doing is not socially responsible. On the contrary, we aim to bring listeners back to radio. We aim to get people interested in listening to us again and being exposed to French-language vocal music.

**The Chair:** You have five seconds left, Mr. Bélanger.

**Jim Bélanger:** Thank you very much.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Chenette, you have the floor for three minutes.

**Madeleine Chenette:** Mr. Chair, may I have the remaining 30 seconds? It's up to you, obviously.

Mr. Leclerc, thank you for being with us. It's really very interesting.

You're assuming that if a quota for French-language music is imposed on platforms, it will bring people back to radio. I have doubts about that because, in the end, it's radio consumption habits that have evolved.

I would expect today to have questions about what we should do about Tesla and the regulatory project that aims to eliminate radios in cars. It's a place where people listen to the radio a lot.

You say there are changes in the environment. That's exactly why the Government of Canada made the historic decision in the budget to invest \$770 million in culture. It's to reinforce the importance of culture and, of course, francophone culture.

There are 321 million francophones in the world. So there's a market. K-pop has truly revolutionized the world through its leadership.

We can turn the question around by asking how we can strengthen this francophone culture given that, in the current environment, French culture is in demand in the world. There is a "de-Americanization," if I can use that term, because American popularity is on the decline. What can we do to seize the opportunity?

I also want to talk about the community aspect, which is also part of the new environment. We've lost the sense of community because everyone is isolated on their little device. In that context, shouldn't the mandate of radio evolve? Radio could be seen as a community tool. It could also benefit from everything happening in the cultural sphere. In our Quebec reality, francophone culture is important.

Let's project ourselves. Instead of fighting against a reduction to a quota, how can we seize the opportunities that arise to enhance culture?

In that context, what could you ask from the government that is different?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** I think we have no choice but to be in front of you today to tell you that we need to be more in tune with the needs and preferences of listeners.

Your premise was that listeners who are on online platforms will not return to radio. I'm telling you that our wish today is to stop the bleeding. By changing the quota for French vocal music, the people who are still listening to radio today will remain with radio. Furthermore, we won't lose any more listening hours. That's what we're asking you for.

I agree with you that people who are lost are likely to be lost for a long time. What happens is that, if we don't make a brave decision today, we will continue to lose others, and that's what we need to avoid. Traditional radio must remain a common thread for our culture. If we no longer have listeners or listening hours, we won't be able to fulfill our role and carry out our mission.

• (1145)

**Madeleine Chenette:** I agree with you.

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds left.

**Madeleine Chenette:** I agree with you that we need to rekindle people's interest in returning to radio.

What are the consumption habits?

What do you think makes people listen to radio today?

**Jean-François Leclerc:** There are all sorts of reasons.

**The Chair:** Please give a brief answer, thank you.

**Jean-François Leclerc:** It's true that music is one of them, but there's also the local connection. We talk about our stories; we talk about us. It's certain that broadcasters who continue to have a local presence will succeed better in the future.

**Madeleine Chenette:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Chenette.

This concludes the first hour of our meeting today.

Mr. Leclerc, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for being here with us.

Colleagues, I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so the next witnesses can settle in.

Thank you.

• (1145) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1150)

**The Chair:** We are resuming the meeting.

Before welcoming the witnesses, I would like to say that the interpreters sometimes had difficulty interpreting our remarks because two or three people were speaking at the same time. It was probably earlier in the meeting. I really enjoy it when we have informal discussions. However, to protect the health of the interpreters and to preserve our work, I suggest you raise your hand if you want to speak. Please wait for me to call on you before speaking so only one person speaks at a time.

Does that work for everyone?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

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

I would now like to welcome the witnesses for the second hour.

We welcome representatives from the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo, ADISQ. They are Simon Claus, director, public affairs, and Eve Paré, executive director.

You have five minutes for your opening statement. We will then proceed to a question-and-answer period with the committee members.

You have the floor for five minutes.

**Eve Paré (Chief Executive Director, Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members, I thank the Standing Committee on Official Languages for giving the floor—

**The Chair:** Ms. Paré, I'm going to ask you to stop for a minute. There's a problem with the sound volume here. I'm going to ask you to wait a minute so we can sort this out.

Can you say a few words so we can test the sound?

**Eve Paré:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Excellent. That works.

I had stopped the timer. You have five minutes, Ms. Paré.

You have the floor.

**Eve Paré:** Perfect. Thank you.

My name is Eve Paré. I'm the executive director of ADISQ. I'm accompanied by Simon Claus, director of public affairs. Unfortunately, we were unable to attend today's session due to other commitments. Please excuse us. Don't see that as a lack of interest.

Our association represents over 200 companies working in the music sector. Its mission is to equip them, support them and ensure that the environment in which they operate fosters their growth. Maintaining a competitive music industry means ensuring the visibility of our music and performances here and beyond our borders.

I would like to start my remarks with a quote from Billie du Page, a 21-year-old artist who has just won the Félix Award for Revelation of the Year at the latest ADISQ gala. Last summer, she was asked about her song reaching number one on the radio charts in Quebec. She said—

**The Chair:** Ms. Paré, I'm sorry to interrupt you again. There's still a problem with the sound. I stopped the clock for you, but I would ask you to wait a minute.

Could you say a few words, Ms. Paré, so we can test the sound one more time?

**Eve Paré:** I was talking to you about Billie du Page, who won the Félix Award for Revelation of the Year at the last ADISQ Gala.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will suspend the meeting briefly.

• (1155) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Ms. Paré, I'm sorry that there are technical issues.

The committee members unanimously agreed to use their headphones to listen to you.

Please continue your presentation. You have four minutes left.

**Eve Paré:** Thank you.

Billie du Page said: "Honestly, I cried tears of joy because it was a feeling of accomplishment, of satisfaction. I never thought I would get there...just being on the charts was amazing, but when I reached number one, I couldn't believe it."

