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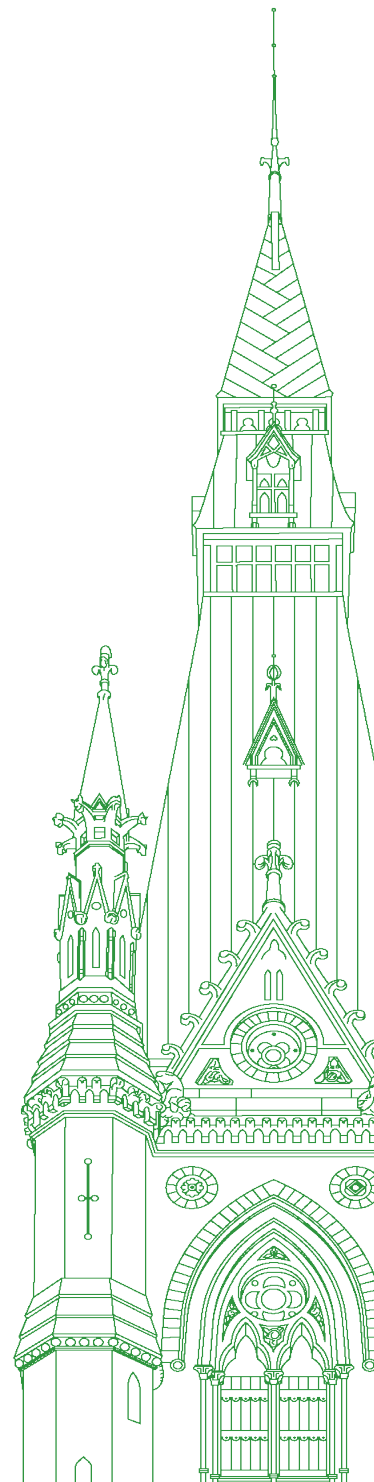
Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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Chair: Lisa Hepfner



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• (0815)

[English]

The Chair (Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 31 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Before we begin, I would ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines written on the updated cards on the table in front of them. These measures are in place to prevent feedback incidents and protect the health and safety of all participants, especially our interpreters. You will notice a QR code on the card. It links to a short awareness video.

Pursuant to the routine motion adopted by the committee, I can confirm that the witness online has completed the required connection tests in advance of this meeting.

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.

We have with us today in the room l'Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec, Léa Villalba et Samuel Lamoureux. We also have Jane Robertson from the Canadian Media Guild. Welcome.

From the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, we have Éric-Pierre Champagne and Stéphanie Mac Farlane.

Hopefully we won't get confused because we have Éric St-Pierre and Éric-Pierre Champagne in the room today.

From the Independent Press Gallery, we have Sheila Gunn Reid.

From the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, Peter Menzies joins us online. Welcome, sir.

We will start with opening statements. You have five minutes as a group if you're here with an organization, or five minutes on your own if you're here independently.

We'll start with l'Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec.

[Translation]

The floor is yours for five minutes.

Léa Villalba (Freelance Journalist, Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec): On behalf of the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec, the AJIQ, I thank you for giving us this forum in which to describe our reality and our needs.

The culture sections and the special sections of *Le Devoir*, professional periodicals, *L'Actualité*, Radio-Canada, podcasts. I could go on. Did you know that a hundred media outlets in Quebec and in Canada are filled with the talent and professionalism of often invisible freelancers?

Our reality is to deliver research files, in-depth articles, photos and radio reports and to be paid only when the finished product is delivered. Research, interviews, writing, corrections and work on location are all obvious and vital tasks in quality journalism. But as freelancers, we are not paid to do them. Our per-page rate, meaning 250 words, has not changed for 10 years, for 20 years for some media. Some still pay the equivalent of \$50 per page, often hardly more. According to a 2022 survey, 29% of us still, even today, work for minimum wage. Freelancers in Quebec earn a salary of about \$31,000 per year, despite our strong qualifications. Eighty per cent of us have university degrees. To top it all off, late payments are unfortunately not uncommon.

Finally, Meta's block on journalistic content in Canada does nothing to improve our situation. The impact on media visibility and, by extension, on our work is considerable.

The media depend on our expertise a great deal. They do not have the budgets they need to rely wholly on their staff journalists to fill all their pages and to meet all their editorial needs. Many call on freelancers to provide full and varied coverage. Freelancers are neither staff, nor artists, nor business people. We fall between the cracks in the system.

What is sad in all this is that many freelancers are tending to reduce their freelance work and turn to other endeavours because they are afraid that they will not be able to pay the rent or put food on the table at the end of the month. In Quebec, almost 60% of independent journalists have some other professional activity. This is killing journalism, slowly but surely. Fewer freelancers means fewer journalists and therefore less protection for democracy.

As links in the media chain, we are free, of course. But do we have to be the weak links?

