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# Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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Chair: Lisa Hepfner





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Thursday, March 12, 2026

• (0820)

[English]

**The Chair (Lisa Hefpner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.)):** Welcome to meeting number 27 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Before we begin, I'd ask you to read the guidelines written on the updated cards on your table. They are measures in place to help prevent feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including our interpreters. You will notice that there's a QR code on the card, which links to a short awareness video if 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, September 22, 2025, the committee is meeting to study the state of the journalism and media sectors. It looks like we have a big panel here today.

[Translation]

We have Marie-Eve Carignan, full professor and UNESCO chair in the prevention of violent radicalization and extremism, Université de Sherbrooke, as an individual.

[English]

We have, from the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, Cheryl McKenzie, executive director; Mike Omelus, executive director of content and programming; and Joel Fortune, legal counsel. Welcome.

We also have with us today, from Accessible Media Inc., David Errington, president and CEO; and Kevin Goldstein, outside regulatory counsel.

From the Canadian Ethnic Media Association, we are joined by Kiumars Rezvanifar, president; and Madeline Ziniak, chair.

Each organization will have five minutes for an opening statement, and then we'll invite questions from members.

[Translation]

We'll start with Ms. Carignan.

You have the floor for five minutes.

**Marie-Eve Carignan (Full Professor, UNESCO Chair in the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism, Université de Sherbrooke, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the invitation today.

I'll start by saying a few words about my background, as well as why I'm speaking to you today. I was an analyst and communications manager at the Quebec Press Council for seven years. The Quebec Press Council is the informal tribunal for the press in Quebec, so it's a media self-regulatory body. At the council, I focused on the media's professional and ethical framework. For the past 12 or so years, I have been a communications and public information professor at the Université de Sherbrooke. My research focuses on journalistic practices, media ethics, the impact of media in society and disinformation.

Today, I wanted to talk to you about the media not only as a public good, but also as a public good with significant responsibility.

It's important for the media to be considered a public good, since they're unlike any other businesses, given their essential role in democracy and in serving the public, that is, Canadians. Everyone can benefit from them. For that reason, public intervention is necessary to fund them.

With that in mind, it's necessary to maintain and strengthen the financial sustainability measures that the Canadian government has already adopted because, as you know, traditional advertising revenue for media is continuing to decline. There has been a \$6 billion drop since 2008, in favour of major American digital platforms.

Measures such as the Online News Act are essential to the survival of these media outlets and must be strengthened. Countries would benefit from coordinating their efforts to adopt stronger common measures and work together to perhaps carry more weight in the face of these web giants.

The Canadian journalism labour tax credit also needs to be maintained and strengthened, in my opinion.

It's important to fund journalism, which has significant added value for the public, particularly fact-based journalism, investigative journalism and science journalism.

Measures must be taken to promote local media because of their importance. There is cause for concern about certain news deserts where local news and municipal political coverage are entirely non-existent. There are certain regions, particularly in Quebec, that are covered by a single media outlet and sometimes by a single journalist. These are sometimes vast areas that are very difficult to cover.

As an example of the importance of local news, our research on the Lac-Mégantic rail tragedy enabled us to demonstrate the crucial role of local media in a crisis. In the context of that crisis, local radio was truly an essential driver in making it possible for the public to know the appropriate public health measures to take. Those measures weren't reported in the national media, so the only place the public could learn how to act was in local media, including local radio. That makes it necessary to fund these media outlets, which are essential in crises, and to include measures for these media in tax programs.

In another report that our team submitted to Quebec's department of culture and communications in 2023, we also demonstrated the essential role of indigenous media in serving these communities. These communities feel under-represented by the national media. Indigenous media face pressing issues in terms of human and material resources and training for professional journalists. They need recurrent funding. Project-based funding is particularly restrictive and ill-suited to their situation. They also need a better structure for collecting advertising revenue, including government advertising. In fact, a number of the stakeholders we interviewed during this study explained to us how much government advertising had helped save their media outlets during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was essential for them, and many of them would have shut down.

A public good like the media obviously also entails a significant social responsibility. We're facing rising disinformation in a world where the Canadian public is still heavily relying on social media for information. Despite the fact that Meta blocked news sharing, various data, including from the Digital News Report 2025, actually still show that a large number of Canadians, one in four or five, continue to get their news from Facebook. That's extremely concerning. It's important to provide the public with diverse sources of information so that people can deal with this rise in online disinformation.

The results of another survey we conducted during the pandemic enabled us to demonstrate that the public sometimes had emotional expectations of the media during crises. The media is accused of being too critical at times, of not being critical enough at other times, or, when fatigue sets in, of over-reporting a crisis, such as the ice storm. In fact, every party involved views the crisis as their crisis, and people sometimes get an impression of media bias when it may also be a subjective perception of the impacts of the crisis and uncertainty. In any case, the blurring of journalistic genres—between information and opinion—fuels a certain public distrust of the news.

● (0825)

In another study that my colleague Marc-François Bernier and I conducted in 2023, we were able to demonstrate that while the majority of respondents believed that events unfolded as reported by the media, many had doubts about the independence of journalists and news businesses when it came to politics and the economy, in particular.

That's why media accountability is so important. If media outlets are public goods, they have to put structures in place to demonstrate that they're meeting ethical standards and ensure that they're accountable to the public. The public needs transparency and more

awareness of journalistic practices. Media literacy is key to understanding news sources and choosing them wisely, especially in the context of the rise of artificial intelligence and deepfakes.

Investing in training for journalists, particularly those who work in community media, and providing them with the resources to develop the technological and digital tools necessary for their discoverability is essential to their survival. Pooling those resources would be a good opportunity for those media outlets.

In short, in a world in crisis, and given the rise of disinformation and biased sources, it's important to present the media as a public good that must be funded accordingly, but which must also be accountable for its actions because of its social responsibility.

Thank you.

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

[English]

We will go next to the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Collectively, you have five minutes.

**Cheryl McKenzie (Executive Director, News and Current Affairs, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network):** Thank you very much.

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting us to appear today.

APTN News brings indigenous perspectives to Canada's national conversation. We do it to the highest professional journalistic standards. From day one, we have ensured journalistic independence and editorial integrity. Those uncompromising principles were established by the late and renowned news director Dan David when APTN News was first built. They continue to guide how we operate today. Our journalists follow the same rigorous standards you would expect from any major news organization in Canada.

What makes APTN different is the indigenous perspective. We cover stories that you won't see anywhere else, which make up much of our reporting, and we also cover the national and global stories that every network is covering. APTN invests heavily in journalism. We operate bureaus across the country and send reporters wherever the story requires, even when that travel is difficult and expensive. Recently, our journalists travelled to Greenland to report on the Inuit perspective regarding threats of a U.S. takeover. We also travel throughout Canada and to many remote communities. We recently travelled to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord to report on the changing way of life due to melting sea ice.

This kind of reporting takes time and resources. While many television news reports today run under 90 seconds, APTN stories often run three or four minutes, and sometimes longer. That time matters. It allows our journalists to explain the story, include community voices and report the full story, because first nation, Inuit and Métis communities are complex.

APTN produces one of the few remaining stand-alone investigative news programs in Canada. Our journalism has received national recognition, including Canada's most prestigious journalism honour, the Michener Award. But the most important measure is the trust we work for with our communities. No other media outlet in Canada can match the volume and breadth of indigenous news coverage that APTN accomplishes. As indigenous peoples, we are the ones who need to be telling our own stories.

I'll now turn things over to my colleague Mike Omelus.

• (0830)

**Mike Omelus (Executive Director, Content and Programming Strategy, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network):** Thank you, Cheryl.

[Translation]

Good morning, everyone.

[English]

Canada's media system is under real pressure. The alarm bells are already ringing.

[Translation]

The Canadian broadcasting system is going through an extremely difficult time. Changes in the media market are threatening the ability of Canadian broadcasters to continue producing journalism and other programs that reflect our country. The fundamental question is this: Will Canada still have the necessary media institutions to tell its own stories?

[English]

APTN relies primarily on our subscriber fee and advertising revenue to operate, but all of this is at risk. The broadcasting ecosystem is being reshaped by global streaming platforms. They operate widely in Canada and make billions in revenue, but they don't yet make nearly the same level of contribution to the Canadian system that we expect from Canadian broadcasters. This is not sustainable for the Canadian system and for Canadian broadcast media. That's why APTN has proposed that the CRTC establish a services of exceptional importance fund designed to support broadcasters that provide essential public value to Canadians. This and other measures are necessary for Canadians and Canadian stories to have a meaningful presence online.

Indigenous journalism, storytelling and language preservation all depend on a healthy Canadian broadcasting system, as does journalistic integrity, we believe. You can't protect journalistic integrity if the newsroom disappears. It's time for all hands on deck. Media organizations and newsrooms across Canada are at risk of disappearing, and APTN is no exception.

[Translation]

Thank you.

We look forward to your questions.

[English]

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

Cheryl, I would love to have had three or four minutes to tell a news story back in my day. You're right that they're 90 seconds to two minutes.

Accessible Media is next.

David Errington and Kevin Goldstein, you have five minutes, starting now.

**David Errington (President and Chief Executive Officer, Accessible Media Inc.):** Good morning.

Accessible Media Inc., or AMI, would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to offer its views on the state of the media industry in Canada.

My name is David Errington, and I am president and CEO. With me today is Kevin Goldstein of Goldstein Communications Law, AMI's outside regulatory counsel.

AMI is a Canadian content company that entertains, informs and empowers persons with disabilities through the offering of original content that reflects diversity and inclusion. AMI operates three broadcast services: AMI-tv, AMI-audio in English and AMI-télé in French. Each of these services benefits from a mandatory carriage order from the CRTC, which requires Canada's cable and satellite companies to distribute AMI services to all their subscribers and to pay AMI a monthly fee per subscriber set by the commission. AMI's vision is to establish a supportive voice for the one in four Canadians with a disability, representing their interests, concerns and values through accessible media reflection and portrayal.

This study comes at a critical time for the Canadian media sector. For well over a decade, the Canadian broadcasting system has been undergoing a significant structural change driven by the emergence of foreign-owned Internet streaming platforms such as Netflix, Prime Video and Disney+, and to related declines in subscriptions to traditional cable, IPTV and satellite providers.

AMI services and other public interest channels like them play a very important role in the Canadian broadcasting system and make immeasurable contributions to the communities they serve. Together, we form a cornerstone of Canada's democratic, cultural, linguistic and accessible ecosystems, bringing trusted public interest programming to Canadians in every region of the country.