That quote is not anecdotal. It illustrates the importance of radio in our society. In a world where attention is scattered and algorithms increasingly shape our discoveries, these cultural landmarks become essential.

Radio acts as a seal of recognition, generates direct economic benefits and remains a marker of professionalism in a business model weakened by declining traditional revenues. That's why quotas for French vocal music have not lost their relevance. It's not just a regulatory mechanism. It's about the very presence of French in public spaces, the space we want to give to our music and our artists, the vitality of our culture and our collective responsibility toward future generations.

Radio remains a staple. Its scope remains immense. According to Numeris, it reaches 84% of Canadians each week. Furthermore, according to our own surveys, it remains the primary source of music discovery for 60% of Quebecers.

For over 50 years, the framework established by the CRTC has created a true virtuous circle. The increase in the broadcasting of French-language music has contributed to growing interest in our music, which has stimulated supply and investment, ensuring high-quality music production that, in turn, has fuelled radio programming.

During prime time, French-language commercial radio stations must dedicate 55% of their musical programming to French vocal music. During a week of broadcasting, they must dedicate 65% of their musical programming to it. These obligations exist precisely because French is in a minority situation in North America. They've shaped listening habits that still persist today.

We don't deny the difficulties that radio stations are experiencing. These difficulties are very real, but they primarily stem from structural factors: audience fragmentation, unfair competition from platforms and revenue loss related to digital transformations.

Nothing in the data links these difficulties to quotas. A system that has existed for over half a century without causing listener loss would not suddenly become the main source of challenges for radio stations.

Reducing the quotas would simultaneously weaken the presence of our language, the real diversity of our offerings and the essential visibility of our artists and our music, but it would not help regain the audience. The true way forward is to subject digital platforms to the obligations of the Broadcasting Act in order to restore fairness among players without lowering standards.

Songs convey who we are. They unite and create a common space, even in a fragmented world. Every time a French song finds its place on the radio, it's a bit of our language, our imagination and our collective memory that continues to live on. Protecting that place is not about defending an industry; it's about defending a cultural heritage, an identity marker and the trust we place in our own voices.

Songs recount what we are. They unite. By valuing our francophone songs, we bring to life the richness and diversity of French in a unique cultural context. Far from being a deterrent, they're a landmark, an anchor point. Let's give them the space and resources they deserve on the airwaves and on platforms. ADISQ offers you its full collaboration to ensure that francophone music continues to resonate strongly and sustainably across the country.

Thank you for your attention. We are ready to answer your questions.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Paré.

We'll now move on to questions from the members.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Paré, for being with us. I believe your expertise will be very helpful in our study.

I want you to know that, at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we're here to find a balance between the protection of French and the survival of businesses that are, in part, within the ecosystem of French song broadcasters.

You talked about Billie du Page and how she was very happy to be at the top of the charts. I'm happy for her too. A long time ago, we used to listen closely to compilations on Sundays. It gives away my age, but back then, those rankings were very important. I can therefore understand all the pride she must have felt.

Earlier, you said that, according to Numeris, 84% of Canadians listened to the radio.

Is that right?

**Simon Claus (Director, Public affairs, Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo):** Good morning.

According to data from Numeris, included in the latest CRTC consultation, radio reaches 84% of Canadians. This means that, each week, 84% of Canadians are reached by radio. It's known that average listenership is decreasing. However, the reach remains.

**Joël Godin:** In Quebec, it's 60%.

Is that right?

**Simon Claus:** That's another statistic. It's from a survey conducted by ADISQ among Quebecers about their music consumption habits.

Obviously, the way they discover music interests us. Among respondents, 60% reported discovering music through radio. Thus, radio is the primary source of new releases for Quebecers, which is directly related to its strong reach.

**Joël Godin:** Are these data from 2024-25?

**Simon Claus:** The data from Numeris are from 2024. In any case, they're quite recent.

The data from ADISQ's Guide MQF are from 2023.

**Joël Godin:** Do you have data from 10 years ago?

That's not a trick question. I just want to know if the reach of radio has been maintained, increased or decreased in Canada and Quebec.

**Simon Claus:** I think there's been a slight decrease in reach. However, what we primarily see decreasing is average listenership. That's why we don't deny the difficulties of radio. People continue to turn on the radio, but they listen to it less because we're in an attention economy with competition among music and entertainment listening options. People listen to the radio for shorter periods because they're in a world where they are being pulled in every direction.

So it's primarily average listenership that has decreased, which is also one of the explanations for certain difficulties.

**Joël Godin:** You will understand that our goal is to find solutions—because there isn't just one—so commercial radio can do its job within the radio ecosystem in general, which includes community radio and CBC/Radio-Canada's public radio. Commercial radio has a role to play in this ecosystem.

I don't want to scare anyone, and I don't want to dramatize, but if we lose these broadcasters.... I understand that some of the challenges arise from the fact that, for a private company, the goal is to generate revenue. It's a completely legitimate goal because they'll close if they don't generate any revenue. If they close, people will lose their jobs and the local economy will suffer the consequences.

In my opinion, we can play with the quotas of 65% French-language music or 55% during prime time and 10% for the rest. Listen to the radio on Sunday night, and you'll hear French everywhere.

However, I want to find a way to work with you, who represent the artists, so commercial radio can remain profitable and viable and continue to be your partners.

What are the possible solutions?

• (1205)

**Simon Claus:** Indeed, commercial radio stations are essential partners in our industry. We said that.

Quotas were put in place over 50 years ago. This contributed to the creation of a virtuous circle and the building of a star system. Radio has a lot to do with it.

We obviously disagree on the current premise that people are tuning away from radio because it plays French music. For us, French-language music is a collective landmark. It's what allows radio to stand out by broadcasting artists who resemble the people—

**Joël Godin:** I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Could you send us some solutions in writing? Unfortunately, we don't have enough time to hear them in person.

You say that commercial radio has a responsibility in relation to the broadcast of French songs.

