



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 024**

Thursday, February 12, 2026

---

Chair: Lisa Hepfner





## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Thursday, February 12, 2026

• (0815)

[English]

**The Chair (Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

We are gathered here for the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Before we begin, I ask all participants to please read the guidelines written on the updated cards on your table in front of you. These are measures in place to prevent audio incidents and protect the health and safety of all participants, including our interpreters. You will notice a QR code, which links to a video should you need more information.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before you speak. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, November 17, 2025, the committee is meeting to study the subject matter of supplementary estimates (B), 2025-26. We have vote 1b under the Canadian Museum for Human Rights; vote 1b under the Canadian Museum of History; vote 1b under the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21; votes 1b and 5b under the Canadian Museum of Nature; vote 1b under the Department of Canadian Heritage; vote 1b under the National Film Board; vote 1b under the National Gallery of Canada; vote 1b under the National Museum of Science and Technology; vote 1b under Telefilm Canada; and vote 1b under The National Battlefields Commission.

Appearing with us this morning, we have the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages.

Minister, you're here with us until 9:15, I understand. I will give you five minutes for opening remarks, and then I'll open the floor to members for questions.

It's over to you.

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages):** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members.

I want to acknowledge that we are here today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I'm really happy to be appearing before you.

[Translation]

As Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, it is my job, above all else, to protect and promote who we are as Canadians.

We face a rapidly changing world—a world that has presented and will continue to present many new and difficult challenges. As we've repeatedly seen, what we need fundamentally to address those challenges is unity.

[English]

It requires us to stand together as Canadians to protect our cultural sovereignty and our ability to tell our own stories, celebrate our languages, importantly, and pass on a vibrant culture and heritage to the future generations. It's why our government is taking action to deliver investments where they're needed most.

Investing in the arts and culture is a smart economic policy. Canada's arts and culture sector contributes over \$130 billion to our economy, including \$65 billion directly. It supports, directly or indirectly, more than one million jobs. Every federal dollar invested generates up to \$29 in economic activity.

[Translation]

However, the value of arts and culture is much more than economic. In a world increasingly shaped by misinformation, these investments seek to protect the democratic values we hold dear. They seek to ensure that Canadians have access to reliable sources of information and are reflected in the stories they see, hear and read. While Canada is a vast and diverse country, arts and culture has the unique power to bring us together. The hundreds of local media organizations, festivals and cultural programs we support every year help connect our communities.

• (0820)

[English]

I'm pleased to note that three-quarters of Canadians believe that attending such arts and culture events deepens their connection to our country.

As part of the 2025-26 supplementary estimates (B), Canadian Heritage received an additional \$120.7 million in funding. The majority of this funding will go towards grants and contributions, enabling us to strengthen Canadian cultural institutions and sustain Canada's exceptional cultural scene, while also supporting both elite and grassroots sports.

[Translation]

This includes more funding for the Canada media fund to better support Canadian creators and producers. It also provides funding for an extension of the special measures for journalism component of the Canadian periodical fund to support journalism and access to local news. This will ensure that Canadians have access to local and timely information from diverse sources, reflecting their community needs and interests.

[English]

The sport support program will receive additional funding as well to advance diversity and gender equality within the Canadian sport system. We're also investing more through Sport Integrity Canada, ensuring that athletes and coaches across the country can train and compete in safe and inclusive environments.

In addition, we're funding arts and heritage activities that matter deeply to local communities, such as new exhibits for the Montreal Holocaust Museum, upgrades to cultural infrastructure like Richmond's Gateway Theatre in B.C., and the fallen firefighters memorial project in Whitby.

[Translation]

A number of Canadian Heritage portfolio organizations received increased funding totalling \$29.9 million through the supplementary estimates. This funding will support our national museums, as well as the operational requirements of key cultural institutions, including the National Battlefields Commission, the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada.

[English]

Finally, we are very pleased to renew the Canada Strong pass for summer 2026. This is a signature commitment of our government, helping families choose and discover Canada, while reducing costs for families. This initiative was a great success last summer, in particular during the holiday season, attracting two million visits in participating museums. That includes half a million—500,000—children who enjoyed free admission and 115,000 youth who benefited from discounted rates.

In moments of change, what defines us matters more than ever. Canada's strength will come from our ability to tell our own stories with openness, honesty and confidence. By investing in our culture and choosing unity, we ensure that the story continues to be written by Canadians for Canadians and shared proudly with the world.

Thank you for your attention.

[Translation]

I look forward to answering your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

I failed to introduce our witnesses from the department this morning. We have Francis Bilodeau, deputy minister; Andrew Brown, associate deputy minister; Véronique Côté, chief financial officer; Blair McMurren, assistant deputy minister, cultural affairs; and Joëlle Montminy, senior assistant deputy minister, cultural affairs.

Welcome to all of you. I understand you're with us for the full two hours, and we appreciate your attendance.

I'll now turn the floor over to Mrs. Thomas for six minutes, please.

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Thank you.

Thank you, Minister.

My first question for you is about your recent statement, after becoming minister, that part of the responsibility of CBC is to foster what you called "social cohesion". Can you explain for the committee what you meant by social cohesion? The reason I ask is that experienced journalists have stated that these words or this term is often used by the People's Republic of China to mean state control and zero tolerance for challenges. That seems counter to the values that we hold here in Canada, and so I'm curious as to what you meant by social cohesion.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think that, in the age of intense disinformation that we're all living through, there is less social cohesion as falsities are propagated through media sources, both legitimate and illegitimate. Integral to a healthy democracy... Indeed, the fourth pillar of our democracy is a healthy media ecosystem that exercises, rightly, its freedom of expression. Again, integral to that is a state-financed—not state-controlled—public media. That is CBC/Radio-Canada. Indeed, the CBC's mandate is ferociously independent, and we should all defend that, whether they are saying good or bad things about us.

When there is a lack of support for a public broadcaster, I think that contributes to the spread of disinformation, and social cohesion is therefore affected. It's not about any sort of command and control of the media system that you may see in other countries, but indeed it is part of, and integral to, a healthy democracy.

• (0825)

**Rachael Thomas:** What is social cohesion?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Social cohesion is the ability of people to trust their institutions, to not feel like society is falling apart, but that we are all living together and able to exercise the rights, in the case of Canada, that define us—freedom, as enshrined in the Charter of Rights.

I could go on beyond the time allotted for you to discuss this, Ms. Thomas, but I think we both agree as to what it is.

**Rachael Thomas:** I think the committee needed to hear from your mouth what it was. One of the things that you said in your statement was that it's a trust in institutions, and that Canadians should be able to place their trust in the media. In particular, you mentioned the public broadcaster, the CBC.

Interestingly enough, just a couple of weeks ago, there was a media summit that was hosted in Vancouver. At that summit, from the stage just before the Prime Minister took it, the president of the Canadian Media Producers Association said, “Prime Minister, know that every person in this room and the 180,000 people who work in this industry have your back, just as we know that you have ours”.

Minister, this is from a media organization in a room full of media folks, saying directly to the Prime Minister, “[we] have your back, just as we know that you have ours”. Minister, that's not the role of the media. The role of the media is not to have the back of the Prime Minister and to be able to tell the story that the government wants told. The role of the media is to be truthful in storytelling, to report the news as Canadians deserve to have it told. When a statement like this is made, it chips away at the credibility of media, and it actually distorts the trust of Canadians, which you just spoke about as being important.

What do you make of that?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** What I make of your statement, Ms. Thomas, is that you're deeply incorrect in the premise. First of all, the event itself took place in Ottawa. It was not members.... It wasn't CTV or CBC. It was producers of shows, and those two executives....

Let's correct the record, because it's deeply flawed.

**Rachael Thomas:** With all due respect, let's correct the record. It was news as well. In fact, the head of the CBC was one of the key speakers at this event.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** What was said at the event, Ms. Thomas, by producers of shows like *Heated Rivalry*, which was discussed at length, was that in the trade negotiations, these people who are defending Canadian content had the Prime Minister's back.

It wasn't CBC or independent journalists who were saying this. That is false.

**Rachael Thomas:** Their job, with all due respect, Minister, is to report on those trade negotiations. If you're reporting on those trade negotiations, you just simply report the facts. You don't have the Prime Minister's back.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The job of these people is to make shows—

**Rachael Thomas:** That's an illegitimate use of media.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** —like with puppets. These are producers. They make shows. It wasn't journalism.

**Rachael Thomas:** Minister, you're misleading the committee. It was not just producers. That was part of it, but—

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The two speakers were the head of an organization that talks about media producing—producers in a heated negotiation with the U.S.

**Rachael Thomas:** These are folks who are receiving government dollars, who are producing material that is making it out to the Canadian public. They are telling stories, and they are telling the Prime Minister, “[We] have your back, just as...you have ours.”

**Hon. Marc Miller:** They were telling the Prime Minister, in the context of being under threat from U.S. content coming into

Canada, that they want to protect the pillar of our cultural identity, which is Canadian content. That's all they were saying.

**Rachael Thomas:** They tell stories.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think you're wrong, and I think you know it.

**Rachael Thomas:** Their job is to tell stories, so how are they going to tell stories to protect the Prime Minister's back?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** They want support, financially, to be able to tell stories about Canadian identity—whether it's good or bad about the Prime Minister.

**Rachael Thomas:** However, they're saying they also have the Prime Minister's back, so how are they going to have his back?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think you're making this up. I really think this is something.... You're looking for something where there is not an issue.

**Rachael Thomas:** This is a direct quote from the individual who spoke from the stage.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You're insinuating that it's journalists who are going to spin stories positively for the Prime Minister because they “have [his] back”. That's entirely false. These are producers of shows like *The Littlest Hobo*, for God's sake.

**The Chair:** I'll now turn the floor over to Mr. Al Soud for six minutes.

● (0830)

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to see you, as always.