However, it is important to recognize that these channels are directed at niche audiences and would not exist without regulatory intervention. Historically, these revenues have come almost entirely from monthly subscriber fees that cable, IPTV and satellite companies pay. Subscribers to these distributors are cutting the cord and migrating towards streaming providers, which has had a dramatic impact on public interest broadcasters like AMI, putting their ongoing viability at risk.

Compounding the problem is that CRTC has generally been unwilling to consider changes to the rates that broadcast distributors pay to public interest services, except as part of a formal licence renewal process. Licence renewals are supposed to occur every five years, but, given the recent overhaul of the Broadcasting Act and the CRTC's efforts to revise its regulatory framework as a result, licence renewals for these channels are now unlikely to occur before 2027, a full nine years after the last renewals were considered. Moreover, AMI's television services have never had a rate increase in their nearly two decades of existence.

AMI's annual revenues are now well over \$4 million less than they were when AMI's licence was last renewed in 2018, and they continue to decline. This financial reality has forced AMI to restructure its operations, reduce its workforce and shift the ways it produces programming, but this is only a temporary fix. While increasing the rates broadcast distributors pay by a reasonable amount is part of the solution, we respectfully submit that a more comprehensive approach is needed. The CRTC is currently considering what financial contribution streaming platforms should make to the system, and AMI and others have argued that a portion of such expenditures must go to support public interest channels—something that is now specifically contemplated under the Broadcasting Act.

Furthermore, in 2024, the government committed \$10 million over two years to help address funding shortfalls for public interest services. This funding was recently renewed for an additional two years but at a lower amount. While we truly appreciate this funding, it is far from enough. Over the next three years, the public interest services that are eligible to tap into these funds expect to face a funding shortfall of more than \$38 million.

What we desperately need is reliable, sustainable funding. This involves a dedicated envelope of funds from the federal government for an extended period of time and at levels substantially greater than \$10 million. This, coupled with increased funding from broadcast distributors and required contributions from streaming platforms, would help stabilize the operations of public interest channels for the long term. Without such support, however, the viability of our channels and their ability to deliver on their mandates are in serious doubt.

AMI would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide these comments, and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

● (0835)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Finally, we have the Canadian Ethnic Media Association.

You have five minutes.

**Kiumars Rezvanifar (President, Canadian Ethnic Media Association):** Good morning, Madam Chair and committee members. On behalf of the Canadian Ethnic Media Association, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for the study of the journalism and media sectors.

I am Kiumars Rezvanifar, president of the Canadian Ethnic Media Association, and also, for the last 33 years, an independent television producer for the Iranian communities in Canada. With me is Ms. Madeline Ziniak, chair of the Canadian Ethnic Media Association and a recipient of the Order of Canada for her work in multilingual and multicultural media.

The Canadian Ethnic Media Association, CEMA, was founded in 1978, and is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization whose membership of journalists, producers and writers from all media platforms serves as a voice for Canada's diverse ethnic media sector. For the past 48 years CEMA, as part of its mandate, has supported the principles of Canadian citizenship, multiculturalism and the right to free expression without ethnocentric bias. CEMA has also annually produced juried national awards of journalistic excellence in order to recognize, inspire and platform the exceptional work and talent in Canada's ethnic media.

We are here today to address serious issues facing the independent multilingual community television producers sector in Canada. Our media platforms, reaching millions of weekly viewers, target underserved communities across Canada whose language of comfort is neither English nor French. This is to inform you that this is the only Canadian media sector without any dedicated federal support, despite being essential to trusted multilingual communication and outreach.

Unfortunately, in spite of statements made by government representatives, none of the independent multilingual television community producers have any access to any funding, specifically the Canada Media Fund, the Google news fund, the local journalism initiative, or the Canadian journalism labour tax credit. In fact, the criteria for all these funds are prohibitive and punitive to the independent ethnic community producer sector.

Now I will ask Ms. Madeline Ziniak to continue with our presentation.

**Madeline Ziniak (Chair, Canadian Ethnic Media Association):** Thank you, Kiumars.

There is a critical need for an equitable playing field for independent ethnic community producers that is commensurate with Canada's multilingual population. The described landscape has resulted in the demise of many Canadian multilingual media platforms. This challenging environment continues to threaten the fragile multicultural media sector due to systemic exclusion to any existing government-supported funding.

This sector not only reflects the multicultural-ethnocultural identity of Canada, but also acts as a conduit for crucial trusted communication, inclusive of government outreach. A pertinent example to cite is that, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, we provided vital health information to diverse audiences in their mother tongue who otherwise may not have had access to critical life-saving information. It is also important to note that this media sector, without access to funding structures and Canadian government support, could become vulnerable to foreign influence and disinformation, contributing to a potential risk of national security.

According to Statistics Canada, one in four Canadians speaks a language at home other than French or English. The revised Broadcasting Act mandates support for the production and broadcasting of programs in a diversity of languages. We need to be able to contribute to the development and sustainability of a more inclusive Canadian media environment.

The Canadian Ethnic Media Association has been in discussions, for years with relevant levels of government identifying our issues and proposing recommendations. It is in this spirit today that we welcome this opportunity to present the issues concerning the Canadian independent ethnic community producer sector. We are Canada.

*Merci. Meegwetch. Ba Sepas. Diakuii.* Thank you.

We look forward to your questions.

● (0840)

**The Chair:** Thank you all for your very succinct and pointed opening statements.

I now turn to Mrs. Thomas. You have six minutes.

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

My first question is for Canadian Ethnic Media Association.

In your opening remarks, you said that, without the right support for ethnic media to continue to exist in Canada, it makes those who are a part of different ethnic communities here in our country vulnerable, perhaps, to misinformation or disinformation. It also makes them vulnerable to foreign influence.

My hope is that you can take a minute and expand on the vulnerability that exists there.

**Madeline Ziniak:** I'll begin to answer that and then pass it over to Kiu, who has a real-life experience of what is really going on.

Without support from Canada, you have ethnic media that is often voluntary or that has to be subsidized by other businesses in order to continue its television programming and production of ethnic content. There are many occasions that have been cited where foreign governments have come forward and said, "We will support

your media entity. However, if we do so financially, you will have to include some of this editorial."

Many independent producers, Kiu being one of them, have refused this support based on the information they would have to carry, which would not be through a Canadian perspective, especially at this time of polarized environments.

I think we're living through an extremely challenging time, certainly for ethnocultural communities that are dedicated to a Canadian ethnocultural perspective. They are the thread that is binding communities in Canada and a voice that is trusted in the mother tongue. It's very important to get accurate information. Often, those whose language is not French or English have a problem in interpreting distinctly the information that comes forward.

Now I'll ask Kiu to give his own life experience of the situation.

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** Last year I was approached by CBC because there was a study done by the government. It found that foreign influence is another issue for national security. For that matter, 33 years ago, when I started my program and I was not that known, I was approached by the government because I started the business. Three different times, they approached me and wanted to help me. The funny thing was that they were telling me that I had the same mandate they had, which is to promote the culture, promote everything. However, we are smarter than that. We knew what was going to happen. Three different times, I refused. The reason I refused is why I'm here now. For that matter, I'm aware of several media outlets that fell into that trap, and they don't exist anymore. For that matter, yes, there's a price to pay if you are going that route.

**Rachael Thomas:** I find it interesting that you were able to stand up against the Iranian regime and not accept their funding. Thank you for standing for truth.

● (0845)

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** It's my duty.

**Rachael Thomas:** Interestingly enough, in January this year, Iranian protesters gathered outside of CBC/Radio-Canada demanding more objective coverage of what was and is happening in Iran. One of the things they were advocating for was, "CBC, tell the truth."

A media outlet like yours is committed to telling the truth. Why is that so important in an environment where that doesn't seem to be the case, even from our main media outlets in this country?

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** We are fighting that. In fact, for the past two months we've seen a total media blackout from all levels, not only the media, but even the human rights advocates.

I'm part of that organization behind the scenes organizing all of these rallies and everything else. We have created a kind of brand for ourselves.

I remember one of the rallies. I believe there were 150,000 people in downtown Toronto. We received only 20 seconds of exposure from one of the media outlets. It seems like every day that happens. That itself is news, if you want to cover it.

We heard that there are—I don't want to name them—certain mentalities and views in that organization that led them to not give us the coverage. That's for the whole community. It's not that often we go to a broadcaster and demand that, but it's been so obvious, so clear. This is news that has been covered all over the world, in every aspect, and our main broadcaster tries to look the other way, or at least it doesn't give it the attention it deserves for Canadians, not only for us. Right now, we are not living in a global village; we live in a global neighbourhood. Everything that happens anywhere affects us right now. It is kind of sad and disappointing that we really rely on that organization to give us our story. We've been educating Canadians of what's going on because, unfortunately, they are not getting the real truth. We should be getting it from the CBC.

**Madeline Ziniak:** If I may add, I think the ethnic media sector is dedicated to contributing to democracy in Canada. Many of the communities are here because of that. As we live in a more turbulent world, we know that democracy is being whittled away. It's so important to have a Canadian ethnocultural perspective in news as a reflection of the community dynamics and the support there.

In this world of increasing polarization, it's very important to have this binding thread in media, in the language of your comfort and specifically, in the independent ethnic producer segment, which as we said, would really appreciate being able to have some kind of support. It's a distinct category and has not been recognized to date in the broadcasting arena, as far as support is concerned.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Al Soud, you have six minutes.

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being with us today.

A healthy media ecosystem is one where everyone can see themselves reflected in the stories being told. Everyone deserves access to news.

My first question will be for APTN.

Ms. McKenzie, Mr. Omelus and Mr. Fortune, thank you for being with us.

Indigenous media organizations play a unique and vital role in Canada's media ecosystem. They ensure that indigenous voices are heard, that stories are told authentically and that communities, particularly in remote regions, have access to culturally relevant journalism.

Ms. McKenzie, you said that as indigenous peoples, you are the ones who should be telling your own stories. In your experience, what kinds of stories or perspectives are most often missed when indigenous journalism is absent from the media landscape?

**Cheryl McKenzie:** It's that real lived experience in the communities by the people doing the work in journalism. You can spend your whole day doing something you're absolutely dedicated to and

so passionate about. You can do the research and the work. Then you present that and go home for the day, but all of the subject matter you dealt with for that entire day has no impact on your family. You don't think about it. It doesn't affect your life. You don't think about your weekend plans. It doesn't affect your ability to go to work the next day because of things happening in your family.