However, does public and private television not also have a responsibility? Commercial radio stations are not the only villains in the story.

**The Chair:** Please respond in about 10 seconds, as time is up.

**Simon Claus:** We agree. It's not about villains. Television also plays an important role in the visibility of our music. That's why we support the protection of shows of national interest, including music shows that truly make a difference in the careers of our artists.

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

Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their testimony. I particularly appreciated their comments about the importance of francophone music as a vector of identity and of language as a vector of vitality.

In previous testimonies, a comparison was made between the quotas imposed by Canada and those of other countries, such as France.

However, in Canada, we recognize that French is in a minority context in North America. Furthermore, under the Official Languages Act, we have a special responsibility to protect and promote our French language.

In your opinion, given the specific context of French in Canada, is it justifiable to have stronger measures than those in countries like France to ensure the protection of French on our airwaves and to ensure an adequate French presence?

**Simon Claus:** I will agree with you. The minority status of the French language in North America and Canada is recognized in the Official Languages Act. The CRTC has responsibilities in this respect, and it acknowledges this, but it's also found in paragraph 3(1)(c) and subsection 5(2) of the Broadcasting Act.

There are even specific points in the Broadcasting Act. Moreover, there was a CRTC consultation on the minority French language. These obligations also arise from those issues.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Thank you.

Previously, we also heard about the challenges faced by commercial radio. I'm very sensitive to the fact that businesses need to be able to thrive.

However, in our recommendations, we must ensure that we're not just wasting our efforts, and we need to aim directly at the heart of the issue. A correlation has been drawn between the francophone music quota of 65% and the decline in ratings for traditional radio. We also observe, for example, a decline in traditional television viewing in favour of digital platforms, and a decrease in the consumption of print media in favour of digital media.

Do you know if there is any evidence or studies that support the link between having high quotas for French-language music and the decline in audience ratings?

**Simon Claus:** Not to our knowledge. Obviously, this takes on a new significance in our current economic environment. This link between French music quotas and the decline in listeners is an old argument that we have often heard and on which we have rarely agreed in front of the CRTC.

For us, that's not the explanation. It's a global trend, as Ms. Paré explained, related to structural transformations, the explosion of cultural consumption practices and competition from platforms. We cannot relate this to the French-language music quota.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** If I understand correctly, this premise is not accurate, according to you.

If we want to help commercial radio stations, it's not necessarily by changing the quota for French-language music that we should go about it, if I understand your comment.

• (1210)

**Simon Claus:** That's exactly it.

We agree that there is currently unfair competition from digital platforms in our industry. We have been denouncing it for over 20 years, and this problem needs to be addressed by restoring fairness and regulating online broadcasting companies that operate in Canada.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** We discussed potential solutions with the witnesses who appeared earlier. Quotas for French-language music are imposed on French-language music stations. Work is also being done currently to establish a quota of 5% for Indigenous music.

What is your opinion on the possibility of imposing a quota for French-language music on English-language stations?

**Simon Claus:** To be very honest, these are proposals we've already made, but they received little response. We're never against better exposure for our music, but to be honest, today we're focusing our energy on restoring equity, as I mentioned, and on regulating online businesses.

If radio stations licensed to broadcast English music want to play more French music, we'll welcome that with open arms.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Last September, in Montreal, there was a day of reflection on the state of song in Quebec and Canada. Chronicles were published afterward, including a piece on francophone music as a vector of identity and language.

You represent the artists. I'd like you to talk to us about the importance of this strong presence on the airwaves for our francophone artists, especially emerging artists and local artists.

**Simon Claus:** It was a very good day.

Ms. Paré summarized it very well in her conclusion. Since you are talking about emerging and new artists, I must say that radio provides unparalleled exposure.

The very idea of the Broadcasting Act, which is over a century old, is to say that people should have access to music in which they see themselves, in which they can find their identity, which is expressed in particular through the French language. That's fundamental.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I only have a few seconds left.

You mentioned being present at that day of reflection in Montreal.

Are there any other lessons we could take away from that day of reflection, which was surely full of good ideas?

**The Chair:** You have 25 seconds left.

**Simon Claus:** We organized it.

In fact, it may be Ms. Paré's conclusion. Francophone music should be showcased everywhere it can be, whether on television,

radio, in schools or in public spaces. We said it clearly in response to the previous questions.

The promotion of francophone music is a collective responsibility. This burden should not rest solely on the shoulders of radio stations.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have heard broadcasters say that only 4% of people listen to French music, that quotas have a negative impact on listening, and that they accelerate the migration to digital platforms. I think you don't agree on that.

Can you explain that to us further?

**Simon Claus:** First, there is a fundamental misunderstanding about the purpose of quotas, which are imposed on companies that have been granted the right to use a public asset such as the airwaves. We sometimes forget about that a bit.

The quotas are not intended to reflect existing demand, but rather to support and stimulate listening practices and to ensure a significant presence of French-language content in the public space.

The fact that they hold an extremely small share of the digital market compared to their position in the world of physical sales is not an argument in favour of relaxing regulatory requirements. On the contrary, it's more important than ever to modernize the CRTC's regulatory framework by subjecting online broadcasting companies to promotion and recommendation obligations.

Radio still plays a fundamental role in the discovery of music by Quebecers. Data from the Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec, or OCCQ, shows that radio usage in Quebec is positively associated with listening to songs in French.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Do you think the CRTC could regulate the major digital platforms?

**Simon Claus:** Yes, but it's also obligated to do so. In 2023, the Broadcasting Act was updated to subject online broadcasting companies to the obligations of the act, just like broadcasting companies. It was to restore some fairness in the system and to reaffirm Canada's cultural sovereignty, which is fundamental.

The CRTC is updating its regulatory framework. It's quite a long and very demanding process. That's normal, since we're questioning the different stakeholders around the table and seeking various areas of expertise. A decision has already been made on the obligation of companies to fund music creation and production. We're currently finishing the consultation phase on the enhancement and recommendation obligations that will be imposed on the platforms.