Minister, of course, I offer a warm welcome to you. Thank you for being with us today.

Given the relative recency of your appointment and that this is your first appearance, I'd like to give you the opportunity, first and foremost, to speak to your top priorities for Canadian Heritage in 2026 and how these supplementary estimates reflect those.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In the context in which we are all living, where our Canadian identity is under threat, we need to make sure that the arts and culture sector is well supported, as it has been in the past by the Canadian government.

We can't and shouldn't be the funder of everything in the sector. There is a role for private industry in making sure that Canadian identity and the beauty that is this country are shown through the way we consume media. That is an ever-changing ecosystem, but the Canadian government has to be there. It includes funds for the big shows, small shows, arts and Canada Day celebrations that are so important in waving the flag, particularly in this context.

We're making sure, first and foremost, that the modest sums that we give from Canadian Heritage to these organizations are well used to wave the flag, to show stories—good and bad—about who we are in this country. Also, in this context, this important pillar of democracy, the media, is under a constantly evolving ecosystem that we are adjusting to make sure that the traditional sources of information are well supported so that people are getting truthful information they can consume, so they can judge their politicians or society accordingly. That's part of what I meant in answer to the question posed by your colleague about social cohesion.

The future of the CBC/Radio-Canada is extremely important, both in my role as the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and in my role as the Minister responsible for Official Languages, because of the role that Radio-Canada plays in making sure that information gets out into smaller francophone communities, principally in places outside Quebec. That's key.

As the ecosystem and the environment that we are in are evolving, we also have, as I mentioned, the task of making sure that our kids are being protected from online harms and that we, as a government, play a role in making sure that those platforms are responsible. I anticipate that this will be a significant challenge for all members of Parliament, but particularly this committee, over the next year.

**Fares Al Soud:** Thank you, Minister.

I've bragged about this directly to you before. Celebration Square is in my riding, very firmly in the middle. It's a beautiful opportunity for people to come together to celebrate the incredible diversity in our country. In my community, cultural policy drives employment. It drives creative industry growth, tourism, and small business development.

I want to latch on to something you said early on, this idea of reflecting the beauty that is this country. Cultural policy is often both celebrated and, at times, scrutinized. At a time when many Canadians are focused on affordability and fiscal responsibility, rightly so, there is heightened sensitivity around public spending.

How do you respond to concerns that cultural spending is disconnected from everyday realities, or that there are bigger concerns or bigger priorities than festivals at Celebration Square, for instance?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** It's a good question.

The fundamental question that any of us in this position need to ask themselves, regardless of the role they play, is what is the role of the state, what is the role of the federal government in any policy that it undertakes, including the funds that it provides to organizations, for example the many cultural organizations in your riding. Mississauga is so diverse. It is a thriving, growing community that you are a proud representative of—and you are on the younger end of the spectrum, I've noticed, so there is a long future for people like you in politics. We need to be able to nourish the mind, and that includes all the cultural organizations that you represent.

If I had more time, I could fire off all the lists of things that Canadian Heritage finances, on both sides of this table, and it would be a pleasure to do it because those organizations are the heartbeat of this country. When you're funding an anti-racism strategy in Mississauga, you're raising awareness as to what the chal-

lenges are about diversity and inclusion. When you are funding a Blackfoot cultural initiative in Ms. Thomas's riding, you're raising awareness of the issues that the Blackfoot people face in and around the Lethbridge area.

Those are small examples of the work that we do. Otherwise, if they didn't have funds from the Canadian government, they would struggle to have their voices heard. This is about people making their voices heard within their communities and, when we do it properly, across the country.

● (0835)

**Fares Al Soud:** That's a perfect segue to my hopefully short final question.

Canadian Heritage is uniquely positioned to create opportunities for young Canadians within the creative sector, whether that's someone who's looking to be the next David Myles, or someone who's deeply passionate about video games at large.

What role do you believe federal policy plays in supporting equitable access for these young Canadians, making sure that they have these opportunities in those sectors?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes, it's a challenge for young people, including my parliamentary secretary, David Myles, who has a song that has well over a million listens on Spotify. I listened to it the other day. Not many of us can claim that type of fame, and he shares the honour of having a Latin Grammy.

He could probably talk to you at length about the struggles that he faced in making sure he could make ends meet, including getting financing. However, when I've talked to David—and I don't want to put words in his mouth, particularly because he's here—I think he didn't expect handouts. He expected to work for the small sums that were provided from various levels of government. It's not just Canadian Heritage that provides tax credits of various nature.

Younger segments of the population have challenges in accessing these programs, knowing and being aware that they are there, particularly in an environment where things are ever-changing. I spoke to a bunch of YouTubers. Given what they were doing—not everyone has access to government funds, nor should they—they weren't aware, even though they were wildly successful, that they would have some funds available for them to even multiply the earnings that they were making, and that's actually good for the economy in the end.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

We now go to Mr. Champoux for six minutes.

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

Minister, my thanks to you and your officials for being here this morning. It's always a pleasure to see you.

You're heading off to Paris soon. You're attending the UNESCO meeting next week. In June of last year, Mr. Guilbeault, your predecessor, raised the possibility of establishing a protocol to support the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, so that governments could adopt better laws in the digital age.

Can we expect you to support the proposal for a protocol that could be adopted at the 2027 meeting?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** To give you a very clear answer, I will tell you that the final decision is currently under consideration, so I don't have a definitive answer for you now, at 8:30 this morning.

That said, having spoken to Mr. Guilbeault, I know that he did a tremendous job during the last session to save the ship, so to speak. As you know, this potential protocol does not have unanimous support, and I'm sure you would agree that an effort like this in the digital sector requires everyone rowing together. Otherwise, the results will be mixed.

Let's just say things are looking positive, and I took note of my counterpart Mathieu Lacombe's position on the matter. I believe we will be supporting it, but we are in the process of finalizing our position.

**Martin Champoux:** To be perfectly honest, I'm a bit surprised. The meeting is less than a week away. It's actually happening next Wednesday. I can't believe you haven't had a chance to fully develop Canada's position on the issue. I'm really surprised that you're telling me the truth when you say that you don't have an answer.

People in the culture sector are anxious. We spoke to them yesterday, and I think a number of them are optimistic, but they are very nervous nevertheless. We are talking about a protocol that is essential to protect cultural industries in Quebec, given its cultural distinctiveness, and in other jurisdictions. Europe is supportive, from what I've heard.

I think it would be very reassuring for you to confirm here and now that you intend to support the potential protocol and help develop it as quickly as possible so it can be implemented in 2027. A lot of people would be happy to hear you take a firmer stance than that this morning, Mr. Miller.

● (0840)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I will say this: There is reason to be optimistic. I don't want the position we take to be a political exercise. I want everyone rowing in the same direction, but the fact remains that we're talking about a potential protocol that does not have unanimous support, far from it. Regardless of our position, there will be work to do, in co-operation with the other member states, to make sure the protocol is effective, if it is adopted.

**Martin Champoux:** If the European Union and Canada got behind the proposal, it would represent a fairly strong consensus. There is strength in numbers, so their support would help legitimize the idea. Do you agree with that?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes, indeed, but for the time being, it's speculation.

**Martin Champoux:** All right. We'll know more next week, and we can be optimistic. I think some people will be happy to hear that.

When it comes to digital companies and their contribution to cultural industries, how are things going? We worked very hard to put legislation in place. The CRTC is developing rules as quickly, or as slowly, as its workload permits.

As far as digital giants and their contribution to our cultural ecosystem goes, are we going to get there in the end?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Let's hope so, but unfortunately, the U.S. has identified the issue as a trade irritant. The fact is that the laws our government has put in place to ensure the availability of Canadian content or Quebec content, as the case may be, are very important. I'm not saying things are perfect, far from it, but a lot of companies are making changes to address the Canadian content requirements and promote Canadian identity across the country.

As for the contributions for that purpose, you know as well as I do that they are the subject of a court challenge.

**Martin Champoux:** Your government got rid of the digital services tax in the hope that it would facilitate trade talks. It didn't work. On the contrary, we're dealing with someone who is completely unpredictable.

Don't you think that, at some point, we have to stop looking at culture as a potential irritant, that we have to put policies in place, that we have to stand up and protect our industries, our jobs and our cultures?

I'm getting tired of hearing that we have to tread carefully because it's a sensitive issue for the Americans. They don't feel the need to tread carefully when it comes to sensitive issues for Quebecers and Canadians. They put up obstacles every step of the way.

Don't you think we need to say, let's get on with our own business, let them think what they may, because we are going to protect our citizens and put the necessary mechanisms in place to do that? In particular, that means making digital companies, which earn billions of dollars here, contribute to our system.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes. It's important to point out that neither one of us is at the negotiating table. I won't comment on how the talks are going, because discretion is very important. One of the reasons for the arts and culture investments we made in the budget was precisely to make sure that those working in the sector are supported. It's not as though we were hesitating. The decision to suspend the tax was made by the Minister of Finance, as you know, for reasons having to do with the negotiations, and I can't comment on what is being discussed.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

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

**Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, Minister. I've seen a lot of ministers come through this heritage department over the last 10 years.

Mr. Bilodeau, congratulations on moving up to the deputy spot.

I'm going to talk about the missing indigenous art, because I think that was the last time department officials were here. I bring it up because, actually, yesterday I got a call from Cobourg, Ontario, and the person was kind of distressed about the way it was handled by the federal government, which washed its hands. I understand there was no legal obligation, really, to notify the artists of the disgraceful misplacement of the cultural contributions, but, Minister, do you feel that there should be a moral obligation over this missing indigenous art, over the number of decades that we've had?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you, Kevin. I do believe there's a moral obligation. Any time you receive art or sacred items from indigenous people, it is something that has to be treated with extra care.