I think that having indigenous journalists doing indigenous journalism would give you the deeper context that the headlines and those shorter stories are just not able to get to.

• (0850)

**Fares Al Soud:** That's an interesting idea—reflected experience finding itself in those spaces where others can then turn that into reflected experience.

APTN plays a critical role in ensuring that indigenous communities see themselves reflected in national media. What are the biggest structural challenges indigenous broadcasters face in reaching audiences today?

**Cheryl McKenzie:** It absolutely has to be about the resources to do it. APTN gets its money primarily from cable subscriptions, and we all know the direction that cable subscriptions are going. It means decreased revenue, year after year, for broadcasters like APTN.

We also have rating systems in Canada that are not truly capturing the audience that actually watches APTN. It's focused a lot on the southern communities. There's barely any measure. I know there is work being done to change the way television consumption is measured to capture those true audiences for us, but it's just not happening fast enough. It affects our bottom line and our revenue when it comes to marketing. Everyone looks at those ratings numbers and says, "Sorry, but we can't help you there," even though it's not a true reflection.

We have done more with less over the years, in recent years especially. We absolutely have to be on the digital scene. I'm very proud of the work our staff does. They just go ahead and charge forward. They have so many ideas and get them out there, and we do our television broadcasts. They get everything onto digital.

We just relaunched our new news app. It was down for a little while because of the upgrade, but you can find it now.

I could go on and on, but I think I should leave it there for your questions.

**Mike Omelus:** If I may elaborate on the rating system, there are many structural issues, and ratings are just one of them. Numeris is the primary currency that advertisers and major broadcasters use to determine audiences. There is no measurement, or there's very little measurement, in rural areas. There is no measurement in any of the three territories. There is no measurement of satellite, and that has a huge impact on our audience numbers through the regular system that is being used.

There is some experimentation with set-top box data that has been under way for at least a dozen years. Preliminary testing shows an increase of well over 30% in APTN's ratings, so that says the current system is flawed. It's one of the issues we face.

**Fares Al Soud:** That's fantastic. Thank you both.

This is a perfect segue into my next question on the cable subscriptions piece.

This committee has consistently taken an interest in this shift and the technological advancements angle because it has such an important impact on the industry at large.

As audiences increasingly consume media through digital platforms and streaming services, could you provide a little more context on what kind of progress or what kinds of pathways you folks have endeavoured to make in the digital world? Also, what policies or supports do you find would be most helpful as you pursue that transition?

**Cheryl McKenzie:** We have monetized our YouTube channel, and we're definitely using Google. We put our content out on multiple platforms every single day. We've diverged into podcasts because we know there's a lot of podcast uptake.

We do multiple livestreams, including many events like... Not this committee. I told them not this committee. I'm just kidding. I didn't say that. We definitely do the big major news events. We buy into those pool feeds for broadcasters so that we can provide a forum for our own audiences to watch on their network and discuss in the comments forum what is happening. We broadcast our news live twice a day and we also livestream those things.

Even our own news team is helping APTN become more and more on the digital scene, because we are a small but mighty team. We all have to stick together and try to do as much as we can, and everybody certainly does that.

• (0855)

**The Chair:** Thank you. The time's up for that question.

Mr. Omelus, I wanted to ask you to clarify something.

In your opening statement, you suggested the government implement a system for services of exceptional something. I didn't get the last bit. What did you say?

**Mike Omelus:** I said a services of exceptional importance.

**The Chair:** It's importance. Okay.

**Mike Omelus:** What APTN does is unique—

**The Chair:** I'm not going to ask you to go into detail right now. Maybe other members will, but I thought that was an important suggestion. I wanted to make sure I got it right.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Good morning, Dr. Carignan. Welcome back to the committee. It's always very interesting to have you here.

The purpose of the current study is to shed some light on the state of journalism and the media.

Do you think journalism is in good shape these days?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Journalism is in pretty critical condition. I see that in my work as a journalism professor. Many students are now reluctant to start a career in journalism, particularly because of precarious conditions and unreliable income. Many freelance journalists describe themselves as journalists but, in reality, get their main income from another job. Even if they aspire to be journalists, that doesn't guarantee them a stable income.

We can really see that journalism is a profession that's currently at risk. Although it's idealized by many students, there are a lot of fears, especially because the rise of artificial intelligence raises concerns about possible job losses.

**Martin Champoux:** We have talked about journalism as a profession, but let us move on to the quality of journalistic coverage today.

You have been teaching journalism at the Université de Sherbrooke for 12 years now. Have you already seen a difference in the quality of journalism over the past decade? What do you think is influencing those changes in the products of journalistic work in Quebec and Canada? I imagine that there are many factors, but what are the main ones?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Obviously, when it comes to the quality of journalism, I think most journalists still want to do work that they care about. You become a journalist because it's truly a profession that you care about; you do it for the cause. Journalists are very dedicated, and they want to do their job well.

However, what has become clear over the past 15 to 20 years, that is, since I became interested in journalism, is that there has been a major rise in opinion journalism, particularly that format, and understandably so. It pays for news businesses to do opinion pieces, and it costs less to produce than in-depth investigations and reports. It attracts a lot of people. However, this journalism often misleads people, because they have trouble distinguishing between factual journalism and the journalists' opinions.

It's also a type of journalism that perhaps brings less insight into understanding social issues. In my opening remarks, I talked about the importance of funding investigative and specialized journalism. I think that goes hand in hand with this rise in opinion journalism.

There are genres that have emerged and that raise questions, then.

Aside from that, there are also all the media crises. We're now talking about specialized media, ethnic media and local media. Those are media outlets that face a lot of funding difficulties. Fewer and fewer people want to work in community media because it pays poorly. It requires a great deal of commitment. It's a bit like believing in a cause and throwing yourself into it. There's a real need in that regard. Community media outlets have lost a lot of resources. In Quebec, in particular, there was a great deal of competition between regional media outlets, which meant that a lot of areas lost their weekly papers after the war between the Quebecor and Transcontinental weeklies at the time. We're really seeing a decline in local and community media, in particular, and that's worrisome.

**Martin Champoux:** I want to come back a bit to the distinction you made between opinion journalism and factual journalism, that is to say the profession or vocation of being a journalist, whose objective is really to bring out the facts and bring out the closest and most truthful story as possible, even though nothing is perfect, obviously, as people know and are aware.

There has been an emergence of opinion journalism and this trend in independent media, then. I think independent media outlets specialize in opinion media while only half admitting it. That trend means that the major so-called traditional news outlets have also taken to offering columns and commentaries.

Do you think the major media outlets may have made the mistake of failing to make a clear enough distinction for their clients between commentaries and opinion journalism, on the one hand, and what, in their pages or programs, is genuinely factual and serious journalism, on the other?

• (0900)

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** I think there's a lack of distinction. Many people are being misled. That's what a lot of our research and that of my colleagues demonstrates: that people don't always distinguish between opinion and factual information. This creates confusion and distrust of the media. Those distinctions have to be clearer.

Obviously, there are trends. There's a clear rise in opinion journalism in the United States. Now, online influencers who are extremely popular are making opinion journalists more popular. That creates even more confusion about who is a journalist and who is not. Right now, many people online are claiming to be journalists, but they actually have ideological biases. That's extremely concerning as well.

In my opening remarks, I talked about journalistic responsibility. That's a problem we're seeing. I recently went to a number of journalism conferences where columnists and opinion journalists said they shouldn't have to follow codes of ethics because they were doing opinion journalism, not factual journalism. That's a serious mistake. Opinion journalists are subject to the same ethical rules as news journalists. The only difference is that they have the right to give their opinion on the news, but that news has to be based on accurate, verified and rigorous facts. There's sometimes a kind of *laissez-faire* attitude when it comes to opinion journalism, as if opinion journalists could afford a few ethical lapses.

**Martin Champoux:** What do you think of the fact that more and more groups of individuals are presenting themselves as watchdogs of journalistic quality and coverage? We heard from one of those

groups this week: HonestReporting Canada, not to name any names. What do you think of these groups, which blatantly target people based on their opinions on certain issues and systematically criticize anything that doesn't suit them in terms of journalistic coverage, with very little nuance? We're seeing it more and more in the current landscape.

Does that have an impact on the work of journalists, on their commitment, and I would even go so far as to say on their courage to do their job seriously?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Thank you for the question. It's an excellent question.

I believe that advocacy groups are important. It's important to advocate for the coverage of different perspectives and to have comprehensive reporting that presents the two sides of the parties involved in various conflicts or situations.

My real issue with groups such as HonestReporting Canada is their approach. Some of them engage in doxing, which is the malicious release of personal information. They intimidate journalists. They target specific journalists. It isn't just these advocacy groups. We're seeing a growing number of individuals doing this on social media. A number of studies show that journalists are targeted by hate messages or subjected to intimidation campaigns. People's addresses or their families' addresses are shared. The situation has reached a point where people decide not to become journalists because they fear for their safety and or their loved ones' safety. As I said, the economic conditions aren't always easy either. Why do this job if you receive threats?

This doesn't just affect journalists. It also affects experts who speak out in the media. I could talk about this at length. My team, which works on disinformation, has often received threats. We've had to step up security at the university.

These tactics intimidate people and deter them from continuing to speak out in public. We must stand up for different advocacy groups and different points of view. However, we must do so rigorously and honestly, while upholding the rights of individuals.

**Martin Champoux:** We also need to do so using the structures already in place for this purpose.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Exactly. People can speak out in public without engaging in intimidation.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Généreux for five minutes.

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

I would like to thank all the witnesses. It's quite informative.

Mr. Omelus, I'll ask you a question. I gather that you speak French quite well, by the way.

The Government of Canada has signed an agreement with Google that brings in \$100 million a year, an indexable amount. Of this \$100 million, Radio-Canada receives \$7 million because it employs journalists. The number of journalists employed by each media outlet that receives funding is a key factor in this agreement.

Do you find it right that, even though the Government of Canada—or the Canadian people, for that matter—gives \$1.4 billion so that CBC/Radio-Canada can carry out its work, the organization also receives \$7 million?

True, CBC/Radio-Canada employs journalists. However, all ethnic communities and media outlets such as yours could obtain more funding. You could have more funding for your journalists if that \$7 million didn't go to CBC/Radio-Canada.