• (1215)

**Mario Beaulieu:** There was supposed to be a tax on digital platforms, which would have brought in about \$1.2 billion a year.

Could we also consider applying that tax and ensuring that the revenues generated are used for French-language private broadcasters?

**Simon Claus:** There are two elements to consider, namely the tax on digital businesses and issues related to taxation.

Normally, any business operating in Canada must be subject to taxation. Next, there are financial contribution obligations that arise from the Broadcasting Act.

Today, radio stations contribute 0.5% of their revenues to the funding of various funds supporting music creation, production and marketing. As for online broadcasting companies, according to a decision made by the CRTC a year ago, they must contribute 5% of their revenues.

This decision is being challenged by some digital companies in court, but we believe that it's indeed an important element to continue ensuring the funding of our system.

Moreover, part of this money is allocated to music funds, but another portion is designated for community radio funds, in particular.

**Mario Beaulieu:** What are the effects of montages on the share of French-language music broadcast?

**Simon Claus:** That's an interesting question.

From the beginning, the spectre of the 65% quota has been highlighted. In fact, it's 65% during the week and 55% during prime time. There's also a feature called montages. The quotas are calculated based on the number of musical pieces that are broadcast. If we broadcast 100 musical pieces in a week, we must play 65 in French. However, there's a nuance related to montages, which are compilations of several songs put together without interruption, that count as one song.

In fact, either French-language or English-language montages could be broadcast. However, we currently only see English-language montages. It is important to note that montages may be broadcast up to a limit of 10% of the content broadcast during a week of broadcasting. This is a long technical explanation to say that, mechanically, in the end, montages serve as a workaround, and that the 65% quota would have to be lowered by 10 percentage points for the share of French-language content actually broadcast to match it.

**Mario Beaulieu:** It has been proposed to give a tax credit to companies that purchase advertising from private broadcasters and to withdraw those intended for large digital platforms.

Do you have other solutions to propose?

**The Chair:** Sorry, but there are only 10 seconds left.

**Simon Claus:** As we said, radio stations are our partners. We're therefore necessarily in favour of economic policies that can encourage them.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Thank you.

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

We will now move on to the second round of questions. We will proceed in the same way, that is to say, I will give three minutes to Mr. Bélanger, three minutes to Ms. Chenette, one and a half min-

utes to Mr. Beaulieu, three minutes to Mr. Dalton, and then three minutes to Ms. Mingarelli.

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor for three minutes.

**Jim Bélanger:** Thank you.

We're discussing the possibility of changing the percentage of the quota, and you've given us your opinion. However, private radio stations tell us that their survival is at risk. Coming from a background of small or medium-sized enterprises, I believe that no one knows their business better than they do.

What concrete solutions do you propose to ensure compliance with the francophone music quota while ensuring the financial viability of private radio stations, not only in Quebec but also outside Quebec?

● (1220)

**Simon Claus:** As I've been saying from the beginning, these are partners. We disagree on certain elements of the diagnosis. What we are demanding is that equity be ensured within the broadcasting system by subjecting online broadcasting companies to the obligations of the Broadcasting Act.

Moreover, nothing prevents us from helping radio stations that need it. We were talking about the different budgets earlier, particularly for community radio. This is something we will support, but we believe that a reduction in quotas will not save radio.

**Jim Bélanger:** If private radio stations cannot survive and disappear, do you agree that we'll reach even fewer listeners?

**Simon Claus:** Yes, I completely agree. That's why we say that radio is a key player in our industry. We were also talking about digital migration. Earlier, someone was talking about the presence of radios in cars. That's something we also support.

For example, in Quebec, a bill has been introduced stating that our broadcasters must be present in this new digital world and its various interfaces. This can include smart speakers or connected cars, among other things. Our radio stations must be present and promoted, including our public broadcaster and private stations, which, in accordance with their obligations, prominently showcase our music.

**Jim Bélanger:** In my opinion, the current situation shows that the regulations, which have not evolved in 50 years, should be modernized.

Do you agree? Don't you think that the quotas should be reduced?

**Simon Claus:** We believe that this solution will not help radio stations increase their revenues. The CRTC is currently considering ways to lighten the workload of radio stations, particularly in terms of administration and reporting. We are in favour of this, but we do not believe that the solution necessarily lies in lowering quotas.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Chenette for three minutes.

**Madeleine Chenette:** I thank the witnesses for participating in this very interesting discussion today. There are so many questions to ask.

Our Canadian pride is on the rise, and the francophonie, just like our anglophone communities, is becoming increasingly important for our economy.

I understand you well when you say that people need to see themselves in music.

When it comes to promoting this, is there a difference between promoting Canadian content, which can be in English or French, and promoting strictly French-language content, which includes both Canadian content and content consumed by the francophonie around the world?

This represents a huge market of 321 million people.

**Simon Claus:** Yes, there's a difference.

It's important to keep our language alive with other francophone peoples. Indeed, when we talk about showcasing, we're referring to both Canadian content and francophone Canadian content, which is fundamental.

It should be noted that our radio stations, which are our partners, have had quotas in the past for French-language music that were higher than the Canadian content quota, which is 35%.

However, since these are people located in Quebec and the programmers are committed to playing our songs, naturally, we've always broadcast Canadian francophone music on the radio, for the most part. So, it's something that's important to us as well.

**Madeleine Chenette:** As you said, there are many things happening in the sector, and to ensure the survival of our radio stations, we also need to promote our culture. We have therefore allocated \$770 million to culture in Canada, a historic budget.

In your opinion, what should be done to encourage radio stations to view quotas not as a penalty, but as an opportunity to showcase our culture, which is constantly evolving?

Do you have any other suggestions for us on that?