On the details of this—and I know you probably want to hear from me—I would probably accord a few minutes to Andrew, who has a little more detail on it, if that's okay with everyone.

● (0845)

**Kevin Waugh:** I can get to you in the second hour too, but, very quickly, Andrew, I wonder whether the department set up a public notice. You washed your hands. We're missing the art. When we look at it, it's very minimal—\$49,000—but how are we going to let the public know? It could be in an attic. It could be in a basement somewhere. I think we have an obligation to the artists to let them know that we haven't washed our hands completely of the missing indigenous art.

Go ahead, Andrew.

**Andrew Brown (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you for the question.

I would say that, certainly, we need to respect the cultural value of this indigenous art, irrespective of how it may be assessed in terms of monetary value.

I believe you're making reference to the audit of indigenous art that was conducted and led by Indigenous Services Canada. Just on that, it's work that continues, in terms of that accounting and being able to track down those pieces of indigenous cultural property—

**Kevin Waugh:** I didn't get that feeling, Andrew. I got the feeling that the study was done: "We can't find it. We've decided that the art is gone. We're washing our hands, and we're moving on." That was the report that I saw. They can't find the art. They don't know where it is. They don't really care anymore, and they're moving on from it. That was my interpretation, but we'll move on from this.

I was wondering what the department will do in the future so that this doesn't happen again, because it was an embarrassment. I put up a Facebook post on it, and I didn't think I'd get any reaction. I was shocked, because the value of indigenous art, as I said in the statement here months ago, has gone through the roof. If someone is going to donate or give us a piece and we lose it, I feel for the family and for the artist. I was awestruck by the department saying, "I'm sorry. It's only worth under \$49,000. We're not really going to worry about this, and we're moving on."

Anyway, I'm going to move on with my questioning. I have only another minute here.

Minister, what are your thoughts on the job cuts at the two museums, the Canadian Museum of History and the Canadian War Museum? They took a big bullet here, both of them. They slashed their workforce by 18% and 24%. Those are pretty big reductions for the two museums. Why?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As with any government agency, the civil service is going through a rationalization process as well, headed by central agencies, related to the reduction of the workforce in particular, and to cost savings. These are decisions that were taken. I make no excuses for them, but they are part of this process.

**Kevin Waugh:** In the supplementary estimates, I see that over \$11 million is going to.... You've added some money to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Canadian Museum of History, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, the Canadian Museum of Nature and the National Gallery of Canada. You're taking away from the two museums that I mentioned, and now, in the supplementary estimates, you've come around and said, "Here's more money." Can you explain those two?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Look, you can do two things at once. In any restructuring, you have cuts in one area and investments in others.

No one would propose to cut the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, where we put \$11 million into your riding, as part of this simply to satisfy an arithmetic calculation. I think that's a cultural centre that was super important to your riding. I don't think you would propose to cut it simply because it was a number.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Royer, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Zoe Royer (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Lib.):** Thank you.

I'm really delighted, Minister Miller, that you are in the role, and I'm looking forward to hearing about the great things that the department is going to be doing.

In my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, community and ethnic television such as the Tri-Cities Community Television, Parvaz TV and Korean television through Omni Television are vital local voices. They survive mainly because of grassroots volunteer-driven efforts stepping in when traditional systems have pulled back. They really rely on the large broadcasters to decide whether they are carried at all and how much support they receive.

How concerned are you about their sustainability? What role can the federal government play in making sure that this system is more accessible for them?

• (0850)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** These organizations, like many around the country, are struggling for a variety of reasons. They struggle generally because a lot of them are grassroots. Some are even just shoestring operations that get out amazing information into the community, often cultural communities that are looking for that information because they want to hear about issues that they care about, and they want to see themselves in the journalism and the journalists who provide that information. It is of concern to me that they can survive and thrive.

Again, this is a context where the federal government can't always do everything, but we must do something. There are a couple of elements that I think would be important for you to note and for the organizations that serve the members of Port Moody—Coquitlam so faithfully. The changing narratives fund is a \$10-million investment over three years that supports diverse voices in Canadian media, those of indigenous, Black, racialized and ethno-religious minorities, to share stories and experiences, so there's eligibility there. That's part of the Canada Media Fund that supports diverse communities generally as well.

In addition, there are a number of streams, including the local journalism initiative, which supports communities through press, radio and community television. It's not delivered by me, but by a not-for-profit organization, so that it does what people are concerned about, protecting the independence of the press. I don't have discretion over it, so to speak, and that contributes, for example, to the news and hiring diverse journalists.

**Zoe Royer:** Thank you for that answer.

I also want to speak a little bit about Freshet News. It's a new publication in our community. We lost the much respected, deeply trusted Tri-City News. They were in operation for many years in our community. They closed their doors, their print media and their digital media just ahead of the election. The journalists, who had 20 or 30 years of experience, recreated Freshet News, but they are also facing many challenges. That's not a question; I just wanted to give a bit of a shout-out.

CPAC is essential to parliamentary transparency, and—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but I have to interrupt, Ms. Royer. I think we have a problem with interpretation.

We just need to suspend for a couple of minutes while we resolve that problem.

• (0850)

(Pause)

• (0855)

**The Chair:** Thank you, everyone.

We're back to Ms. Royer, who has another couple of minutes left.

• (0900)

**Zoe Royer:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

CPAC is essential to parliamentary transparency. While viewership is strong, registered wholesale subscriber fees have not kept pace with rising costs, which limits its ability to modernize aging broadcasting infrastructure.

How is your department thinking about long-term sustainability for public-interest broadcasters like the much relied-upon CPAC? Can you talk about the access to Parliament? Can you make sure that access to parliamentary democracy keeps pace with how Canadians actually consume our media?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you, Ms. Royer.

I think the work CPAC does is indispensable, because it covers stuff that even the most ardent journalists and outlets don't cover. Some of it is like watching paint dry, but I think it is important.

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

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Much like my answer, currently.

**The Chair:** We're on CPAC right now.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** We're doing a couple of things. We are waiting for a CRTC decision that would create a sequence of waterfall events that would see CPAC get the proper support, which it deserves. That is important.

In the meantime, we've invested and we're bridging them in a number of ways, including a recent investment of about \$5 million over the next three years for CPAC to continue. I will not hide from you that this is not all they want, but those are ongoing discussions in order to make sure that we are supporting the proper broadcast of all parliamentary activities.

**Zoe Royer:** I'm really glad that you're having those discussions. Thank you, Minister.

**The Chair:** All right.

[Translation]

Mr. Champoux, you may go ahead for two and a half minutes.

**Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

Minister, independent television stations that provide news coverage, in regions mainly, have reached out to us a lot regarding the independent local news fund, or ILNF.

I'm not sure whether you are aware, but last year, in June I believe, the CRTC approved Corus's application to receive ILNF funding. The CRTC determined that Corus was eligible because of its Global TV stations. The decision to add Corus to the list of eligible recipients was entirely appropriate. Since becoming a beneficiary, Corus is receiving a big chunk of the fund, to the detriment of the other beneficiaries, who are all smaller players, regional players that cover regions such as Abitibi. RNC Média comes to mind, as does CHAU in eastern Quebec. CHAU broadcasts TVA but is an independent station.

Those stations urgently need that funding to survive and keep their newsrooms open. The problem is that the fund was supposed to grow with the contributions of the digital companies. As we know, time is dragging on, the effort is being stalled and nothing is happening. Meanwhile, stations are in jeopardy of closing. The association that represents them is calling on the government for some support. I believe they're asking for \$3 million or \$3.5 million a month, until the money from the digital platforms starts coming in to make up the shortfall. It's a matter of survival. It's a matter of urgency for regional news and regional television stations.

Is your government going to do something soon to save them?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** That's a good question, Mr. Champoux. Again, I don't have a perfect answer for you.

As you explained so clearly, we are waiting for the funds from the digital platforms. With Corus becoming part of the group, there is obviously less to go around. We're keeping an eye on the situation. I'm not insensitive to the problem, far from it, but I don't have a solution for you this morning.

**Martin Champoux:** We have a solution. It is straightforward and wouldn't cost too much while we wait. Basically, they're running out of time; this is urgent. The answer can't be that you're going to look into it and get back to them with an answer in a few weeks. Some stations are on the verge of closing because they don't have enough money. This support would save them.

Regional news coverage, which has already been undermined by the digital platforms, is in trouble—real trouble. It's not the only problem, but it's one that's pretty easy to fix quickly, until the money from the digital platforms starts flowing into the fund. I think you could put the pedal to the metal and convince your Minister of Finance to make a bit of funding available.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** As you well know, he's full of energy.

In short, we are working on it. As you pointed out, it involves more than just my department. There are a number of avenues, but we don't have a resolution yet.

• (0905)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

It's now over to Mr. Généreux for five minutes.

**Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here, Minister.

I agree with my fellow member. Just about everyone is concerned. When you talk about social cohesion, national social cohesion is important. Regional social cohesion is also very important. Small regional TV and radio stations and newspapers need help right now. They are suffering greatly. Many of them are literally dying. The proposed solution, potentially....

Bills C-11 and C-18 didn't deliver the results promised. Let's be clear. Under the agreement signed with Google, the company is required to contribute \$100 million, to be distributed among all the news organizations. Of that, \$7 million goes to CBC/Radio-Canada, on top of the \$120 million you gave CBC/Radio-Canada in

your last budget. Why is that \$7 million still going to CBC/Radio-Canada?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** The reason is simply that it's entitled to the money, like the other news organizations.

**Bernard Généreux:** The decision came from you. Under an agreement between the Government of Canada and a company like Google, you decided where the money would go.

That brings me back to your explanation of social cohesion. You just gave CBC/Radio-Canada \$120 million, and you're absolutely allowed to do that. You promised as much during the election campaign. However, how is it that our regional media organizations are among the most disadvantaged under the agreement with Google right now?