I understand that \$7 million—in a situation such as the one discussed earlier involving \$6 billion in lost revenue—is peanuts. However, it's still an amount paid to an organization that already receives \$1.4 billion to carry out its work.

Do you think that it would be right for 100% of the money paid out by Google to go to organizations such as yours?

• (0905)

**Mike Omelus:** Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

Seven million dollars isn't peanuts for APTN, of course.

I'll speak in English for the sake of clarity.

[*English*]

We have a great partnership with the CBC/Radio-Canada. We have a memorandum of understanding. We could not do some of the work that we do, especially scripted dramas, without their support. They have been very supportive.

It's a really complex issue as to who is eligible for additional funding coming into the system. We benefit from some Google money, because of the journalism that we do, but I think it's something the regulators need to be seized with to decide the best way to spend the money. Should it go to an organization that is already funded by the government to the tune of \$1.4 billion? That's really not something for us to comment on.

I do want to express our gratitude to Canadian Heritage for the gap funding that we did receive. I think APTN received \$2.5 million. That is very helpful. It's interim and short term as the CRTC works through the updating of the Broadcasting Act, but we are grateful for that support. I wanted to mention that.

[*Translation*]

**Bernard Généreux:** You can understand that I don't want to pass judgment on the fact that some media outlets are receiving it and others aren't. The point is that one of these outlets, a public organization, receives over \$1 billion to do its work. That's fine. However, the planned agreement with partners other than Google never materialized. In general, these agreements were meant to bring in much more than the \$100 million from the Google deal. Unfortunately, this didn't happen.

My question is for you, Mr. Omelus, but also for Ms. Carignan. Should we continue to try to obtain this money so that we can help

Canadian journalism? Given the current situation, I think that, inevitably, the GAFAMs of this world will continue to dominate. How can we obtain more money from these organizations?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** I do believe that this money should be distributed among various media outlets, including official language minority media and ethnic media. The various community media outlets must receive their share, just like the major national media outlets. We need a variety of sources of information. Sometimes, in the comments, I hear people expressing concerns about biased information. Yet we need a number of sources to obtain a variety of information. All these sources need funding.

I think that the agreement with Google is important. However, the government must continue to look at ways to ask other platforms to take responsibility. One solution may be to seek more funding. I think that we need to ask to speak with other countries about how they can apply the same pressure to the platforms. Canada alone may not be a big enough player. That said, if we find a joint approach with other countries for applying this pressure to the major platforms, we'll face fewer threats of having our access to the media cut off given our status as a small player on the world stage. We need countries to work together to apply pressure to the major platforms and to force them to give money back to the media.

**Bernard Généreux:** Ms. Carignan, there have been agreements with Australia, for example, and in other parts of the world. Could you share some examples that you think have worked better than our current situation in Canada? Of course, \$100 million is quite significant. However, I think that the government's expectations were much higher.

**The Chair:** You'll have to give a quick answer. Mr. Généreux's time is almost up.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** The government was expecting more, and we need to keep up the pressure. Examples in Great Britain, Europe and Australia show that it can work. We need to keep up the pressure. Sometimes, when we don't give in, the platforms end up giving in. We need to learn from these examples.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Ntumba for five minutes.

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

When I arrived in Canada, I had a dream of becoming a journalist. I had worked in print media in my country. Once I arrived here, I faced some challenges. I turned to other professions that helped me to integrate better. Today, I'm a member of Parliament and I have no complaints about that. However, I have a question for you, Ms. Carignan.

Should we review or expand the regulations governing the journalism profession? Should we even create an order to regulate these professions?

• (0910)

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** It's a big question. I know that the journalism community has two points of view. Some believe that an order could really provide protection by giving journalists a status. In their view, it would prevent people who disregard the ethical standards of the profession from claiming to be journalists. It would also provide a measure of credibility that could boost public confidence at a time of crisis of confidence. Other journalists are concerned that this type of structure could prevent journalists from doing their job freely when freedom of the press and freedom of expression constitute fundamental freedoms.

We also have the fact that no compulsory training is required to become a journalist. The fact that people can study in any field and become journalists raises questions about how an organization could regulate the profession. I think that we can find a middle ground. People who practise journalism would come under the authority of a body responsible for ensuring adherence to ethical standards and overseeing the profession, in order to help build trust.

I'm currently quite concerned by the fact that people on social media, for example, whom my team follows, claim to be journalists. Yet they clearly don't adhere to ethical standards or any well-understood and rigorous journalistic practice. This is a matter of great concern. It undermines public confidence, creates confusion and fuels distrust of all sources of information, including professional sources.

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

Mr. Omelus, you spoke a bit about media ratings. When it comes to measuring ratings, can you share your ideas on how to ensure credible ratings?

**Mike Omelus:** The current system is quite complicated in terms of audience measurement. However, audience measurement should be equal across Canada. In my opinion, the lack of measurement in Canada's territories and the lack of measurement for people who access satellite television services is unacceptable.

[*English*]

It's really necessary to have proper ratings to know who is watching, where they're watching and what they are watching. We don't have that system right now. There's an inequality.

Also, we need to get into discoverability of content. I have a Samsung TV, and there's a big issue on my TV remote. I can get Disney+, Netflix and Amazon Prime.

[*Translation*]

Where is Canada?

[*English*]

Canada is not there. That's a big issue.

I think Joel wants to add something.

**Joel Fortune (Legal Counsel, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network):** Looking forward as well, people have said that data is

the new oil. Fair access to data from streaming platforms and digital services is going to be increasingly important. We're only getting into, these days, how the online world is going to be structured and regulated in the public interest in Canada.

Obviously, access to data is going to be critical for Canadian media to understand their audiences and to perform better in the market. Ultimately, the market is important for the success or failure of all media, so you have to have fair access to underlying data, respecting privacy at all times, of course. You need to have that data access.

[*Translation*]

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Mr. Errington, how would you assess the effectiveness of the current federal programs to support inclusive media? Would any additional measures be particularly helpful in ensuring the accessibility of information in Canada?

[*English*]

**David Errington:** From AMI's perspective, the thing that makes us unique in the Canadian broadcasting system is the fact that no other network like ours exists in the world. We're providing accessible content with respect to captioning and description. We're looking at adding ASL and QSL to our content, going forward. From an accessibility standpoint, Canada is a leader throughout the world. AMI has played a critical role in putting that out there and making sure content in Canada is accessible. I first started in 2009 with AMI-tv, and we later added AMI-télé in 2014. Now all content in prime time needs to have description. I don't think that would have happened without the lobbying efforts, advocacy and things we did at AMI-tv. Canada is a leader because we have networks like AMI to promote and foster that.

What is needed, and you're going to hear this over and over again, is long-term, sustainable funding so we can continue to do the things we do really well. AMI is a leader with respect to accessibility of content, but we're also a leader in accessible content. We create over 100 hours of original content per year, half and half between English and French. It's award-winning content. It's being recognized throughout Canada. In order for us to continue to do that in the future, we need long-term, sustainable funding from government, cable and the Online Streaming Act. Those three mechanisms would help us.

Thank you.

• (0915)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I'll now give the floor to Mr. Champoux for two and a half minutes.

**Martin Champoux:** I found it quite intriguing when Mr. Omelus spoke earlier about discoverability. We talked about data. I think that discoverability is a challenge for all Quebec and Canadian media. A number of our studies have focused on this issue. We've also heard about it in Quebec City. It's a major concern. However, are there limits to our approach to discoverability?

Ms. Carignan, I would like to talk about the news that caught our attention. Radio-Canada decided to make its programming available on the Prime Video platform. Prime Video is owned by Amazon, one of the GAFAM companies. Remember, this American company systematically refuses to comply with any tax or regulatory regulations when it comes to broadcasting.

From your perspective as an observer, which I imagine is as objective as possible, what do you think of Radio-Canada's decision to provide RDI programming on an American platform even before providing it on its own platform, ICI TOU.TV, when the English version, CBC News Network, is available on Gem?

Maybe I want to know whether I'm completely off base in thinking that the decision makes absolutely no sense. However, I don't want to put words in your mouth either.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** As an expert, I always try to cover the different sides. I know that the committee asked to hear Radio-Canada's position on this. I think that it will be useful and important to do so. I think that it's a good initiative.

I gather that certain economic aspects explain the decision. All media outlets, including the national media, are having trouble generating revenue, even if they have certain privileges that others don't have. It's really an economic problem for everyone these days. The challenge is widespread.

The RDI channel reports the news for Radio-Canada. It's an important channel. There are fewer and fewer cable subscriptions. It's necessary to find other ways to fund RDI. I understand that. We're hearing that a situation supposedly explains the choice to go through a provider that isn't ICI TOU.TV and that the agreements with the cable companies prevent this content from being made available for a fee on ICI TOU.TV. Nevertheless, that doesn't stop us from asking big questions about the chosen platform, Amazon Prime. It isn't necessarily a good player in terms of labour relations or its approach to setting up shop in Quebec. We've had all kinds of discussions about this.

In terms of the discoverability of Canadian and Quebec content, I believe that these major platforms have a long way to go to make our content more discoverable and accessible and to open the door to Canadian media. In that sense, I find it hard to understand why a public broadcaster chose to go with Amazon Prime.

**Martin Champoux:** It seems that, once we've firmly established our foundations here, we can ultimately still look for other distribution methods to reach as many people as possible. I think that this was clearly the intention. Still, I find it particularly questionable to maintain that the first step is to turn to this platform. Quebec-owned or Canadian-owned platforms could have provided this service.

Isn't this a type of breach of the ethics required of the public broadcaster? It seems that the public broadcaster should set an example and serve as a role model for these practices.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** I agree with you. The Canadian broadcaster has an ethical and professional responsibility and it must set an example. I think that doing business with an American giant such as Amazon really isn't setting an example. I can't understand this decision.

I understand the financial considerations. However, I also already have a hard time with the idea of making a large part of ICI TOU.TV's content available for a fee. This content should be accessible to all Canadians when it comes to access to information and our cultural production. For example, I find that Télé-Québec makes its content much more accessible to Quebecers, free of charge. Radio-Canada should follow suit. It shouldn't choose an American platform, especially not a giant that fails to comply with our regulations and that doesn't co-operate much. It should try to make its content available for free as much as possible. If you're a public service, you need to provide your services for free as much as possible.

• (0920)

**Martin Champoux:** Is that an argument that—

**The Chair:** Your time is up. Sorry, Mr. Champoux.

**Bernard Gagné:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** He tries to push me every time.

[*English*]

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

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

It's an interesting panel we have here today.