• (1225)

**Simon Claus:** As Ms. Paré said, we have created a virtuous circle. Historically, French-language music has represented 40% to 50% of album sales, particularly with the help of radio. This has helped highlight francophone, Québécois and Canadian music.

People are inclined to buy this music, and a star system has been defended that, in turn, helped feed radio. It's not Taylor Swift who'll come give an interview to a radio station in Quebec City or Trois-Rivières. On the other hand, our artists come to these radio stations, and people will hear artists who look like them and are close to them.

All of this continues to feed this virtuous circle. We must not break this chain. On the contrary, it needs to be strengthened, particularly by subjecting digital companies to the obligations set out by law.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Chenette.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for one minute and a half.

**Mario Beaulieu:** You propose to integrate the current definition of francophone vocal music into the Radio Regulations, 1986.

Could you tell us a little more about that?

**Simon Claus:** According to the definition of the term "French-language vocal music", or according to the practices of the CRTC, 50% of the lyrics sung must be in French. This practice has never been established in regulations.

We therefore propose that, as part of the current revision of the Broadcasting Act, this be included in the Radio Regulations, 1986. This technical detail will clarify a practice that's already being applied within the CRTC.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Several surveys show that the English-speaking population knows very, very little about French-language music. We're really talking about two solitudes.

Could we consider setting a quota for French-language music on English-language radio stations?

**Simon Claus:** We wouldn't be against this idea. We find it positive that this audience is interested in our music and sees that what's being done here is just as good.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Okay.

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds left.

**Mario Beaulieu:** All right.

Do you have any other solutions to suggest to us?

**Simon Claus:** In 15 seconds, I'll only have time to thank you.

**Mario Beaulieu:** Thank you.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Dalton for three minutes.

**Marc Dalton:** Thank you very much.

Since I have very little time, I would ask you to answer with yes or no to the first questions.

Do you agree that people are listening to music on the radio less and less?

**Simon Claus:** They listen to it for shorter and shorter periods of time, yes.

**Marc Dalton:** It's said that listening time has dropped by about 50%.

Do you agree that commercial stations are experiencing a decline in profitability and that the possibility of closure is becoming more and more real?

**Simon Claus:** I don't have the exact financial data to answer your question.

**Marc Dalton:** Broadcasters told us they do not want to force listeners to listen to English songs. However, they're sensitive to their tastes, and they want to give them what they want, whether it's French music or English music. They want more flexibility.

Is that true or not?

**Simon Claus:** In fact, it's a premise that we disagree with. Flexibility already exists. We were talking about montages earlier. If you listen to the radio, because we listen—

**Marc Dalton:** Excuse me for interrupting. I have very little time, and I have two other questions.

Over two years ago, in April 2023, when the Liberals took control of the Internet with the Online Streaming Act, they claimed that these censorship powers were necessary to help Canadian content creators.

Can you tell us if such strict government control has helped popularize French-language vocal music?

Do you see a difference since that law was passed?

**Simon Claus:** We see a difference in the sense that a decision has already been made by the CRTC concerning the obligation for financial contribution. The CRTC is an independent administrative tribunal responsible for implementing the Broadcasting Act.

Regarding the obligations for development and recommendations, no decision has been made yet. This process is long and democratic, and it requires consultation with the various stakeholders. Since the beginning of the year, we have, for example, submitted eight briefs and held three public hearings. We hope that this will change—

• (1230)

**Marc Dalton:** Excuse me for interrupting.

Short video platforms, like TikTok, Instagram reels, and YouTube shorts, provide ways other than radio to discover content, as the user doesn't know which song will play next.

What do music artists do to increase their discoverability on platforms?

**The Chair:** Please respond briefly, in 15 seconds.

**Simon Claus:** They invest in all areas. Like all the professionals in our industry who are experiencing the fragmentation of music listening and discovery methods, artists are investing in different channels, whether it's radio, television, platforms or social media.

All of this means that today, our industry is also under pressure and facing significant financial challenges, because much more needs to be done for revenues, which are lower.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dalton. You used your speaking time very effectively.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mingarelli for three minutes.

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Ms. Paré and Mr. Claus.

Thank you very much for agreeing to testify before the committee today.

Some broadcasters claim that quotas lead to a decrease in listeners.

How do you respond to the argument that too many constraints could harm the very viability of French-language music radio stations?

**Simon Claus:** Thank you for the question.

I think we've discussed the issue of constraint several times. We disagree with the statement that francophone music drives listeners away.

We also see that there's flexibility. It's not true that there isn't any. We talked about montages, and we can also discuss how francophone music is programmed.

What we notice is that francophone music is mainly broadcast when there are few listeners, particularly in the evening. We can talk about official quotas, but we can also talk about the actual exposure of our French-language music.

We realize that, due to the way francophone music is programmed, it has less chance of being heard because it airs at times when there are fewer listeners.

We can denounce the quotas, but we can also say that there are certain manoeuvres being put in place by radio stations today to circumvent the spirit of the law.

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** Thank you very much.

How does ADISQ assess the balance between programming freedom and cultural responsibility?

**Simon Claus:** In terms of programming freedom, we will not tell radio stations what to program. They are free in their programming.

What we say and what the law states, in fact, is that radio stations must make predominant use of Canadian and French-language content in their programming, because they have a responsibility in that respect.

Broadcasting is considered to be in the public interest. It's stated in the law. In this respect, they are accountable.

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds left.

**Giovanna Mingarelli:** You describe radio as a privileged space for discoverability.

How has this role evolved in the era of platforms like Spotify, TikTok and YouTube?

**Simon Claus:** Where we have platforms that are more on mass media but individualized, radio remains a tool for social synchronicity, meaning it maintains a wide reach. It continues to gather a large audience. We talked about Billie du Page earlier. We could also take the example of Roxane Bruneau, who is a bit older.

However, it can be said that it has changed the careers of many artists. It's an acknowledgement, but it also serves as a real springboard, which other media may not necessarily provide.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mingarelli.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the witnesses, Ms. Paré and Mr. Claus, for being with us.