CBC/Radio-Canada isn't being disadvantaged. CBC/Radio-Canada is entirely funded by public money. However, regional organizations are often small private businesses in need of that support. I don't understand why \$7 million is going to CBC/Radio-Canada when you just gave them \$120 million.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I mean no disrespect to the honourable member. The funding is allocated according to the number of journalists. There's a cap on the amount. The reality is that CBC/Radio-Canada is entitled to that funding.

Of course, in a context where the government cannot do everything and everyone is hurting, choices have to be made. These people have reached out to you for help as well, so you know as well as I do that, yes, these local businesses want money, but they also want tax credits. Again, we are working on that.

**Bernard Généreux:** We'll be starting a study on the media in a few weeks. What we are going to hear, and what you will in turn hear, about the Canadian media landscape is pretty grim. In fact, a lot of people are approaching us leading up to the study, and the list of witnesses just keeps growing because Canada's media system is really in danger.

If I recall correctly, the studies on bills C-11 and C-18 indicated that they would bring in nearly \$300 million, which would potentially be redistributed among Quebec's and Canada's media organizations. Do you think the two bills, which were passed, did what they promised? As far as I know, they haven't been successful.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** They haven't been as successful as expected. Many people are adjusting to the reality under bills C-11 and C-18. That includes the ongoing court cases. It was anticipated that they would bring in far more than \$300 million. It's pretty close to a billion dollars. That's a big deal, if it does end up happening.

**Bernard Généreux:** You're aware that the platforms are challenging a portion of the money they are being asked to provide, which means we aren't able to use money from the Canada media fund to help regional media organizations.

These giant companies have infinite resources. They can afford to drag out the court challenge or litigation for years and years to come. What do we do in the meantime? How does the government plan to support all regional media organizations, which are dying?

Again, social cohesion is fundamental. Not only is social cohesion important at the national level, but it is also important at the regional level when it comes to the presence of these media organizations in the regions. If half the regional media organizations disappear tomorrow, leaving people with just two or three sources for news and information, I don't think we could talk about national cohesion.

• (0910)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I agree. We are in the process of bridging that gap, not up to \$800 million, mind you.

As you certainly know, within your own party, your colleague to the right thinks that social cohesion is a synonym for some sort of government conspiracy. I don't mean Mr. Waugh; I'm referring to a different colleague. There's some inconsistency in your party when it comes to what that term means.

**The Chair:** We now go to Mr. Ntumba.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being with us, Minister.

I got some good news earlier when I was reading *La Presse*, and I feel compelled to share it with you. It's important and it makes me happy. Canada ranks third in the world when it comes to countries with the highest percentage of people who trust others. We're behind Sweden and the Netherlands. The level of social trust in Canada is at 73%. No doubt, the Department of Canadian Heritage, with its large portfolio, is an important part of the Canada strong pass. What do you have to say about that?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Could you please repeat the question?

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** I wanted you to comment on Canada's current ranking as the third country in the world where most people trust others.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think it's great news. However, we're in an ecosystem where people have very little trust in certain institutions. There's a breakdown, especially among young people.

Yes, I do think it's important to recognize that victory, because it's a ranking of comparable countries, countries with good social cohesion, with national unity.

That is not to say that we don't have regional concerns, as Mr. Généreux pointed out, or that we are disregarding the social cohesion we must always work on to make sure that we are all united. That is especially true given the threat from our so-called friend to the south, which threatens us with all kinds of things, including a bridge. It's something we need to pay close attention to.

For young people, I think it was very important to have the Canada strong pass, to encourage people to visit museums and national parks and to inspire confidence. These are assets, national treasures—vast spaces that people can visit, but unfortunately very few do. Giving young people a little help, so they can visit a muse-

um, such as the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum, in Ottawa, or our great national parks is the right thing to do, as I see it. Obviously, I understand that we have to be mindful of how we spend public money, but I think it's a very good investment.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to switch topics now.

As you know, I talk a lot about the World Cup, which is coming. A lot of people will be coming here. The eyes of the world will be on us. How is the Department of Canadian Heritage getting ready for the World Cup?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You're very familiar with Mr. van Koevreden, because I think he's the only man to have been Canada's flag-bearer, not once, but twice. He's at the Olympics now. He's our Secretary of State for Sport and he's working on that. Technically, he falls under the Department of Canadian Heritage. He's in Milan right now, celebrating our Canadian athletes. Canada is still waiting for its first gold medal, but I'm sure it's coming.

The FIFA World Cup is really a golden opportunity to promote Canada on the world stage, from the diversity of our Canadian team, which is made up of many immigrants, new Canadians, to the fact that we are hosting the event and will have the opportunity to raise Canada's profile around the world by putting on a number of games. I have to say, though, that the tickets are very expensive, unfortunately. I saw the ticket prices the other day, and not everyone can afford them, unfortunately. Nevertheless, I think the event is a golden opportunity to really help Canada shine on the world stage.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Yes, absolutely.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I almost forgot an important detail. Our department alone has invested \$220 million, but other departments are very involved as well.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you, Minister.

In my riding, Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, we have a number of cultural, community and sports organizations that play an important role in local communities. What steps is your department taking to make it easier to access programs, reduce red tape, and help small and medium-sized businesses take full advantage of the support your department provides?

• (0915)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** That is an ongoing concern, to be sure, and I look forward to visiting your riding again.

Given that we're a department that tends to provide smaller amounts to small organizations, you raise a very important point. You're right that they don't necessarily have the administrative staff they need to apply for funding. They work part time. Consequently, those accustomed to the process are usually the ones that get the funding, and that's not fair. That's true for the entire country, but especially in small regions.

A lot of organizations in Montreal, for instance, receive funding, and I'm glad, but they are able to fill out funding applications because they have more capacity. That is something we are constantly looking at to ensure that funding is spread out equitably across the country. Thank you for bringing it up.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you, Minister.

**The Chair:** I know this is when you're supposed to leave us, but since we lost a few minutes because of technical issues, would you be able to stay a few minutes more?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** You know, that's the worst thing you can ask a minister.

**The Chair:** We'll ask the department officials.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Four minutes is fine.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

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

[*Translation*]

**Martin Champoux:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** All right.

**Martin Champoux:** The minister just said he would stay for another four minutes, but you're going to start another round and the time won't be split fairly between the parties. I think we should insist that the minister stay a bit longer so that each party can have two and a half to three minutes. It seems to me that—

**The Chair:** Is it really four minutes, or can you stay a bit longer than that, Minister?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I can give you five or six minutes. Six minutes is fine.

**The Chair:** Would two minutes for each of the first two parties and one minute for the third party work for you, Mr. Champoux?

**Martin Champoux:** How about two minutes, two minutes and two minutes, for a total of six minutes?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Diotte, you have two minutes.

**Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** Okay.

Minister, thanks for being here.

Have you seen the report by Honest Reporting Canada that has some very disconcerting findings about the CBC? Basically, it used AI to examine the CBC's coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. It analyzed 2,789 CBC news articles published between October 7, 2023, the day of that terrible massacre, and June 7, 2025. It found that CBC's coverage of the war demonstrated “a significant imbalance” and there was consistent, overwhelming bias “against Israel”.

Minister, does it concern you that public dollars are being sent from your department to the CBC and that this report calls into question its very impartiality and actually questions its stated journalistic standards and practices?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I'll say a couple of things, and I don't presume that my answer will make you happy, Mr. Diotte.

First and foremost, the CBC, as you know, is independent. It doesn't mean that it is unaccountable and that I'm not entitled to an opinion on this matter, but I want to be very judicious in my answer, in particular because of the ongoing situation in Gaza but also because the CBC has its own mechanism internally.

Ultimately, the CBC is accountable to the public, and it's important not to attach that type of condition to the financing of the publicly supported broadcaster.

**Kerry Diotte:** Okay, that's fair enough, but their own editorial culture is being questioned. Actually, this report from Honest Reporting Canada says they're calling for an audit of CBC's editorial culture—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Diotte. That's exactly two minutes.

[*Translation*]

The floor is yours, Mr. Ntumba. You have two minutes.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I know it's easy to single out the show *Heated Rivalry*, given all the success it's had. It's important to point out, however, that it's not an exception; rather, it's a case that highlights the value and impact of Canadian content and intellectual property.

How can the government continue to promote Canadian identity, and values that resonate across the country and throughout the world?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think it's important to note that shows like *Heated Rivalry* should be the rule, not the exception. Despite the many francophone references in the show, it's not a French show. I urge everyone to watch the show *Empathie*, which is enjoying record-breaking popularity. It's a Canadian production. I think it's important, without being too heavy-handed, to embrace producers who take risks to make shows like these and to trust their instincts.

• (0920)

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Minister, to wrap up, I want to talk about foreign digital platforms again. They have a dominant hold in Canada.

What tangible steps is the department taking to better showcase Canadian content so that our creators, especially those from under-represented cultural communities, can reach audiences and enjoy the economic and social benefits.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I think we need to maintain confidence in an institution like the CRTC, which establishes the rules and manages the regulation of Canadian content. That's extremely important.

Of course, without commenting on the discussions between us and our economic partner, the United States, concerning digital platforms, I can say that we must always keep culture as a red line in those discussions.

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

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for one minute.

**Martin Champoux:** We had agreed to two minutes, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead. You have a minute and a half.

**Martin Champoux:** In any case, Minister, you can take much longer than two minutes, as this is the last round of questions. Don't be shy.

You probably heard about the report featured last week on *Enquête* about Live Nation, a U.S. company that is often accused of having established something of a monopoly in the ticketing and show production industry.