I must say that CBC's mandate was not answered when APTN was formed, and I remember your coming on the air in 1999 because CBC did not fulfill their mandate.

I just want to say to APTN, don't worry about Numeris ratings. When the president of CBC was here, I asked her about the ratings. I knew they were very poor, but she wouldn't give them. Don't worry about it. They only want to talk about it during the Olympic gold medal game that 13 million Canadians watched. Don't worry about the ratings, because our national public broadcaster couldn't give a damn about the ratings and only when they're in their favour.

It's interesting, because I've been a broadcaster for over 40 years. Bill C-18, which was brought in by the Liberal government, was supposed to be the answer to broadcasting. It was supposed to give funds to small players and local voices. Have any of you received any money out of Bill C-18?

I'm going to start with AMI. I'm old, and I got called out on closed captioning. I ad libbed a lot of my sportscasts. I got called out by the CRTC for not using closed captioning when it first came in.

David, thank you. You started this in 2009. I got called out shortly after.

Have you received any of the funding from Bill C-18 that was supposed to go to the group that we're seeing here today?

**David Errington:** We have not received any Bill C-18 funding.

That being said, we have had to make substantial changes to the way we operate at AMI. We had a daily morning live show called *AMI Today*. We had a host, and we would talk about disability issues across the country. That was a live show that we produced in-house. We had to cancel that show two years ago and lay off almost 35 people because we could no longer afford to sustain that programming.

Now we've moved to an outsourced programming model where all of our content is produced by third party production companies. We've had to scale down our in-house production. It's meaningful. Things are happening. Changes are being made. Hard decisions are being made that are not fun and are not allowing us to reach the mandate that the CRTC licensed us for in 2009.

**Kevin Waugh:** Yes, the other issue is the CRTC. They're not listening. They're not listening to you guys when you go there. Now you're \$4 million short, and you're cutting programs because of it.

**David Errington:** Yes, we were \$4.4 million short for 2018. Our high cable subscribers are declining at a rate of 5% this year, up from 2.5%. That represents about a \$1.4-million loss of revenue for us per year. If things don't change in three years from now, we will not be sustainable.

**Kevin Waugh:** Well, you're the same as APTN. They used to get 35¢ per person when it was cable. They're up to 38¢. That's a whole three cents.

Cheryl, I want you to talk about it. Your budget has decreased. At one time, you were at around \$11 million, and now you're down to \$8 million. You've added a newscast. Now you have two local newscasts a day. You're doing more with less but, eventually, that catches up, and maybe it has already.

**Cheryl McKenzie:** We are beneficiaries of the Online News Act. There is a fund dedicated for indigenous publishers and broadcasters. As you know, it definitely will help in the short term. We know how volatile that piece of legislation is for the future. I hope it stays, because it definitely is helping.

To be transparent, I'm also on the board of the CJC. I was elected in a by-election. I didn't put my name up at first, but when there was a by-election, I knew I had to step forward and put my name forward. After I was involved, a seat on the executive committee opened up, and I was asked if I could serve for the executive committee. It was accepted by the group, which is a great group of really smart people. I do have some inside knowledge of how that's going.

• (0925)

**Kevin Waugh:** Congratulations on your appointment, by the way.

I want to go to the Ethnic Media Association.

Ethnic media is a growing medium. I saw the footage from the city of Toronto rally where there were well over 100,000 people. We never had anything like this in Canada in all my time in broadcasting. You said there were 150,000 people. I watched the news that day. There was maybe a maximum of a minute on CTV and Bell Media, and there was a little bit on CBC.

It's frustrating, because when we got into Bill C-18, I thought it was about small players, local voices. Over 100,000 people took to the streets in the largest city in this country, and there was no balance in media whatsoever.

I would like you to talk about that, because I think ethnic media has received little or no funding, and it's disturbing when I see and hear these stories not being told after Bill C-18 was passed.

**The Chair:** Maybe you could give a quick response, as we are out of time.

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** If you followed the two weeks after that, we had, according to Toronto police, 500,000 people who were at the rally.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, as an independent producer, CEMA has not received even a dollar. I operated for 33 years, and except for emergency funding during COVID, I have not received even one penny from any level of government.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

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

This is a great panel.

Many of the challenges we're facing in this sector are because we're moving from traditional broadcasting to digital platforms, and digital platforms aren't monetized in the same way. This seems to be across the board, and now we're trying to catch up to this new reality.

As we move to digital platforms, and Madam Carignan spoke of this as well, we're running into the problem that digital platforms respond differently from traditional broadcasting in terms of how they perform and how they react.

[Translation]

I'll start with Ms. Carignan.

One challenge lies in the fact that digital platforms prefer rather extreme perspectives, which generate more interaction. If the content is more journalistic or consistent with journalistic standards and practices, it's too boring and too balanced for the algorithm.

How will journalism survive in this world? People are now confusing opinion with journalism, as you said, because digital platforms prefer opinion. Is this true? How can we support journalistic content in today's world and on today's digital platforms?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** The rise of opinion journalism is also due in large part to the fact that it is inexpensive to produce and it attracts attention. The whole financial aspect has also made it very popular. The major platforms say they don't need news, because people don't go to them for news. That's hard to contradict, since we don't have access to their data because it is private. However, it's clear that many people choose digital platforms for news content. A lot of people left Facebook after news media content ended. Many are saying that the content on Facebook is now superficial and unverified.

There's an appetite for news, which is sometimes hidden because it's not profitable. Social media algorithms are clearly designed to stir up emotions. They want to keep people on the platforms for longer. What people see is what generates anger and outrage, what makes them react, what makes them laugh and what hooks them in. That's another issue. Right now, in the United States, there's a whole trial about the way platforms were built to grab attention, which can have a very negative effect on young people and on the rise of radicalization and violence.

Perhaps we should take a step back and realize that people also have an appetite for news. Their appetite should not only be defined by viewership, but also by the public's desire to get relevant information in order to make informed decisions. We sometimes confuse what people need with what they want or what they're curious about. These are two completely different things. Let's not confuse the two. People also have to be offered what they need, and for that to happen, they have to be exposed to it. Therefore, we need to promote content discoverability. I think people have an appetite for that.

Various studies, including one by the Centre d'études sur les médias at Université Laval, show that people have made a marked shift to downloading the media platforms and applications that have been blocked. That proves that there is an interest and an appetite. People need to know how to access it and they need to be able to access it.

• (0930)

**David Myles:** Thank you.

[English]

Maybe APTN can speak to this as well.

Obviously, you're trying to be where eyeballs are. We know that eyeballs are at those digital platforms. How do you maintain your journalistic standards, procedures and integrity in a world where sometimes the more extreme views are the ones that get the most

views, get the most interaction and are favoured by the platform itself?

**Cheryl McKenzie:** Yes. Absolutely. I talked earlier about how we have longer-form journalism than most other media outlets. We know now, absolutely, that people are not watching those traditional newscasts as much as they used to. We definitely chop up little stories into bite-sized pieces and put them out there according to what we feel is true to that story and what we feel are viewpoints that are not being heard and go out on those mediums and share them.

The online hate that comes from those short little snippets, there's so much of it with so many of the people commenting, including bots. Research has come out saying that there's a real human effort in creating those bots that will target certain groups of the population in Canada and definitely bring everybody down. It definitely does not speak to the true form of the kind of broadcasting that has to happen with indigenous media and what we've heard from the rest of the panel today. Canadians need more of that context. They need more of that education, but you definitely can't get a lot of it on streaming video, not unless you have a really curated feed for yourself.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** Thanks, Madam Chair.

Just to give you a bit of background, I was a journalist for 30 years. There are several around the table here. I worked in radio, TV, magazines and newspapers. Back in the glory days, we were very, very opposed to taking any government money. I worked at a tabloid for most of my life. We said, "No, we want to be independent; we don't want to be undermined by looking like we're taking government money." Today everybody wants it.

You also see online now how people will deride mainstream media, saying that you're bought and paid for. What's the solution? Obviously, we don't want to see journalism disappear. I don't want to see that. I think we need more journalists, not fewer journalists, and I say that as a politician. What is the solution?

Maybe we could start with Mr. Rezvanifar.

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** In terms of a solution, I can only talk about my sector. We are grassroots. Our work is not just our work; it's our passion—passion for our culture and passion for and commitment to our community. The reason I spoke as a media person, obviously, about recognizing the community is that there's a responsibility on me. All my conduct has to be questioned. I have to make sure that I am scrutinized, first by me and then by my community.

I would like to say that, for us, to come to this level, we don't want to get money from the government, but in terms of advertising, the world has changed drastically. It has happened very quickly. COVID made it faster. You might have asked where, for the past 33 years, we got the money. We were making it just like any other operation. We are extremely small. In fact, we're a one-man show, with maybe a couple of freelancers. I'm a producer. I'm a director. I'm a content producer. I'm a marketing executive. I have to do all this stuff by myself. Why? I could have gone and found a job with CBC, but that's not the one I'm looking for. I want to commit. I want to basically have a job that I can vouch for.

For that matter, I would like to say that now it's become a matter of survival to come and look at an authentic and legitimate source of funding, which is the government.

• (0935)

**Madeline Ziniak:** If I may, the independent ethnic producer segment is the only segment that does not have accessibility in a world where so many media entities are getting some kind of support. We do not fit into the system because of the definition of independent ethnic producer. We cannot access any of the media funds. We've met with all of them. We've been lobbying for years and years. The Google fund we cannot access because of the very nature of the independent ethnic producer. They don't have a staff of paid journalists. We've met with the Canada Media Fund several times. We also do not fit those categories and others.

I think it's important for us, because we are a distinct category, to be able to have accessibility somewhere in the structure. It's a critical time now for expression and for journalism, and it's a critical time to educate audiences who are not comfortable in either French or English.

**Kerry Diotte:** Let's open it up to others.

How do we strike that balance? Again, we want media to survive, but we don't want people to think that you're bought and paid for. Would anybody care to figure out the best way to do that?

**Joel Fortune:** I don't know about the best way, but as for a way, there are probably several ways and one way is the Canadian journalism tax credit, which goes to print publications and digital publications, but broadcasters are excluded from accessing that tax credit. That is a neutral—strictly neutral—CRA-administered tool. You spend the money. You get a tax credit. That's about as neutral as you can get. There's no decision-making involved in that. You either spend the money and qualify or you don't. That's an example of a mechanism that is as clean from interference as you could imagine.