The committee will now discuss its work on the regulations. I will therefore excuse the witnesses and thank them once again.

Colleagues, we have about 20 to 25 minutes left to discuss our work regarding the regulations. To help us plan our work, I asked the clerk to distribute a calendar. She emailed it to you during our meeting, and she will also distribute it in printed form.

Once all the members have received the schedule, I will make a few comments before we start our discussion. The clerk also helped me prepare some notes regarding the process and the regulations. Finally, I am open to comments and suggestions on our approach.

If you look at the page showing the December calendar, you can see what the clerk has planned for the meetings before the Christmas break, which are meetings 14 to 17. For meetings 15 and 17, which will take place on the remaining Thursdays, the clerk indicated who will come to testify before the committee.

For meetings 14 and 16, a small change was made after printing for meeting 14, namely that witnesses are now confirmed for meeting 14 concerning the study on the quota of French-language music. They are Cogeco and Alexis Normand. I would therefore ask you to add that to your notes. For now, that's what's planned.

I would like to bring up a few other points. With respect to the work that's not on the calendar, that's not planned, I would simply ask you to take it into account.

First, there's the report on the education continuum. We need time to prepare it. The first step is to give our instructions to our analyst, Ms. Lecomte. We also need time to do that. It's up to you to decide when, but it's something you need to take into account.

Secondly, we discussed, as a committee, the fact that we would prioritize a study on the appointment of the new commissioner when that person is chosen. Obviously, they haven't been chosen yet, but I just wanted to let you know that it's something the committee will need to address at some point. This summarizes the schedule and the work in the immediate future.

With respect to the regulations, I just want to make sure you understand the process. The regulations were submitted yesterday, and there are 30 sitting days before the regulations are published in the Canada Gazette. This means that those 30 days will end on February 25. After that, there will be a public consultation lasting a minimum of 30 sitting days. So, at a minimum, the public consultation will end on May 6. As a committee, we can decide how many meetings we want to dedicate to the study. In fact, we can decide on the witnesses and whether we want to write a report. That decision is up to our committee.

The clerk searched to find out if there were any precedents concerning the approach to take in studying the regulations and, honestly, there aren't many for this committee.

• (1235)

The last time the regulations were tabled and presented to the committee was in 2018, and the committee did not review them, which means there are not many precedents. It's really up to the committee to decide how to approach the study.

In my opinion, we need to decide together when we want to start the study, how many meetings we want to hold, which witnesses we would like to invite and whether we want to write a report at the

end of this study. We must always take into account that if we want to produce a report, we need to determine whether we want to complete it before the 30 sitting days are up, namely before February 25 or May 6. It's up to us to decide. These are questions we need to answer.

I asked the clerk to distribute the agenda. I wanted you to be informed and to know that if we start the study during the next meetings, we may need to cancel a meeting or make changes to the schedule.

I'm happy to receive your feedback.

Mr. Dechênes-Thériault has the floor next. It will then be Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Villeneuve and Mr. Godin's turn.

You have the floor, Mr. Deschênes.

• (1240)

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** If you allow me, Mr. Chair, before making my comment, I would like to ask questions to clarify a few things regarding two studies.

How many sessions are left for the study on the quota of French-language music and the study on the use of French in government communications and federal institutions?

**The Chair:** I will let the clerk respond to you, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Madeleine Martin):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Regarding the study on the quota for French-language music, technically, we just had to adopt a minimum number of meetings. We have reached this minimum, but we could hold other meetings if the committee wishes.

Some of the witnesses we received appeared individually in their witness group, which extended the meeting time a bit. That's why the representative from Cogeco will come next Tuesday.

It's at the committee's discretion to determine what it wants to do for the study of the quota for French-language music. If the committee is satisfied with the statements it has heard regarding this study and is ready to move on to the next step, that's perfectly fine.

For the study on the use of French in government communications, there was still a meeting with the Commissioner of Official Languages scheduled for December 11. On December 4, the ministers are invited to appear to discuss their mandates and priorities, while possibly having an opening for the use of French in government communications.

To answer your question, Mr. Deschênes, it would be one or two meetings. Again, the committee had only agreed to a minimum number of meetings, which has been met. After that, we would need to see what you want to do.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Thank you.

Now that I have these answers, I will make a few comments.

I don't think we should start the study on artificial intelligence before the holidays. We have a lot on our plate, and I think we should avoid spreading ourselves too thin with different tasks. It would be better to finish the current studies. I propose that we postpone the study on artificial intelligence until after the holidays, definitely.

In terms of our priorities, we should submit our comments to our analyst for the drafting of the report on the education continuum. I think we should set aside some time before the holidays to make sure we don't lose too many weeks of work on that. I think the report on the education continuum—

**Madeleine Chenette:** I don't think they're listening to you on the other side of the table.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** These proposals were also intended for them.

**Madeleine Chenette:** That's it. You make suggestions, but no one listens to you.

**The Chair:** I would just like to ask the members to listen.

Please continue, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** I would like to make suggestions regarding the four meetings that are planned.

I suggest that we address the issue of artificial intelligence after the holidays. Time should be reserved during the four meetings for the draft report on the education continuum. Otherwise, we will significantly delay the preparation of the report. If we want to finish this file, we need to set aside some time.

With respect to the regulations, we had agreed as a committee that it was one of our priorities. For our part, we are ready to start the study whenever the committee wishes. If you want to start the study next week, we agree. If you would like to wait, we are also okay with that. We recognize the importance of this issue, but we would like to hear your perspective on it. We are ready to start the study.

I would also like to hear my colleagues' opinions on my suggestion regarding the regulations. I propose that we study each regulation separately and that we do not study all the regulations at the same time. In any case, only one regulation has been submitted. Even if two regulations were submitted, I would suggest that we study the regulations separately.