We know that the company is a 49% shareholder of Evenko, a major producer of shows and festivals here. We also see that the presence of an American multinational, with Ticketmaster and Live Nation, has a serious impact on the entertainment and festival industry, not only in Montreal, but throughout the major festivals industry.

Do you have any thoughts on that? I ask because it's extremely concerning to see that small venues, which are trying to hold their own, especially in the Quartier des spectacles and around Montreal, are in extremely precarious situations because of the rules that these large, extremely dominant companies are putting in place.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes, I'm concerned about that. Any monopolistic behaviour worries me and should worry all politicians.

As part of my role, I looked into this very briefly and I believe that this institution, through its relationship with Evenko, receives a maximum of approximately 1% of funding that is allocated in this area. It's not huge, but it's still something. That's not an excuse, either.

The reality is that I'm more concerned about the artists than the producers. Of course, as you know, that organization produces Osheaga, the Festival international de jazz de Montréal and other big events, but in any analysis that we undertake at the department, we have to keep an eye on artists, especially those who are potentially exploited.

**Martin Champoux:** Yes, but 80% of shows produced in the venues owned by Evenko, and by extension Live Nation, involve mostly foreign artists, after all. There isn't a lot of space in their programming for local artists and for the promotion of local culture.

That should also be a concern for the department, and you should make sure that it is reflected in the way support funds, grants for these activities, these events, are allocated. Wouldn't you agree?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I agree. As I said earlier, in any consideration of this nature, we have to ask ourselves where and how the government will intervene, especially in a quasi-monopoly situation.

**Martin Champoux:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. We really appreciate your visiting us today.

[English]

I'll suspend for a couple of minutes while the minister gets out of the room.

• (0920)

(Pause)

• (0925)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting back to order.

Mr. Diotte, we will start with you. You have six minutes.

**Kerry Diotte:** Thank you. It's nice to have a little bit more time this time.

Thanks to all of you for being here. It's always very revealing.

I'm wondering about advertising. I'd like to talk a little bit about that. I think we all remember *Heritage Minutes* and all of that. As a department, how much advertising is run in terms of dollars?

• (0930)

**Francis Bilodeau (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Do you mean by the department itself? Much of the advertising in the Government of Canada actually will be directed centrally. We don't, as a department, typically do much personal advertising. For example, that's separate from what CBC might run in terms of its own advertising in the context of its program, but that wouldn't be department-led advertising.

**Kerry Diotte:** Well, there was an article yesterday from the Star Phoenix that said the federal government has increased its spending on Facebook and Instagram. The article said that the government "spent \$78.15 million on advertising".

I imagine your department spends some of that money, or gets some of that money, in advertising. Can you specify any kind of dollar figure or percentage?

**Francis Bilodeau:** I don't have the specifics on how much the department specifically spends. We can endeavour to get that to the committee. Generally, I would say, advertising within the Government of Canada is structured by rules set in place by Treasury Board and coordinated through the Privy Council Office.

We will endeavour to get you the information on how much is spent by the department specifically. The sums won't be large.

**Kerry Diotte:** Okay.

One of the most interesting things from the article was that of all government spending on advertising, 63% went to digital media. I mean, that is a bit of a trend. People tend to advertise on Google and Facebook. Liberal MPs, including the Prime Minister himself, have said that we're in a trade war with the U.S. We're spending all that money for digital media that's almost exclusively owned in the United States of America. Is that right? We're in a trade war. We're rewarding these tech giants.

Do you have any thoughts on that?

**Francis Bilodeau:** Again, the policy and the choices in terms of how the overall government advertises would not be with me. It would be with Treasury Board. That being said, I think generally the government will try to balance ensuring that they can reach citizens where they are and ensuring that they have efficient communications with citizens.

Absolutely, we are in a trade war, and there have been measures. I believe that in the past the government at some point banned advertising on Facebook and Instagram. That has been looked at. That is driven out of the centre, primarily out of Treasury Board, in terms of overall guidance and approach.

**Kerry Diotte:** According to the same report, “Between 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, government spending on TikTok advertising plummeted from about \$1.1 million to about \$180,000.” However, it goes on to say, “Over the same period, government spending on ads for Facebook and Instagram increased from about \$500,000 to about \$1.4 million.” The article also says this: “The increase on Meta platforms comes after years of declines, including a drop of more than \$6 million between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, a timeframe that coincides with the passing of the Online News Act.”

Don't you think the Canadian public would be concerned by this? Again, we talk about how we're in a trade war with the United States: “Okay, we'll give you some more money. We'll reward you.”

**Francis Bilodeau:** I think excellent points are being made. These are matters that aren't necessarily directly within my area or my ambit in terms of responsibilities. That being said, as an overall posture, I think we've seen the government take an increasingly buy Canadian type of approach. As the Treasury Board and PCO consider the overall posture on advertising, as I said, I think part of what they're weighing is ensuring that the government is reaching Canadians where they are and being very mindful, at the same time, that we are certainly in a difficult dynamic in terms of trade and that those considerations play in.

As I said, these aren't directly under my purview.

● (0935)

**Kerry Diotte:** You're talking about buy Canadian, but again, to stress this, 63% of government advertising went to digital media, and we know that it's almost exclusively owned in Donald Trump's U.S.A.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I think there has been a shift over a period of time where Canadians are on digital media more and more, and that is part of the reality of where Canadians consume their media. Again, that is not directly an area for which I am responsible, but certainly we're mindful that there has been a shift towards digital media.

That's actually part of the dynamic that, from our area of responsibility, has led to wanting to have a digital agenda and a regulatory agenda that also thinks about Canadian content.

**The Chair:** That is six minutes.

Thank you, Mr. Diotte.

Mr. Myles, you have six minutes.

**David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here.

Perhaps this is a question for Madame Montminy.

I'm curious about the future of the creative export program, something I hear a lot about. I think we've probably all heard about it from different stakeholders in Canada. Maybe you can state what the importance of that program is, but also what it's going to look like in the future, especially as we talk about cultural diplomacy, sovereignty and how we can bring Canada to the world.

**Joëlle Montminy (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Myles.

Yes, the creative export strategy is something that we put in place eight years ago that is specific to helping the creative sector increase its export in important markets. We've been doing this through different ways.

One is through trade missions. As you know, we are just about to take part in a Mexico-Canada trade mission over the weekend. Those have been extremely successful in introducing our creative companies to these new markets. We did one last spring in South Korea, as well as Japan, and we've prioritized different markets, including Europe, Australia, New Zealand and so on. Over the last eight years, we've had really great success in bringing Canadian companies abroad.

We also have a program that supports the creative companies in terms of developing export plans, and we've expanded this over the years. At first, we were focusing on companies that were already ready for export, but then we wanted to bring more creative companies into the realm. Over the last five years, we've also brought in another stream of programs so that we can actually help Canadian companies that are not quite ready to start developing that skill. That's also been successful.

Just in terms of the success, over the last eight years we've helped over 3,000 creative industry businesses and organizations in accessing more than 120 international markets. We've seen the results in terms of impact for those companies that have benefited from this strategy and have been able to significantly increase their export abroad.

The strategy is up for renewal at the moment, so we are waiting for a decision by the government in terms of this strategy, which is complementary to all the different services that Global Affairs Canada is offering, but different, because it's targeted to the creative sector. We're hoping that the strategy will be renewed.

As you know, regarding the business model, the reason Canadian Heritage has its own unique complementary strategy is that creative businesses tend to be different, of course, from agriculture or aerospace companies. A bit more targeted support, we feel, is needed and has demonstrated good results.

**David Myles:** Thank you very much.

I have a question for Monsieur Bilodeau.

You've come from Industry, I think, and we talk a lot about AI. We've just finished a study. I'm curious to know.... From your perspective of having come from Industry, you know the dynamic in terms of how quickly AI is moving and now moving into culture. Where do you see some of the challenges around making sure that we're not, obviously, getting in the way of innovation and moving forward and being key in this, but also making sure that we're protecting copyright, licensing and transparency, and all the things that are important for the cultural sector?

**Francis Bilodeau:** Yes, it's a really interesting question.

I think part of the dynamic for all of us, independent of the sector, is that AI is more and more an existing, real presence across industries, and it's going to shift industries in a way.

Part of what we are thinking of in terms of the cultural industry.... Actually, there will be a summit with the cultural industry and the AI industry in Banff in a few weeks, to discuss exactly those issues.

Part of the challenge is making sure that our industries, whether they're artistic, cultural, etc., can reap the benefit. At the same time, we recognize that there are shifts and potential restructuring of markets, and we want to make sure that our industries benefit from those—and that includes issues of copyright and ownership. I think all jurisdictions, in one way or another, are struggling with that. There's international dialogue that's happening.

I'm very much looking forward to having conversations in a few weeks, with both the AI industry and the cultural industry, about where the greatest opportunities are for our creative sectors, and where government or government collaboration with industry is necessary to make sure that Canadian industry evolves and benefits to the maximum in the opportunities that will be presented.

● (0940)

**David Myles:** Do you feel that the cultural industries have been amply consulted when we're talking about the future of AI in Canada so far? That was something we heard from witnesses, that they felt like they weren't part of these conversations. The conversations were rather with industry, but not necessarily the cultural industry.

**Francis Bilodeau:** It's interesting, coming from a department that's just spent a lot of time dealing with AI.

If you look at it, in a lot of our ecosystem, Canada became a leader in AI primarily through the strength of our early research. That research, through luminaries like Yoshua Bengio and others, actually provided an advantage in our own capacity to understand the technology.

Our colleagues over at Industry and my colleague Mark Schaan and Minister Solomon have been leading on the development of an AI strategy. We've been very strong advocates—and I owe this to my colleagues—around what it means for cultural industries, for artistic industries, and that's exactly why we're going to be participating. We've helped set up the summit that will take place with the cultural and artistic industry in only a few weeks.