Beyond that, something like the fund for services of exceptional importance, which we've talked about, would be a CRTC tool. The

way that functions is it's a step removed from government, or at least probably two steps removed from government. It's a fund that's contributed to by streamers, in this case. The monies would be allocated independently of government to certain designated entities because of the public mandate they fulfill. That's another example of a double arm's-length funding mechanism.

There are probably many more that could be designed in that kind of model. I'm sitting beside the professor here, who probably has some ideas of her own.

**Kerry Diotte:** Yes. We have Madam Carignan.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** If you allow me, I will answer in French.

[*Translation*]

I think we need to think about a number of funding sources.

[*English*]

We are in a moment where we don't have the choice to have that kind of public money to help the media.

[*Translation*]

I think it's important to maintain public funding. We are at a point where we no longer have a choice. If the media is a public asset, it needs to be funded. We need to fund media outlets at all levels, serving different populations.

You were talking about the distrust that people will have if they know there is public funding. That raises questions of how to introduce media literacy programs that explain how journalistic practices and journalistic ethics work. Perhaps we also need to strengthen the bodies that promote journalistic independence and ethics. The Conseil de presse du Québec, for example, is having major financial problems right now. A number of media outlets are no longer members. What image does it send when the media no longer responds to the body that is supposed to defend journalistic ethics?

In Canada, there used to be press councils in every province. Now, there is the National Media Council of Canada, which is greatly weakened. I think we need to strengthen these mechanisms to show the independence of the media, while giving it the financial means to move forward.

Funding must come from programs that do not operate on a project-by-project basis, but that also help the media operate. I think other media outlets here could attest to this, but, for example, in our research on indigenous media in Quebec, the media told us that they couldn't operate on a project-by-project basis because they didn't have the time or energy to apply for each project. They said they needed a recurring operating budget.

At the same time, we could fund constructive initiatives for the media. For example, platforms could be created where all community or local media outlets could put their content together. That way, we might attract more people to these platforms, because there would be more content available and more visibility. In addition, it might be a better media lever to get advertising funding.

These are structural initiatives that could be funded by the government and that would enable media outlets to work together, to collaborate, to strengthen their structure and to have better discoverability and therefore greater bargaining power for advertising.

• (0940)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Myles, you have five minutes.

**David Myles:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

That's a great question, MP Diotte. I was thinking the same thing. I mean, we're talking about mistrust. I would argue that it goes as far as also involving people's relationship to private advertising money. I would say that the distrust across the board has been not just if people get public money, but if they get money from advertising as well, or from big business or whatever.

Let's be honest here. Mistrust goes across the board. As soon as people feel that there's any financing coming from outside, they feel like it's affecting journalism, whether it be from advertising or from public money.

It makes me wonder how much we need to take a step back and talk about the profession of journalism. I know that we talked about education and media, but I would like to hear your perspective again on how many people understand what journalistic standards and procedures are. What does that look like? What does it look like to have an ombudsman at a paper, at a radio station or at a media organization? What does accountability to an audience look like?

Now, it looks like it is accountable only if there's no private financing, if there's no government.... That creates a world in which organizations can't build or grow and actually deliver reputable journalistic news sources to people.

Perhaps we'll start with David and Kevin. I'd be curious to know your thoughts on how we can educate the population to understand the new media landscape and what it looks like, and what journalism looks like as a profession.

**David Errington:** AMI is a little bit different from APTN and the different organizations. We're not a news organization. We're a niche service that wants to put a positive portrayal of persons with disabilities and create content that is reflective of their stories and puts them in the media.

That being said, I'll keep it short, but from our perspective, I think it's really important that all Canadian perspectives are represented within journalism. We have a show on our audio service where David Lepofsky is one of our hosts. He's talking about news and information from the journalistic perspective and that of a person with a disability, who's blind or partially sighted.

Like the stories that Cheryl was talking about from APTN's perspective, it's important that voices in indigenous programming are heard with respect to news.

I will leave it at that, because that's kind of what we're about. I'll let the organizations that actually have news teams, news services and whatnot speak to the authenticity of journalism.

I'll throw it to you. It's not my role to do that, but....

**David Myles:** Go ahead, Ms. McKenzie.

**Cheryl McKenzie:** With the demands of daily journalism and going to air, like we were talking about, we broadcast our newscasts twice a day, whether we're ready or not. That TV screen is going to go black unless we're on the air. There are lots of demands on our time.

In the smaller indigenous news outlets, they talk about going out to communities to consult with them and talk about what kinds of stories they want to have. They ask them for their pitches and what they think of their coverage.

We have done some of that in focus groups, but it's very hard to find the time and resources to do that when we're struggling to go to air every day to keep that screen from going black.

[*Translation*]

**David Myles:** Ms. Carignan, my question is for you.

Do you think the Canadian public understands what journalism is as a profession?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Canadians have a great deal of misunderstanding about the journalistic profession.

As I mentioned earlier, even journalists have trouble understanding whether they are journalists. I've heard columnists say that they weren't journalists because they were columnists. However, they are opinion journalists. Imagine how hard it is for the general public to understand the definition, especially at a time when influencers claim to be journalists. Other people comment on the news and say that they are not journalists, but rather commentators and interpretive writers. In Quebec, we have many influencers, like Al-explique and Farnell Morisset, who don't claim to be journalists, but people don't always keep things in perspective. It's very complicated, and the media also has responsibilities in that regard.

Last year, I attended the Semaines de la presse et des médias. At the event, journalists wondered how to regain public trust. I told them that they too had to explain their journalistic approach. In reports and articles, journalists would do well to provide a little more detail explaining how they got their information and who they spoke to. It's a matter of educating the public through information so that people understand. I also think that the proximity of journalists and the media to the public is really important to maintain that connection and that trust. That means that we should be present in communities and hold meet-and-greet events. It's not always easy, but it's important.

You were talking earlier about ombuds and self-regulating organizations. When I teach, I notice that I have communications students who are interested in journalism. In the first class, I ask them what an ombud or the Conseil de presse du Québec is, and they have no idea. However, if they don't know that the organization exists, they can't file a complaint with it. Also, not knowing or understanding the mechanisms doesn't help build trust. That leads me to say that these mechanisms are really misunderstood, so we need to promote them. The media, which doesn't have a code of ethics or equivalent, would at least benefit from showing that it is adopting good practices.

In short, there is certainly a lack of understanding at the moment.

• (0945)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor.

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

Ms. Carignan, in your opening remarks and afterwards, you referred to a report on indigenous media that you contributed to and prepared along with Quebec's department of culture and communications.

Is that report available anywhere? Would you be able to provide that to the committee so that we can see it? I think it's very relevant to what we're discussing today.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** It's relevant, yes. The report was not made public. It was submitted to Quebec's department of culture and communications, but the department gave me permission to pass it along if I was asked. I believe there will be no objection at all to my sending it to the committee, so I will be pleased to do so.

This report paints a picture of the representation of these media outlets, their challenges and their experiences. It is somewhat limited because, during the pandemic, it was very hard to get all the information on the ground. However, the report reveals challenges that I think are being handled very well by my colleagues today.

**Martin Champoux:** It would be very useful for the committee to have access to it. If ever there is a problem, since this meeting is public, Mathieu Lacombe will tell us immediately because I'm sure he listens to us.

I want to go back to the end of our conversation earlier. We talked about Radio-Canada's decision to offer RDI content on Prime Video. Obviously, given the time we had, we weren't able to finish the discussion, but I wanted to add something to it, which is that the issue of funding the public broadcaster often comes up on

the agenda. I know that there are currently plans to review our public broadcaster's mandate, but also its funding model.

In your opinion, is that the solution?

I'm not just talking about discoverability and the fact that RDI content ends up on Prime Video. I'm also talking about all the challenges related to advertising, competition with other media and the availability of advertising content for media outlets that could benefit more from it if, for example, those revenue sources were removed from Radio-Canada's funding model.

Do you have an opinion on the funding model we should put in place for CBC/Radio-Canada?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** I don't think that robbing CBC/Radio-Canada is going to solve a problem for other media. I think we need to find other resources and other solutions, since CBC/Radio-Canada isn't rolling in cash right now either. There are quite a few budget cuts, so we have to find other ways of doing things. We can deliberate forever about the amounts that should be allocated to CBC/Radio-Canada for digital initiatives, for example. However, I'm not saying that we shouldn't review certain things and certain types of advertising.

The Amazon issue is clearly a problem, but I think we need to find other initiatives to help community media, minority language media, local media and regional media operate. We also need recurrent funding sources and funding for technological solutions for communications and training. In addition, resource tax credits should be created.

I believe that the solution is not to make cuts, but rather to try to be creative and find solutions for the others.

**Martin Champoux:** I would now like to address the issue of media assistance, also in relation to Radio-Canada funding. We won't necessarily dwell on that, but I think we should move CBC/Radio-Canada's funding away from the government. What I mean by that is that it's okay for CBC/Radio-Canada to be funded publicly, but that funding should be at arm's length from the government to distance the public's perception of government influence.

It's the same thing for media support. We've heard comments here today about how people feel that, if they accept government funding, they are beholden to the government and have to censor themselves a bit or be careful in their coverage of government affairs to please the government and not lose their subsidies.

Is there a way to put in place effective government support for the media world in general while moving away from the perception of the influence of funding on media coverage?

• (0950)

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Absolutely. Several reports have been produced by commissions concerned with the future and funding of the media. I am thinking in particular of the Payette report, which was published in Quebec a few years ago. It specifically highlighted the fact that an independent body could not only manage funds for the media, but also act as an observer to highlight certain problems that may arise in the media and demonstrate that there is a social responsibility and that recurring issues in the media can be addressed and discussed publicly. This is something that bodies such as the Quebec Press Council do not currently do. They do not take the initiative to address problems; they simply deal with the complaints they receive. Having an independent body that manages the funding and raises issues would help foster public trust. This has been highlighted in various reports. I am thinking of the Payette commission's report, but there are certainly other commissions that have highlighted the importance of having an independent body. It would demonstrate that the government will not interfere with the media, it would help to gain public trust, and it would allow the media to have greater confidence in public funding.

I invite you to take another look at these solutions, which have often been shelved and forgotten, but were nonetheless interesting.

**Martin Champoux:** I've barely three minutes left, so I—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Oh, oh!

That was interesting and very important.