If we study monetary administrative sanctions, we are only studying monetary administrative sanctions. If we study the use of French in federal communications, we are only studying the use of French in federal communications. If we are working on part VII, we are only working on part VII. This is what I propose to avoid mixing everything up. These are still three distinct components. My suggestion is that we reserve a set number of meetings for each of the three regulations, with guests, so we don't mix things up. This is a suggestion I would like to bring to the committee's attention.

In my opinion, it's certainly the studies of part VII and of federal communications that will require the most time in committee, and for which we may need to hear the greatest number of witnesses.

For the study on administrative monetary penalties that was proposed yesterday, I believe that four sessions on the topic could be sufficient. That said, we are ready to hear suggestions. Initially, in our work plan, we discussed about a dozen meetings on the regulations. If we add six to eight meetings on part VII, six meetings on federal communications and four meetings, we end up with a total of 16 or 17 meetings. That's more than what we initially envisioned. My suggestion would be to study these topics one by one and to start with the one that requires fewer meetings than the other two regulations.

The last comment I would make about our work plan is as follows. If there is an appointment before the holidays for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, one of our priorities should be to have a meeting with that person to provide our input to the House.

• (1245)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

**Mario Beaulieu:** As for the regulations, we will see. We have one at the moment. We can start studying that regulation, but I don't know when. It should be fairly short, but we'll see. As for the other regulations, we will see when we have them. It seems to be dragging on. At the moment, there is a regulation that strictly pertains to travel. I think that could be done quite quickly. I'm not against the idea of starting right away.

As for the preparation of the report, that will also depend on certain factors. We need to give the analyst time to prepare and start it. We will have a work plan, and we can discuss it to see if we want to operate as usual. We will see which time would be the most suitable. As for the issue of the music quota, if we already have the guests, I think we should study it.

As for the study on artificial intelligence, I don't know if it's better to work on it intermittently or to start with a section on the regulations. A proposal should be made. It all depends on how quickly the other regulations will come in.

We saw on Thursday that two mandates are mixed up. I will let my colleague weigh in on that. It's not clear. We could start with the regulation we just received. The analyst will surely give us information on this subject. She just told me that it's not the case for now. We will wait to see when the discussion on the report drafting plan will take place.

**The Chair:** The next speakers on my list are Mr. Villeneuve and Mr. Godin.

Regarding the report, the clerk distributed a draft of the report proposed by our analyst last week. The first step regarding the education continuum report is to find time to provide instructions to the analyst. Our analyst will be able to prepare the report based on those instructions. We will need another meeting for drafting.

Did I explain that well?

**Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher):** The study of the report will certainly require more than one meeting.

**The Chair:** So it will be at least one meeting.

Before continuing, I wanted to respond to your comment, Mr. Beaulieu. I'm only talking about possible processes. I discussed it with the clerk. In principle, if you wanted to start studying the regulations, we could start it on Tuesday. It depends, among other things, on the witnesses we invite, but know that it is possible. I think you were wondering about that a bit.

Mr. Villeneuve, you have the floor.

• (1250)

**Louis Villeneuve:** Thank you very much.

On December 2, we could finish the study on the quota of French-language music. In the second part, we could discuss the report plan. That's a suggestion.

I also want to revisit the study of the regulations. It is true that we had identified this as a priority. However, the regulations that have just been submitted are not very long. It won't take us eight meetings to study them completely.

I don't know what my colleagues think.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, what my colleague is suggesting for December 2 is reasonable. I think we need to finish the study on the quota.

Ms. Normand and the representative from Cogeco will appear during the first hour. That leaves one hour.

If we give our analyst the instructions to prepare the report on the education continuum, she will have her hands full. I also want to note that she will have a report to prepare on the quota and another on the use of French. We will therefore hear about Ms. Lecomte in the coming months.

I also want to go back to the fact that this is not what we had agreed upon for December 4. We need to understand that we've muddied the waters. We plan to receive two ministers, each for an hour, to discuss two different topics. This is not what we agreed upon. The motion from October 23 did indeed state that the ministers would discuss the use of French. The other motion stated that the ministers would discuss their mandate letter. These are two completely different topics. I would, therefore, separate them.

I suggest that on December 4, we complete the study on the use of French so we can finish the report and draft it. The ministers should be reinvented next February to discuss their mandate letters. I know it's late, but I would still like to hear them discuss their mandate letters. Personally, I wouldn't merge the two topics. That was not the intent of our motion, and I believe that's not what was de-

cidated around the table. As for December 9, we have time. We can therefore begin the study of the regulations.

As my colleague mentioned earlier regarding the regulations, I do not want to take a position today because the regulations were submitted yesterday at 4:00 PM. We can come back to this, but I think we could start the study of the regulations on December 9. I don't know if we need one meeting or more. It would be irresponsible of me to respond to you today, but we could schedule this study for that time.

On December 17, the Commissioner will likely be at the end of his term, and the holiday break will have begun. We will therefore revisit the reports from our analyst and, if necessary, the study on the regulations in February. We're talking about the month of January, but it will more likely be February.

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

I would like to revisit a few points.

I understand your comments about merging the topics in meeting 15. I wanted to bring this up with you, but I didn't get the chance to do so. The clerk is constantly in contact with the ministers' offices.

That said, you're right. I agree that they were separate studies. The reason they were brought together is that there were discussions with the ministers' offices and both ministers offered to testify on both topics at the same time so we could ask them questions on both topics at the same time. However, that is up to the committee.

**Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, it must be understood that the motion referred to two hours for each minister. I understand that the ministers can speak for an hour each, but on one topic, not two.

**The Chair:** You need to understand that it was the clerk who put that in the calendar. This is not a decision I made myself.

**Joël Godin:** I understand.

**The Chair:** The clerk can therefore write to the ministers again, if that is the committee's wish.

As for the second point, namely meeting 17, during which we will receive the Commissioner of Official Languages to discuss the use of French in federal communications, the clerk was in contact with the Commissioner. If that is the committee's wish, he would be ready to testify on the regulations during meeting 17. At the moment, he is therefore amenable to discussing the study scheduled in the calendar. That's an option.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor.