We think that dialogue has to happen. We think that we as a department have a responsibility to be the voice of artistic and cultural industry as the government thinks about AI, and we're playing that role very strongly. We look forward to continuing an ongoing dialogue with a sector that will be, or potentially will be, so impacted by the advance of not only AI, but digital technologies generally as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Bilodeau. This is the first time you and your colleagues have appeared before the committee, and it will certainly not be the last.

I'll continue to talk about artificial intelligence. We've just completed a study, and my colleague Mr. Myles has already spoken to you about this. I'm just wondering. Obviously, we are seeing very serious and significant impacts on the cultural sector and cultural industries at all levels. It's no secret that artificial intelligence affects just about every aspect of society. All socio-economic sectors are affected, directly or indirectly, by artificial intelligence.

However, Minister Solomon has set up an advisory council made up of experts from the artificial intelligence community. You talked about that. Under that advisory council, there was a task force that came up with different recommendations and conclusions. However, no one represents the cultural sector and cultural industries on the advisory council or the task force. I am very concerned to see that, in such important work and with such serious repercussions on the cultural sector, experts in the cultural sector have not been included in these considerations from the outset.

We're very close, at the conclusion of this study, to providing a report. I'm wondering if you would support a recommendation for a task force to be set up under the supervision of that advisory council to implement AI strategies, specifically with respect to the impacts it has on cultural industries. Do you think that would be a good idea? The structure already exists, in a way.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I can't comment on a committee structure that would be someone else's responsibility. There will be a number of considerations. What I can say, from our perspective, is that it's incredibly important that the dialogue with the cultural industry and the arts industry happen and that it is part of our department's responsibilities to ensure that those voices are heard.

That is one of the reasons why Minister Miller and Minister Solomon came to an agreement and decided to work together to have a dialogue with industry. I don't think it will be the last such conversation. That dialogue can be structured in a number of ways. This issue is fundamental to the evolution of the industry. It's not just about artificial intelligence, but digital technologies in general. So we have made a commitment to make sure that the sector is an active participant in those conversations and that we will be able to represent the sector.

● (0945)

**Martin Champoux:** What you said earlier was very interesting. You were talking about the fact that the experts who have contributed to the development of artificial intelligence are Quebecers, Canadians, and that positions us as a global leader. It's no secret that we are 100 years behind the United States. When it comes to the development of artificial intelligence and its applications, we are really lagging behind. In terms of regulations, we're not there at all. We're falling behind with AI in the same way we did with broadcasting. We did not legislate on digital platforms for too long, and now we're seeing the mess that's causing.

I want to come back to the issue of protocol, which will be discussed next week at the UNESCO meeting. I wonder how we can deprive ourselves of this strong and essential tool that makes it possible to put in place enforceable legislation by states, including Quebec, Canada and European countries. That would make it possible to put policies and laws in place to effectively regulate these companies that come and generate huge profits without having to abide by or agree to abide by the rules we decide to put in place.

I would really like some clarification. Earlier, Ms. Montminy reacted when I asked the minister these questions about the protocol, which is supported by Quebec and, of course, by cultural industries in general, and by SODEC, with which you are familiar. Explain to me your vision of what this tool will have to be. I think the tool is crucial.

How should we articulate this to ensure that we have the tools we need to catch up, if at all possible, when it comes to AI regulation?

**Francis Bilodeau:** I'll ask Ms. Montminy to talk about that a bit.

I would say that it's not clear to me that we're 100 years behind when it comes to AI.

**Martin Champoux:** Let's say 25 years.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I think we still have a talent base, because we're one of the pioneers—Hinton, Bengio and others—who helped structure the technology. In addition, we have major centres in Canada in terms of understanding and regulating the technology.

**Martin Champoux:** Yes, but we're investing a few billion dollars in AI development, whereas the United States is investing \$400 billion. We're not even in the game. We have to realize that as well. We have to put our strengths where we stand a chance of doing something.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I will agree with that and leave those questions to Minister Solomon and his team.

Certainly, I think there's a capability base in Canada that not all countries have. The role of the private sector means that investment is key in some places. In terms of the protocol, you heard the minister. I think there's a broader issue, and that's international collaboration on digital issues. I believe the Prime Minister and others have talked about the importance of realistic collaboration.

Ms. Montminy, do you want to add anything about the protocol?

**Joëlle Montminy:** Yes, certainly.

Obviously, first, we recognize the importance and urgency of taking action in this area, to protect culture in the digital environ-

ment. We were there and we did so, without necessarily having a binding protocol at UNESCO. Other countries have also acted in this space.

That said, we recognize that UNESCO is one of the important forums for discussing governance of artificial intelligence and digital platforms in general. There are also other forums to do that. Minister Solomon is responsible for broader governance of AI. As part of the work under the 2005 Convention, we absolutely want to explore the path of a protocol, as we have done.

In recent years, as you know, together with Quebec, we have encouraged UNESCO's Secretary-General to advance her analysis. Sufficiently advanced analyses are required if we want buy-in from enough countries to give the protocol the clout it needs to regulate digital platforms. We have to demonstrate that there's a need, light the way forward and indicate what kind of principle should be included in the protocol.

In our opinion, the work is coming along nicely. I think we've received all the information we needed. At this stage, we're going to try to build consensus around these issues. Operational directives are part of it as well, but they can be complementary.

● (0950)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Thomas, you have the floor now for five minutes.

**Rachael Thomas:** One of the observations I've made over the years is that grants made available to communities for festivals or community events often go to large cities. The minister sat here earlier and talked about Montreal as an example. Vancouver receives a lot of money. Toronto receives a lot of money. These big centres receive a lot of money.

My community is Lethbridge. It has a population of about 110,000 people. It's not rural and it's not super urban, so it often gets left out.

What is available in these estimates with regard to a community like mine?

**Véronique Côté (Chief Financial Officer, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Specific to these estimates, the building communities through arts and heritage program is receiving \$400,000. This is available to a number of festivals.

Of course, we have more in our main budget that covers festivals and events across the country. There's a lot of assessment that is being done to determine which festivals and which events will get funding. Unfortunately, it is a program that is oversubscribed, so there is limited funding available.

**Rachael Thomas:** What metrics are taken into account and what provisions are made to make sure that smaller communities are considered, in addition to these larger ones?

**Francis Bilodeau:** It's a really good question. I've lived interesting dynamics around other programs that are major grants and contributions programs. I think we should get you more detail on this. Generally, for most grants and contributions programming, there's a review of both regional programming and rural versus urban to try to ensure equity.

Four weeks in, I do not have the detail on the specific programs and how that's built into the application. I don't know if others do, but it is a really valid point, and I'm happy to provide more information to the committee on that, unless Blair happens to know in more detail.

**Blair McMurren (Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage):** In one of the programs in our department that supports festivals, the Canada arts presentation fund, which is for professional arts presentation, there's been a deliberate effort in recent years to calibrate it to support more smaller and medium-sized festivals, which tend to be in smaller centres. That's a deliberate policy calibration that's going on.

We have other programming in the department, such as the program Véronique just mentioned, that is focused on smaller, community-based, non-professional festivals. We're constantly looking at the balance in terms of recipients.

**Rachael Thomas:** Thank you. I can appreciate that.

Having looked at that funding, I see that the majority of it stays east, largely in Quebec. When the minister talks about social cohesion and our country being unified, part of that is making sure that dollars flow east and west and don't just get caught up in the larger centres or in eastern Canada as a whole. I think that's just a note of caution for those at the table.

My next question has to do with the anti-hate network.

Minister Guilbeault appeared here at this committee on September 24. He was asked a question with regard to the Anti-Hate Network. It's reported and well known that the Anti-Hate Network received about \$1 million in federal grants from 2020 onward. We also know that they target pro-life Catholics as well as conservatives under the pretext of exposing "neo-Nazis".

Further to that, the Liberal government's current Minister of Public Safety has said that they have in fact found bias within the network, and in 2022, a small claims court judge accepted evidence that the Canadian Anti-Hate Network assisted antifa, which is an incredibly violent organization as well.

The minister at the time committed that he would undertake a review of this organization and whether they should be receiving funding. Has that review been completed? That commitment was made by the minister on September 24 here at the committee.

**Francis Bilodeau:** Andrew should be able to follow up directly on that one. I know that we did look specifically at that contribution, and I know that we did bring forward changes to our programs more generally. Following a series of issues that were brought to our attention, we did strengthen our programs to require an attestation—

• (0955)

**Rachael Thomas:** My question wasn't whether you strengthened the programs; my question was whether a specific review was done on the Anti-Hate Network. If so, it actually needs to be tabled with this committee, as per that meeting that took place on September 24.

**Andrew Brown:** I can confirm that this review was completed at Canadian Heritage. We continue to maintain our relationship with the funding recipient, the Canadian Anti-Hate Network—

**Rachael Thomas:** Again, the minister agreed at that meeting on September 24 that the review would be tabled with this committee and that he would get back to us in terms of decisions made. Will your department give those documents to this committee to see?

**Francis Bilodeau:** You have my commitment to come back to the chair of the committee not long after this to identify what's been done in terms of documents and then, as appropriate, share them within the bounds of what I can do within any privacy constraints or other constraints.

Definitely, if there is a study that is within the bounds of what we can release, we will do that.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Thomas, can we just clarify for the officials? Are we requesting specific information from them to come back to committee? Can you maybe specify exactly what you want to hear from them?

**Rachael Thomas:** Sure.

I think it would be easy enough for us to look back on September 24, at the meeting that took place with former minister Guilbeault, in order to understand exactly what was committed to. However, my record would say that the minister committed to do a full review of the Anti-Hate Network and then come to a decision as to whether or not funding would continue. He said that the decision would be reported back to us.

**The Chair:** In regard to your excellent question about mid-sized cities getting funding, did you get adequate answers from the officials here, or are we asking for more information on that as well?