[*English*]

Mrs. Thomas, you have five minutes.

**Rachael Thomas:** Thank you.

I'm going to return to my questions for the Canadian Ethnic Media Association. I feel we got cut a little bit short.

I want to return to news coverage around the situation in Iran and also pertaining to the mass number of people who have come together in places like Toronto and other urban centres across this country in solidarity with the people of Iran who are contending for their freedom from an extremely hostile regime. That coverage within mainstream media, particularly the CBC, has been extremely biased. Many members of the Iranian Canadian community feel that and are upset by it. They have made that known.

In your estimation, both as an Iranian Canadian and as someone who is within the media landscape, why is it that such frustration is growing in your community?

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** First of all, let me say that I am a Canadian Iranian, because this is a country I chose. I didn't have a choice regarding the other one. Obviously, I went to school in the U.S. and then ended up in Canada. We didn't come here for economic reasons. We came here for political reasons. I left that country 46 years ago, and I've never been back. I'm going to say that I love this country and it's my home. Even if things change over there, I won't be going back. This is my home. This is the same sentiment shared by, I would say, 90% of the Iranians here. This is our country. Everything belongs to us. We work here. We pay taxes for the CBC and everything.

When it comes to actually being treated like Canadians, all of a sudden, we are not Canadian anymore. That's why the frustration exists. If you follow the situation with the rallies you mentioned... I've been in touch with the mayors, police departments and everybody. They've never seen anything like it in Canadian history. You had 570,000 people coming to the longest street in the world. Not only did they not have even one incident, but they also cleaned the streets to make sure. Why is that? It's because this is our home. This is our country. In return, we didn't get any kind of media coverage. We got a reaction from the premier. He said that if you ever want to do a rally, take a page from the Iranian community that this is how to do it. There was not even one incident in all the major rallies we had.

In return, we expect some kind of response telling our story. I attended every one of them, by the way. Last Sunday, in front of the U.S. consulate, you should have been there. It was as if everybody was American, Canadian or Persian. Come back to that. We expected that major media would give us coverage. After all, we belong to you and you belong to us. That's why we're disappointed. Normally, we let it go. It's not the first time, by the way. Throughout 46 years, it's been ignored globally—murder or whatever it is. The numbers say 30,000 or 40,000, but the actual number is 97,000 youth being massacred in two nights. It still didn't stop because it continued with mass executions after that, done to the people who were arrested.

That's why we want this story to get out there. After all, we want international support, which we are getting to some degree. The whole globe understands what we have been going through for 46 years. You expect the CBC's major headlines to tell our story. Don't ignore us.

• (0955)

**Rachael Thomas:** I'm sorry. I have limited time.

What is the danger to your community when mainstream media doesn't tell the truth, when they don't report the story as it actually happens?

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** The danger to the community is that this story hasn't been told for 46 years. That government is still there. It's not like they've been doing it for the first time, these past two months. They've been doing it for the past 46 years, but that news never got out in any way. CNN is another one. In fact, now people are questioning it. How come nobody can go to Iran except CNN? We don't have Internet. How can CNN report from Iran? We are living in an era when everybody is smart. Everybody can get their information. You're talking about journalism. Everybody with a camera is a journalist now.

Come back to that. Yes, it's the first time people are paying attention to what we've been going through for the past 46 years. That's why it becomes frustrating. That's why you expect your friends to tell you, "We are here to help you." When they ignore you.... This is the same thing that happens with the CBC.

Madeline.

**Madeline Ziniak:** I want to add that this is where the authenticity of ethnic media comes in. This is why it's very important to have that perspective on the various diverse communities in Canada. We want support in order to help us do our job of entrusting information with audiences in their own language—to the ethnocultural communities in Canada.

Our role is very important. This is why we're here saying that we're a specific, distinct category, the independent ethnic producer base. We would like to have that support to do our job.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ntumba, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Omelus, I would like to return to the question asked by my colleague Mr. Généreux regarding the \$100 million allocated to the media, part of which goes to CBC/Radio-Canada.

You replied that you had a good relationship with CBC/Radio-Canada. In a few words, can you explain to us how these relations with CBC/Radio-Canada are built, so that the media can better understand why it is beneficial to have these relations?

[*English*]

**Mike Omelus:** Partnerships are incredibly important in the Canadian broadcasting landscape. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without having those strong partnerships, not only with CBC/Radio-Canada—which helps us with commissioning certain content—but also with Bell Media and other organization. The funding is not there to do scripted drama and the high-quality, high-calibre programming that we offer to our viewers.

That allows us in turn to fulfill other parts of our mandate, for example, 62 commissions every single year. We do stories that really are unheard, or would not be heard without our efforts. We've actually done a documentary in a language spoken at the time by fewer than 35 people, Tahltan. That was the closing graphic on the screen. This is the first time the Tahltan language has ever been broadcast. It is spoken by fewer than 35 people. Why is that on a national network? It's there because our mission is so broad. We do stories for mainstream audiences, for indigenous audiences and for people whose stories have not been heard. Those partnerships are critical to helping us do that.

[*Translation*]

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Rezvanifar, first of all, I would like to express my sympathy regarding the situation in Iran.

I heard the question from my colleague Ms. Thomas regarding the coverage of the recent march, which was not reported by the mainstream media. She went on to say that the media were not telling the truth, but what I heard you say was that this event had not been covered.

Does the fact that your event was not covered mean that the truth is not being told, or is it simply that the media did not cover your event? I would like you to answer me in a few words.

• (1000)

[*English*]

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** Did you ask if the question is not covered or is not telling the truth? Which one is it? I didn't get your question.

[*Translation*]

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** You said there was no media coverage of your event. However, my colleague said that the media did not tell the truth. Was the march not covered by the media, or did the media report false information? That is what I want to know from you.

[*English*]

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** Thank you. That's a good question. In fact, it's a very good question.

I would say both of them. There are two sides to what is happening in Iran. There's a pro-government and an anti-government side. The anti-government is us, and it's the whole world that's in solidarity with us.

In the first part, it did not receive the coverage it should have received by major media. The second one is kind of interesting because most of my colleagues, Canadian Iranians, are frustrated because the other side, the pro-government, received more coverage than the anti-government side. In fact, sometimes you listen to it and you wonder, how about the other side?

I understand that you need to balance it. Obviously, you're providing information. You leave it to your audience to understand what's going on.

Now I would say it's probably about 30% versus 70%, the 70% being pro coverage of all this stuff and 30% being what they have to cover. That's why credibility comes into question. Is it biased or is it unbiased? We have reached the point where the reaction or demonstration in front of CBC tells you what kind of conclusion people have reached.

[*Translation*]

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Carignan, we are hearing what is happening in the media regarding columnists, journalists, reporters, YouTubers and all those people.

Have we reached the stage where we need to hold a national conference on the media and journalism? What are your comments on this?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** I think it would be a good idea to take stock of the state of the press and to work together to find more structured solutions to tackle the media crisis, the crisis of trust and the various forms of content distribution that do not fall within the scope of journalism, and create competition and cause confusion.

We also need to find solutions. Earlier, I heard people talking about pooling resources. I think this is an option that deserves to be explored in greater depth and given further consideration. Recently, the biggest journalistic investigations have benefited greatly from the pooling of resources by journalists from different media outlets. They have worked together to gain the means to delve deeper into their subject and carry out an investigation. They pooled their resources and involved journalists who are familiar with local situations and who can speak in different media about these experiences, which may be misunderstood by journalists who do not have access to the field or to the communities.

These are successful solutions, and we should probably take a moment to think about more structured solutions and pooling our resources.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

We will have one quick lightning round to finish off, with two minutes for each party.

Monsieur Champoux.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux:** Madam Chair, it is 10:03 a.m. and we began the meeting at 8:20 a.m. That gives us just over two minutes per group, as we would normally have 16 or 17 minutes remaining.

**The Chair:** All right. Let's give five minutes to each party.

[English]

I'll start with the Conservatives.

Which of you would like to take the five minutes?

**Rachael Thomas:** I'll come back to ethnic media here, just to round out this conversation.

One thing CEMA stated in a press release was:

Independent third-language producers are excluded from existing federal programs such as the Canada Media Fund, Google News Fund, Local Journalism Initiative, and the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit.

Obviously, there has been an environment of exclusion created around media funding. The government has positioned itself to choose winners and losers, in terms of who's in and who's out. Then, interestingly enough, it's not only in terms of who's in and who's out with regard to funding but, then, also who gets to ask the government questions and gets access to the press gallery. When a government puts itself in that position, they ultimately begin to influence the message that gets put out to the general public, which I believe is a very dangerous place to be. I believe most of you on this panel would agree with that. The last thing we want is a state-run media. We want to keep it independent. We want journalists to have freedom to exercise their discretion and to be true to the story as it happened rather than taking a certain narrative or angle.

CEMA is in an interesting place, of course, because these third-language initiatives are offering news from a place of wanting to tell the story in the language that is desired by those who are watching these different programs, and wanting to do so, I believe, with as little bias as possible. However, again, I come back to the fact that the government has put itself in a position where it is choosing

winners and losers. I'm wondering how this inequality, in terms of funding and government choice, impacts the ability of Canadians and, in particular, ethnic Canadians, to access accurate information.

• (1005)

**Madeline Ziniak:** Thank you very much for the comments and the question.

We're so important in bringing forward an ethnocultural perspective from a Canadian perspective. We have seasoned journalists who have had experience internationally and now are here in Canada, like Kiu is.

The whole media landscape has changed in that there is support for many entities. We have even asked different government representatives if there should be a multilingual CBC, if there should be a multilingual TVO. We've gone down every path.

We are the underdog. Everyone is here because they're passionate about democracy and about reflecting community leadership that does not get airtime in traditional media. The fact is that the CRTC hasn't looked at the ethnic policy, for example, since the early 1990s. We need our rightful place, in the broadcasting system, to be able to express our perspectives, especially at a time when the world is so turbulent, and to contribute to the dynamics of Canadian citizenry.

The broadcasting system recognizes independent production companies, broadcast entities and community radio stations, but does not recognize the independent ethnic producer. This is not helping us or assisting us in contributing to Canadian events. The coverage is still very sparse at times, and the perspective that is allowed is sometimes stifled. It is at these times when our role is extremely important.

Kiu, do you want to add something?

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** I would like to follow up.

You have to understand the nature of what we produce. I have interviewed prime ministers on my program. We have representatives of police departments. People from all levels of government have been guests on my program.