• (1255)

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Are we all in agreement that the first hour of meeting 14 will focus on the study of the quota of French-language music, and the second hour will be dedicated to preparing the report plan? Do we have everyone's consent? I think it's decided.

I will come back to the 15th meeting later. First, I want to talk about the meetings we have agreement on to speed things up, Mr. Godin.

Are we all in agreement that meeting number 16 will focus on the regulations?

**Joël Godin:** I have reservations. As I told you, we received the information at 4:00 p.m. yesterday evening. I want to confirm it, but we need to consult our colleagues. I'm the spokesperson, but I am not free to do what I want.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** We agree on the principle. We could therefore schedule the study on the regulations in the calendar.

**Joël Godin:** We agree in principle, but I reserve the right to revisit it.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** I would like to hear my colleagues' comments about meeting 17.

I suggest obtaining the comments from the Commissioner, who is finishing his term, on the regulations concerning the administrative monetary penalties that the Commissioner can impose. It had been mentioned in the file. I think it would be interesting.

The topic of the second hour of meeting 17 was to be determined.

**Mario Beaulieu:** It's about both hours.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Yes, the Commissioner is coming. We will be able to ask him questions.

**Mario Beaulieu:** It's two hours, so—

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** We could therefore dedicate meeting number 17 to discussing the regulations, if we want to have someone else during the second hour.

**Joël Godin:** What my colleague just suggested is that we spend two hours with the Commissioner during meeting 17.

**Mario Beaulieu:** We would first discuss the use of French and then the regulations.

**Joël Godin:** That's it. The first hour would focus on the use of French, and the second hour would focus on the regulations.

**The Chair:** I would ask that only one person speak at a time. It would help the interpreters.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** For meeting 14, meeting 16 and meeting 17, we will receive the Commissioner. I think the question is pretty much settled.

With respect to meeting 15, I understood that the invitation the ministers accepted was related to their mandate letters. At the start of the session, in September, we had sent them an invitation related to their mandate. I understood that this is what they were coming to talk about.

However, for the agenda, do we agree to keep the ministers in meeting 15?

**Joël Godin:** We can agree on the fact that—

**The Chair:** It's Ms. Chenette's turn. Next, it will be your turn, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Chenette, you have the floor.

**Madeleine Chenette:** Basically, we agree on the content of meeting 14 and meeting 16.

I do understand the difference between the study of the use of French and the mandate letters. It is important to understand the mandates of the ministers before discussing the use of French. I understood that's why they suggested doing both at the same time. We could perhaps ask them for more time, because we talked about the time needed to get to the bottom of the matters.

I would like to have my colleagues' comments on that.

Don't you see the importance of properly understanding their mandates before questioning them about the use of French?

Could we merge the two topics, as was proposed, and perhaps ask them for more time?

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, I give you the floor. Then, I will have a few things to say.

**Joël Godin:** To answer Ms. Chenette's question, the ministers should have come earlier to discuss the mandate letters. This is the second-to-last meeting dedicated to the study on the use of French. After that, we'll receive the Commissioner to conclude the necessary testimony for this report. I think this topic should be treated as a priority because it's part of a report.

As for the ministers' visit to discuss the mandate letters, unfortunately, I would postpone it to February, because we will progress in a more chronological manner for the preparation of our reports. We will come back to the issue of mandate letters.

I understand that we should have analyzed their mandates before the rest, but they decided not to come earlier. It's not up to them to decide what they come to talk about here. That's up to the committee.

As such, what I'm saying is that we should ask them right away to find a time by May 2026 to come and answer questions concerning the mandate letters. They're the ones who put themselves in this situation. It wasn't us.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** It is 1:00 p.m. I know that all this takes time.

Madam Clerk, could you summarize what we heard?

**Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to make a comment that could help you for meeting 15. Personally, I wouldn't mix the two topics.

I don't know if there could be some flexibility, but I wouldn't mix the two topics.

**The Chair:** Madam Clerk, you have the floor.

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

Correct me if I'm wrong, but from what I've heard, the first hour of meeting 14 would be with the representative from Cogeco and Ms. Alexis Normand, as planned. We would finish the study on the quota of French-language music. During the second hour, we would give our analyst the instructions for the preparation of the report on the education continuum.

For meeting 15, which will take place on December 4, we will welcome the Minister responsible for Official Languages and the President of the Treasury Board. I think the committee could make a decision to clarify this issue, but I understood that I would need to reach out to the ministers to see if they would be willing to testify on only one of the two studies, namely on the study of the use of French in government communications, rather than on their mandate letters. I could inform them of the committee's intention and get their response.

Meeting 16 would take place on December 9. We would potentially start the study of the regulations that were tabled yesterday. This would be the first meeting on this topic, but that doesn't mean there couldn't be others. If it is the committee's wish, we should think about witnesses right away. If you send me a list next week, at the end of the day on Tuesday or something like that, it would give us enough time to invite them.

Finally, meeting 17 would be our last meeting before the Christmas break, and the first hour would be dedicated to the testimony of the Commissioner of Official Languages on the use of French in

government communications. I understand that we would like the Commissioner to stay for the second hour to discuss the regulations. I contacted his office this morning, and his colleagues told me that he would have enough time to prepare to appear on this matter.

**The Chair:** Are we all in agreement?

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Joël Godin:** I still raise my reservation about meeting 16. I don't want to move forward without having confirmed this with my party.

**The Chair:** I just want to clarify the situation, Mr. Godin.

You prefer not to plan the content of the meeting.

Is that correct?

**Joël Godin:** No, I'm saying that we can plan this, but it's possible that I might oppose it later. However, the odds are slim.

**The Chair:** Are we all in agreement on that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Since we are in agreement, I move to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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