**Rachael Thomas:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

I believe their commitment was to get more information to me on that as well.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll go to Ms. Royer for five minutes.

**Zoe Royer:** British Columbia is home to an internationally revered modern dance company, the iconic Ballet BC. At the same time, Ballet Vancouver is emerging as a new and extraordinary classical ballet company. They are actually repatriating Canadian talent back from institutions such as the American Ballet Theatre.

How is the department ensuring that federal policy supports both established flagship institutions and emerging companies that strengthen Canada's cultural sovereignty by retaining and bringing home our own elite artistic talent?

**Blair McMurren:** The department focuses on the next generation of talent through different ways and different components of programs. One that's notable, in our view, is the Canada arts training fund. It specifically funds a unique set of post-secondary institutions. This is the next generation of performing artists in specific disciplines like ballet and theatre, with a strong lens on diversity and a strong student assistance component to ensure that participation is equitable. It is looking to the future and the diversity of that next generation.

**Zoe Royer:** That's incredible.

I have a follow-up question on that.

When Canadian dancers and artists must build careers abroad due to limited domestic infrastructure, does the department view this as a cultural competitiveness issue? What tools exist to reverse that artistic talent departure?

**Blair McMurren:** It's an excellent policy question that we look at from a number of angles in terms of arts administration. It comes up in that context when leaders of cultural institutions are recruited and leave Canada. It's likewise for the artists, who are also the public faces of these institutions.

It's for this reason that we invest in all parts of the value chain in terms of performing arts—the training upstream, the cultural infrastructure and the audience development or the presentation to the public—so that they are in a position to be competitive in Canada and vis-à-vis international competition as well.

• (1000)

**Francis Bilodeau:** Ballet and the institutions in Canada are still ones that I'm getting to know. I will just mention that earlier this week I met with Canada's National Ballet School. They were expressing that Canada is actually a leader on the world stage and attracting people from all across.... Actually, through that recognition, it's exporting Canadian values and Canadian culture. I was quite impressed with the place that Canada takes in the world of ballet.

I'm looking forward to engaging with the other institutions in that space as well.

**Zoe Royer:** I really appreciate that.

The minister mentioned that the arts contribute \$130 billion to the Canadian economy. We have many flagship organizations in B.C. In the Lower Mainland, we call them the "G8". They include the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Vancouver Art Gallery, Bard on the Beach, the Arts Club Theatre Company and Arts Umbrella. These extraordinary institutions are central to our Canadian identity.

Is the department able to ensure that predictable and sustainable core operating support happens, so that these institutions remain globally competitive?

**Francis Bilodeau:** I'll see if Blair wants to add anything, but the core of our mission is supporting the arts and culture. A huge amount of what we do is provide supports and financial supports to

both the institutions and the artists. It's part of our work to continuously review our suite of programs and ensure that we're providing adequate funding. You know, the government faces multiple pressures within funding envelopes, but it is our commitment to make sure that we have programs that are both evolving with the time and providing adequate supports to the communities that we try to represent within government.

Blair, maybe I'll turn to you.

**Blair McMurren:** Our programs are clearly important to the sustainability of arts organizations in the different things they do. We are part of a policy dialogue with the arts sector on emerging forms of support, like social finance approaches and the role of philanthropy, and kind of growing the pie in terms of the funding that's available to build their sustainability for the future.

**Zoe Royer:** I think the philanthropy piece is concerning to many of these arts organizations, because I think they feel like they're competing for the same dollars, which is a shrinking pot. In an age of rising costs and space and capacity needs, I think many of them are struggling. I hope we continue to connect with them and look at ways to support them.

Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Martin Champoux:** Mr. Bilodeau, you're from the Department of Industry, aren't you?

**Francis Bilodeau:** Yes.

**Martin Champoux:** You know that people in the cultural sector have long been calling for a review of the Copyright Act. There's a broad consensus on it in the cultural sector, and even at the Department of Canadian Heritage. Everyone agrees that the act needs an in-depth review and update. However, we've always known that this matter was being blocked at the Department of Industry.

Please tell me that they went to get the person who was blocking this at the Department of Industry and brought them to the Department of Canadian Heritage, and that now, the Department of Industry can agree to review the Copyright Act.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I wouldn't say I was blocking it. It's useful for us to have an internal dialogue, because we also understand the concerns of certain sectors, including the academic sector, as well as the desires and concerns of the cultural sector, among others. I think the government has already committed to artist resale rights. We're actively working on that.

**Martin Champoux:** I have to move on quickly, because I don't have much time.

There are different realities. You mentioned the academic sector, and I think industry also has other concerns when it comes to intellectual property and copyright.

Don't you think this act should be split so that it can be adapted a little more effectively to the cultural milieu's changing realities in the digital realm? That way, those realities can be managed separately, so that things move forward for the cultural industries, at their desired pace?

**Francis Bilodeau:** Splitting the Copyright Act is an interesting idea that I haven't explored. The department is actively discussing how the act could be modernized. So I always like to hear the committee's perspective.

• (1005)

**Martin Champoux:** Are you exploring how copyright will be applied in the world of AI? It's a concern that comes up a lot, and it's a very real one for content creators and others.

**Francis Bilodeau:** It's absolutely a concern that we're looking into and it will be part of the dialogue that Minister Solomon and Minister Miller are going to have in Banff in a few weeks with representatives of the AI and cultural industries.

**Martin Champoux:** Madam Chair, I think I have three minutes left. Is that correct?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** No, you only have a few seconds left.

**Martin Champoux:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Waugh, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

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

I'm going to go back to indigenous art. I need confirmation here. Are there going to be ongoing efforts to locate the missing indigenous art, or are we going to call this a closed case? I was happy to hear that there is a moral obligation to let the artists know that their cultural contributions have gone missing, but I need to know, because our offices have people wondering where this case is. Is it ongoing, or are we going to close it for good?

**Francis Bilodeau:** Mr. Waugh, I appreciate your bringing up the question—

**David Myles:** I have a point of order. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** Mr. Myles, do you have a point of order?

Go ahead.

**David Myles:** It's a point of clarification. It was Crown-Indigenous Relations that we spoke to when they were here. It's a different department.

I just wanted to make sure there wasn't confusion. That was who we spoke to. It wasn't this department. As long as we're clear on that—

**Kevin Waugh:** It still goes through Heritage.

**David Myles:** It doesn't. I think it's actually in Crown-Indigenous Relations.

That's just to clarify. Thank you.

**Kevin Waugh:** Okay, thank you.

Mr. Bilodeau, go ahead.

**Francis Bilodeau:** Again, I appreciate your bringing this to our attention, and I'm happy to have conversations with my colleague at Crown-Indigenous Relations.

The point I was going to make is that it is a matter that was identified through an audit of Crown-Indigenous Relations. I understand that they are in the process of ensuring a follow-up on that.

I don't have an update on that, but I'm happy to talk to my colleague.

**Kevin Waugh:** I do know you grant them money for the program. There is a connection with your department.

The other question is, where are we on Marie Chapman at the Museum of Immigration at Pier 21? The situation is that she was CEO and it was alleged that she mistreated staff. She was on leave. I see you have an interim leader. Where is that situation?

I know you've only been on the job for four weeks, but can you update us quickly?

**Francis Bilodeau:** Yes, I'm quite aware of the situation. Marie is no longer the CEO. There is an interim CEO. I've had a conversation with the chair about the measures. I know that there was a report by the Ethics Commissioner. I've had conversations with the chair around what measures are being put in place within the organization to ensure the health of the organization. The health of the organization and its employees is very important to us.

Obviously, as you mentioned, I'm still in early days, but at this point the report is out and Marie is no longer the CEO of the organization.

**Kevin Waugh:** Yes, I saw some very derogatory comments in the investigation of it. I hope she or the department would take them back. It affected a lot of staff.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I have to be honest; I was not there or privy to.... I was not at the department when any of the allegations were made.

There has been an investigation and there has been a response by the CEO to the findings of the commissioner. Those are the facts as they are. The fact is that at present we have an interim CEO.

**Kevin Waugh:** The national museums, as you know, in the precinct, along with Winnipeg and Halifax, get a lot of money—the most money of any when you're talking about national museums. How close are we with the RCMP museum in Regina? They want it to be a national museum. We had a discussion here on this side about small and medium.... I was at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. Congratulations to them. They actually had the Governor General's Awards in their museum this year, for the first time ever. The small and medium art galleries and museums—thank you to Ms. Thomas for bringing this up—deliver a lot, and sometimes they're missed.

I wanted to say that to you, Mr. Bilodeau, because sometimes when we go through there, they're struggling more than the national museums, if you don't mind my saying it.

• (1010)

**Francis Bilodeau:** I think that's an important point. I appreciate your flagging that to me.

I don't know if any of my colleagues, with regard to the RCMP museum.... I am aware of it, but I couldn't tell you the exact status. I think you bring a really important point for our consideration.

**Kevin Waugh:** Coming from industry, you would know that the telecommunications companies in this country control most of the media, the big telcos.

I did see two long-term stations, Pattison and Stingray, in Medicine Hat and Lloydminster, go dark just seven months ago, just like that. I think it's because of the legislation of Bill C-18. They did not deliver the money they said they were going to. It's been a disaster since day one. Now we see backroom cash deals with Google, which was talked about by my colleague. I really feel that local news is dead in these communities. Now I see CBC trying to move into Yorkton, Swift Current and Moose Jaw. The local people of these communities—for 50 or 60 years, I might add—are entrenched. When they went dark in June...and I see many more going dark in the coming months, and I'm concerned about this.

You're from industry, so you dealt with the telcos. I know—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Waugh. I can tell you're passionate about this. I am too. I appreciate it.