Why are we doing it? We want to teach the newcomers to our community to integrate with these people.

I could put on shows from home. I'm not doing that. I know my colleagues are doing the same thing, too. We want it to be the conduit between the government and our community. We've been doing it for the past 33 years, as I said, without any kind of funding.

When the election comes or when certain major issues come up, they know what my telephone number is. They call and ask for help, and we do that.

We have had more than 50 Zoom calls over the past two years with government officials. We even hired lobbyists. We got everything. Nothing happened. Interestingly enough, when we are on Zoom, it seems like they are just hearing from us for the first time. What have you been doing there? Some of them think that we're already getting funding. We had to educate during all of those 50 Zoom calls about who we are, what we are doing and how long we've been doing it.

It's kind of sad because I heard and I read that New York State in the U.S. has funding for ethnic media, and they're a melting pot. They are not a multicultural society. They even have funding for their third language programming. Here, it's kind of sad. In fact, somehow it's kind of disappointing.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Fares Al Soud:** I'm spoiled for choice with this new-found time, so I will try to ask questions of everyone. My first question is for Mr. Errington and Mr. Goldstein.

Technological advancement, artificial intelligence and stepping into that space is often highlighted as a negative, particularly in this context. However, I imagine that in your specific sector, there are actually significant opportunities with the use of artificial intelligence and technological advancements for ensuring accessibility across a variety of spaces.

I'd like to hear you speak on that, if possible.

**David Errington:** We've looked at the use of AI with respect to description, to captioning and most recently with ASL and QSL. There's opportunity there to do it quicker and make it more ubiquitous across platforms, and that's great.

I will remind you that the different disability groups are really hesitant to adopt AI as a fix-all for everything. QSL and ASL providers want to make sure there's a human element to it. It's the same with description; it can't just be an automatic, voice-over dubbing thing. They want to make sure there's a human element to it.

It's a tool that can be used, but I don't think it's a fix-all for everything. There has to be some form of human element. That's what the disability community is asking for.

• (1010)

**Fares Al Soud:** You'll have to forgive me. Maybe it's a slightly redundant question. Why is there that hesitancy with regard to the human element?

**David Errington:** With the mechanics of description, they want to make sure that the content flows. It's an art form. You're not reading a newspaper article to them if you're describing a movie or whatever it could be. From an ASL and QSL standpoint, it's a culture. It's a language for them, so they want to make sure the nuances in that language are captured. I don't know if AI does that yet. It could in the future, but we're looking at all this.

We're looking at how to turn content quicker but at the same time respect the needs of the community.

**Fares Al Soud:** That's fantastic. Thank you.

Taking a slight shift in terms of the question, do you find that as news consumption increasingly begins to shift toward digital platforms, accessibility standards are keeping pace with the technological change?

**David Errington:** No. Well, yes and no. How does that sound?

From a broadcasting standpoint—like, as a linear service—Canada leads the world. Major platforms like YouTube have come a long way with respect to adding description, captioning and things like that to their content, but they still have lots of work to do.

Without the regulatory and without an organization like us... We put standards in place. We've done that for the Canadian broadcasting system. We'd be more than happy to do that for digital platforms across Canada to make sure that it's not left behind and it doesn't lag.

As we transition from linear services to digital services, it's important that accessibility and the standards that go along with it are a part of it. It's a work in progress.

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carignan, I would like to return to the conversation you had earlier with Mr. Champoux.

You raised several interesting points, notably underqualified or part-time journalism, the rise of opinion pieces and the lack of commitment to good faith journalism. At the same time, there is a certain reluctance with regard to government intervention.

How can we help the sector without intervening too much and without undermining journalistic independence? I am thinking of your example of an independent agency that would distribute funds.

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Indeed, I think it would be interesting to explore a solution involving an external body that could distribute funds, and as I was saying, act as an observatory, thereby highlighting issues in the media and advising and helping them to improve their practices. When I was at the Quebec Press Council, we would sometimes receive calls from journalists who were unsure what to do or how to react in certain situations. There were no resources available apart from the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, the Quebec professional federation of journalists. So this sort of initiative could be a good option.

Obviously, structures need to be put in place within the media themselves; that is to say, we must ensure we have clear codes of ethics and structures in which there is independence between managers and journalists, to guarantee journalistic independence. This is a truly important structure that must be promoted and explained to the public.

At the moment, there is a great deal of confusion. In particular, we conducted an investigation into embedded video advertising with one of our teams, and we saw that this was a practice being introduced to resolve certain financial issues. It involves promoting content funded or paid for by private interests. This plays on the public's confusion. These are the kinds of practices currently fuelling mistrust, and they stem from a lack of separation between journalists and editorial managers. Such practices must be avoided.

**Fares Al Soud:** Perfect. Thank you very much, Ms. Carignan.

[English]

I represent the beautiful riding of Mississauga Centre. It is one of the most diverse in the country. Ethnic and community media outlets are among the primary sources of news and information in languages other than English and French. In your experience, Mr. Rezvanifar, what happens when newcomers, for instance, don't have reliable access to ethnic media? I think of things like civic engagement or opportunity finding.

**The Chair:** Give a quick answer, please. We're out of time.

**Kiumars Rezvanifar:** What happens to them? They're lost. As a matter of fact, I lived in Mississauga when I moved here from the U.S. They're lost.

I could go on, because I've seen a lot of incidents like that. They call us to help. They ask for help. They don't have anybody, especially if they're refugees. They have nobody here. We have become their eyes and ears.

Bear in mind that some of them come here and get into trouble. They don't know things. We have helped people in the hospital. Through my program, we help them. We put them in touch with government officials and with government bodies that will help them. During that period of time, immigration is not an easy task. It's a little sad.

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

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

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

I would like to thank the witnesses once again for attending. Today's meeting has again been truly interesting.

Ms. Carignan, earlier, at the start of the meeting, you spoke about the Online News Act. You said that this act was important and should even be strengthened. I share your view. The act should be strengthened and it should also be refined.

Furthermore, there are also calls for an agreement with Meta to enable news to be found on their platform once again. Many influencers, of course, need these platforms to distribute their content, but regional media outlets need them too. I am thinking of the weekly newspapers that used to publish a great deal of their content on these platforms and gained a significant reach thanks to them.

There may be slightly less rigidity on the part of certain players in the news media sector, but do you think there is a need to reopen this discussion and, possibly, to make compromises to allow differ-

ent voices to be heard a little more widely on Meta's platforms, in particular?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** I believe it is necessary to reopen this discussion with Meta and the other major platforms. We should also look at other platforms that are taking up an increasingly significant place in the online ecosystem, and we should meet with them as well to hold them accountable and see how they can collaborate.

We should certainly start the discussion with Meta. I believe the company itself has lost a portion of its audience in Canada. This might be a good time to talk.

You are right in saying that regional and community media have been hardest hit by these cuts, as they could not pivot as easily as others to create an app and attract as many people to their own platform. That is why, earlier, I was talking about a shared solution. We need to pool platforms or resources for smaller media outlets, because they do not have the same resources as some major media organizations, which have been able to create their own structures, apps and social media channels. Now, they even have the means to create their own artificial intelligence tools, while other media outlets are struggling to maintain their journalistic activities.

**Martin Champoux:** Let's talk about artificial intelligence, indeed. It's the big elephant in a room that's getting smaller.

Artificial intelligence is, of course, fuelled by content. We have a kind of double-edged sword here. If we decide not to allow our content to be used to feed artificial intelligence engines, we condemn francophone culture and the francophone media to being drowned out in the North American English-speaking ocean. This is also likely one of Meta's motivations for enabling finding journalistic content online. Indeed, indirectly, this would allow it to feed its artificial intelligence tools.

I know it's a fantastic technology. I know we won't be able to escape it and that it will be useful in many ways. I know it will make life easier, but it will also bring many ethical problems and questions that we do not yet know.

How should we move forward in this area? At present, what place should we give it in journalism? That is essentially what we are discussing today. What role can we afford to give to artificial intelligence, particularly in a context where certain regions are poorly covered by the media due to a lack of manpower and the disappearance of media outlets covering regional news? At present, what role can we give to artificial intelligence as a tool for journalistic coverage?

**Marie-Eve Carignan:** Indeed, we have no choice; we must make the shift towards artificial intelligence. It's here, and we're not going to go backwards.

I was reassured to hear Mr. Myles mention earlier that human intervention was necessary. Journalistic codes of ethics have begun to incorporate artificial intelligence by stating that its use must be declared. Its use must therefore be transparent and, ultimately, always subject to human intervention—that is, verification by a human. This is because these tools are subject to cultural biases and programming biases. They are not immune to errors or hallucinations.

It is therefore important that journalistic work remains fundamentally human, that there are checks and balances, and that we do not leave it to a machine and to external parties who have programmed these tools to control our content, especially as we can see that artificial intelligence will not produce the same results if it has been programmed in China or the United States, for example. So, there are significant cultural biases that it is important to be aware of in order to make the most of artificial intelligence in the media.

Now, we are seeing that many media outlets are beginning to integrate it. These outlets sometimes try to develop their own artificial intelligence tools, but they need the resources to do so. That may be a solution, but in that case, will the biggest players still have the advantage? That is one of my fears.

So, we need to see how we can pool resources to make them shared. Obviously, in culture as in journalism, the whole issue of intellectual property arises. Perhaps the discussion with the major platforms will also need to include artificial intelligence.

• (1020)

**Martin Champoux:** That is indeed still the case: The largest players are always the first to have access to new technologies, which probably further weakens the smaller players. I see Mr. Omelus nodding. I think it has always been this way, and I believe it is always the responsibility of society and the authorities to protect smaller players to ensure adequate news coverage.

Madam Chair, I have no speaking time left, have I?

**The Chair:** Your speaking time has elapsed, yes.

**Martin Champoux:** And yet I still had five or six good questions.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** No, that's all. Thank you very much.

I extend my thanks to all of today's witnesses.

[*English*]

Thank you to everyone for participating.

If there's something you forgot to say or something you think about later, or if you have documents that have been requested by members or other documents you think we should see, please send them to our committee via our clerk. We'll all be able to read that information and incorporate it into our study.

You are excused.

I would like to ask members quickly, if we all agree, if we can add at least one more meeting to this study, because there are so many witnesses who would like to testify. I think it behooves us to add at least one more meeting at this point so that we can include those voices.

Is everyone okay with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

The meeting is adjourned.

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