I just want to update the committee. The clerk found that the minister did respond to the question about the Anti-Hate Network back in November. Perhaps we can recirculate it to the committee so that we have that. It was a timely response from the minister.

Mr. Al Soud, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Fares Al Soud:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our officials for being here today.

I've said it time and again. I think the World Cup creates an incredible opportunity to showcase our beautiful country. It's especially great for host cities, but there are countless ridings across our country, mine included, that will also be looking for ways to participate in the World Cup.

My first question is, beyond the host cities, how does the department anticipate that investments will generate meaningful economic, cultural and sport-developing benefits across the country?

I have a secondary question. Is there a mechanism to track regional participation or spinoff benefits outside the host jurisdictions?

**Francis Bilodeau:** I'm going to ask Mr. Brown to answer.

As the minister noted earlier, Secretary van Koeverden has been leading a lot of the efforts, supported directly by Andrew.

I will turn to Andrew.

**Andrew Brown:** As you indicated, the co-hosting of this year's FIFA World Cup offers tremendous opportunities for Canada, both in terms of attracting tourists and those dollars and also in terms of showing off the country and attracting economic investments.

It's important to recognize that, in terms of the FIFA World Cup, it is an event that is hosted by FIFA, not by Canada or the other countries. We play a particular role in terms of supporting them as organizers who are working very closely with the host cities of Toronto and Vancouver and with the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, and, I might also add, the local first nations: the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish in British Columbia and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation in Toronto.

Some of the work that is under way is absolutely taking a look at how some of the excitement can be brought to other parts of the country. You will have heard that FIFA announced recently that they will have a sort of caravan that is going to be travelling across the country. In fact, there are going to be two: one that starts in the west and moves east, and one that starts out east and moves west, to really involve communities.

There's also a lot of work that's going on toward looking at some of the legacy that can be left behind after the tournament. This is an area where we at Heritage are looking at how we may be able to contribute and what sort of funding may be able to be provided to ensure that there is, in fact, a legacy that goes across the country.

Certainly, it is the host cities of Toronto and Vancouver that are leading in their respective areas and working with their provincial counterparts to see what can be done predominantly, obviously in those cases, in British Columbia and in Ontario. There is much work continuing.

Just to be clear, in terms of the figures earlier, it's \$220 million that the Government of Canada has provided to the host cities of Toronto and Vancouver to support the operations in relation to staging the 13 World Cup games in Canada. The additional roughly \$100 million that's been allocated and was announced in budget 2025 is largely towards the safety and security costs that are going to be borne by federal organizations such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Public Safety, Transport Canada and CBSA, in terms of some of the impacts that this will have. There are smaller amounts of money that we've received at Canadian Heritage that are about helping to support legacy across the country and helping in terms of indigenous engagement and sports diplomacy.

Those are some things that Secretary of State van Koeverden is engaged in right now as he is currently at the Olympics.

• (1015)

**Fares Al Soud:** Thank you, Mr. Brown.

That was a very thorough response. You pre-empted three of my questions, so I appreciate that.

I have one final one on FIFA for you. How are departments currently working together in terms of preparing for the World Cup and coordinating responses? I know you mentioned that the bulk of this is obviously from the organizer, but how are departments across the board supporting that?

**Andrew Brown:** We have put in place a number of different mechanisms. Some are more formal, and others are more informal.

I think a very key element has been a sort of governance mechanism that's been put in place over a number of years at this point. That's not limited to the federal government. In fact, that involves all of those I mentioned before, the various orders of government, the cities and provinces, as well as FIFA itself and the federal government. I should clarify that the same indigenous first nations that I spoke to are also involved in that process.

At the federal level itself, I would largely speak to ad hoc deputy-level meetings that are held to coordinate and discuss issues of importance in terms of more general matters related to FIFA. They have been taking a look at some of the assurances that the Government of Canada provided when bidding for the World Cup back in 2018. There's also another group that is more focused on those security elements. That's been led more by Public Safety and the PCO national security adviser's office.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We are at the end of our typical time for this committee, but there has been a request for another lightning round if the officials can stay for another six minutes.

Is that okay?

**Francis Bilodeau:** We can certainly do a lightning round.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[Translation]

Mr. G n reux, you have the floor.

**Bernard G n reux:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

Canada Day has been celebrated for many years. I understand that some municipalities have been receiving less funding than they used to. Have you noticed that, Mr. Bilodeau, or am I dreaming?

**Francis Bilodeau:** I'm not aware of that. I don't know if any of my other colleagues have noticed it, but if you're reporting it, I'll check into it.

**Bernard G n reux:** I would appreciate that. I promote all the programs, so I try to make sure we can celebrate our country, even in Quebec, where it often goes unnoticed.

**Francis Bilodeau:** What I can say is that in budget 2025, there's an additional \$20 million for Canada Day. Those funds are not just

focused on Ottawa; they will also be used for activities across Canada. I'm not aware of any funding cuts.

**Bernard G n reux:** At Canadian Heritage, how many programs do you have in total? Can you give me a total?

**Francis Bilodeau:** We have about 30 programs. I don't have the exact number.

**Bernard G n reux:** Before the meeting, we had a little side discussion, and I was asking you if there was any money set aside for infrastructure. You told me that there had been some, but that you were no longer taking on new files because it had been transferred to Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada.

If I may, for the public good and that of my colleagues around the table, I'm giving you the opportunity to explain to us what's happening at Canadian Heritage with regard to cultural infrastructure.

• (1020)

**Francis Bilodeau:** Thank you, Mr. G n reux.

Maybe I'll turn to Ms. Montminy in a second.

Historically, we've always had a program called the Canada cultural spaces fund. As part of the government-wide cost-cutting exercise, efforts were made to eliminate duplication between departments and to limit certain activities to departments better placed to focus their efforts on them.

In our case, it's meant a reduced envelope for cultural spaces in Canada. That said, projects currently under review are still eligible. There are significant envelopes for infrastructure, including provincial and municipal infrastructure, within Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. The primary liaison is now Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada. We certainly have a number of ties with that department, so we're still a useful link between our stakeholders and the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

Ms. Montminy, do you have anything to add?

**Jo lle Montminy:** I agree with everything the deputy minister said—

**The Chair:** There's no more time for this question, because we have to move quickly.

**Bernard G n reux:** Perhaps you could grant five seconds more, because the answer is important.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. Montminy.

**Jo lle Montminy:** I'll take just five seconds to add that there will still be a cultural spaces program, but it will be refocused on equipment that can be used in cultural spaces. For example, a theatre might need new lighting or equipment of that kind. Our department will therefore still have an envelope to support the renovation and outfitting of cultural spaces.

**Bernard Généreux:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ntumba, you have two minutes.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Two minutes is not a very long time.

Ms. Montminy, we've asked a lot of questions, but this morning, we need indicators to measure the impact of cultural initiatives for Black communities, particularly in museums and public institutions.

**Joëlle Montminy:** I don't have that data.

I don't know if you have all the data, Mr. Bilodeau.

**Francis Bilodeau:** I can clarify.

What exactly are you looking for, Mr. Ntumba?

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** I'm looking for the indicators you use to measure the impact of cultural initiatives for Black communities, particularly in museums and public institutions.

**Francis Bilodeau:** That's a really important question. We have indicators for our multiculturalism programs, among others.

In terms of museums, that's a fascinating question. The next time I meet with the heads of museums, I will ask them how they measure the impact. I must confess that I don't know, but it's a very interesting question.

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** How does the department ensure that communities on the outskirts of major regions and urban centres have equal access to cultural programs backed by additional funding?

**Francis Bilodeau:** As I mentioned, and as Mr. McMurren said as well, our programs generally have a criterion that focuses on distribution in the regions as well as in the centres.

Do you want to add anything, Mr. McMurren?

**Blair McMurren:** That's right. We look closely at the results to ensure that funding is spread equally from one region to another. There may be gaps between the application rate and the funding rate. When there are gaps, we make a special effort to engage stakeholders and have them commit to applying for funding.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for two minutes.

**Martin Champoux:** Lately, we've been very interested in the Réseau BIBLIO du Québec, a network of libraries in remote areas that share books.

Bill C-15 would repeal the subsection of the Canada Post Corporation Act that guarantees a very low preferential postage rate for these libraries, and they rely on it. If this fee structure and service were eliminated, it would jeopardize the system, which gives communities access to a great library service. It's a very good system. It has a proven track record and people in the regions love it. The libraries are truly at risk having to pay postage that we are told could cost as much as \$2.5 million a year. These libraries obviously don't have the means to pay that.

I think it's just something that fell through the cracks, but can you guarantee me that you'll pay special attention to that? Will you ensure that under no circumstances will the Réseau BIBLIO du Québec be put at risk due to a measure that was probably added willy-nilly to Bill C-15 with no ill intent?

• (1025)

**Francis Bilodeau:** Thank you for the question.

I'm aware of that issue. That's obviously not a question for me. It falls under the Department of Public Works and Government Services, since Canada Post is part of its portfolio.

Therefore, I can't make a commitment on its behalf.

**Martin Champoux:** Since it concerns libraries, that clearly falls under Canadian Heritage. You certainly have a say with other departments that can act directly.

**Francis Bilodeau:** We certainly have an interest in that. We have fairly frequent conversations with our colleagues about this and other topics.

When it comes to Canada Post decisions, I can't commit to something that's not in my purview.

**Martin Champoux:** Apart from that, I'm counting on your support. I think I'll pass that on to the Réseau BIBLIO du Québec. They will be very happy to know that the Department of Canadian Heritage and its deputy minister are behind them.

Thank you, Mr. Bilodeau.

**The Chair:** Thank you to the witnesses.

[*English*]

Thank you for your fulsome responses and for sharing your excellent and vast experience with us.

I will now call this meeting adjourned.







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

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

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

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

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

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

---

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