For 35 years, the AJIQ has been arguing for the improvement of working conditions for freelance journalists as indispensable information workers. But we need you, as members of the government, to implement measures in support of our cause.

What are the solutions?

The conditions under which the \$100 million that Google pays to all information media could be adjusted. For some reason unknown to us, freelancers were excluded from the criteria by which that money is distributed. The federal government correct its course by putting freelancers back on the list of eligible journalists. A number of local, indigenous and ethnic media are also excluded from the funding. This does not meet the spirit of the law, which stipulates that the money must be distributed fairly and in a way that represents Canada's entire media ecosystem.

The Canadian journalism labour tax credit should also be redistributed. Independent media are growing in numbers and they too count on the work of freelancers. To repeat, they are as many journalists as those on the payroll of the major media outlets. Let us not forget that, in Canada, the federal government pays 25% of the salary of staff journalists, but nothing for independent ones.

Could we not imagine employment status like the casual entertainment workers in France? Freelancers would be eligible for employment insurance, which would kick in after a certain number of journalism contracts. In that way, they would feel less stress the next month even if an article were not picked up. And they could stay in journalism.

In recent years, we have been fortunate to have a bursary program established by the provincial government. If Ottawa had a program like that, many freelancers could be fairly paid for their work in supplying media.

One of our strongest claims is still for a legislated fee schedule. The schedule could, of course, be adjusted for the size, the circulation and the budget of the media outlets. It would accommodate different formats such as podcasts and lengthy reporting. In an ideal world, the fees would be adjusted for inflation each year.

Finally, independent journalists should be included in legislation that already exists. This would allow them to properly negotiate their working conditions. It would also require the media industry to pay decent basic fees, as is the case for members of the Union des artistes. In 2023, there was an attempt to have us included in the Status of the Artist Act. Unfortunately, the attempt was not successful. A separate act for independent journalists could be a possibility, since our working conditions are specific and unique.

As a matter of urgency, the government and the entire media industry must recognize the essential contribution of freelance journalists in Quebec and in Canada and work with the specific aim of improving the conditions under which they work and live. Measures to ensure that independent journalism survives are required. Supporting freelancers means ensuring the diversity, the quality and the vitality of information as a fundamental pillar of our democracy.

As members of the government, you alone are in a position to ensure that we, as the free links in the media chain, are no longer

the weak links, but rather full participants, with appropriate recognition and support.

● (0820)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

We will now go to Jane Robertson from the Canadian Media Guild.

You have five minutes. Go ahead.

Jane Robertson (President, Canadian Media Guild): Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today.

The Canadian Media Guild represents—

The Chair: I'm sorry. We may have some audio issues. We'll resolve those first.

We're going to suspend for a minute.

● (0820)

(Pause)

● (0825)

The Chair: All right, we will resume.

I apologize to you, Jane Robertson. You can start over. I'll give you your five minutes from the top.

Jane Robertson: Once again, Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today.

The Canadian Media Guild represents thousands of media workers across Canada. These can be journalists, producers, editors, technicians, digital creators, administration staff and more working at institutions like APTN, CBC/Radio-Canada, The Canadian Press, TVO, TFO, BuzzFeed and Canada's National Observer, just to name a few.

To identify our members' priorities, we conducted an online survey in February. The findings provide a timely snapshot of media workers whose labour underpins Canada's cultural sovereignty. The survey results, while not surprising, were deeply concerning. Permanent jobs are being replaced with contract, casual and freelance work offering fewer protections.

Media workers are expected to produce more content across more platforms around the clock, but their hearts are still in the work, with 90% saying they are proud to work in Canadian media and 87% believing their work is valuable. The commitment to public service remains strong, but the conditions they face do not: 88% are concerned about job security and describe the industry as unstable, and nearly everyone—99% of respondents—says wages must keep up with the cost of living, not because workers are seeking immense wealth but because they are trying to survive in this industry.

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the media sector in fundamental ways. Workers are concerned about AI systems being trained on their work without consent or compensation. The misuse of AI can destroy the audience's trust and take away meaningful work, and 90% of media workers say they want protections as technology and AI change their work.

Having the government defend existing copyright laws and put out transparent policies on AI use will help the public have more trust in the media sector. We encourage the government to include human content standard language around AI use in the Canadian journalism labour tax credit.

This tax credit has already helped sustain journalism jobs. Adding a human content standard will ensure the credit is supporting Canadian workers and not their artificial replacements. Supporting CBC/Radio-Canada is vital for protecting cultural sovereignty. Our public broadcaster provides local journalism where private media has withdrawn, reflects communities across the country and delivers trusted information, yet ongoing financial uncertainty has resulted in repeated layoffs, reduced local programming and increased precarity for workers.

Of our members, 92% support increasing CBC/Radio-Canada funding towards levels comparable with other G7 public broadcasters, and 85% support moving to legislated, stable, multi-year funding. We urge you to follow through on the 2025 government paper, "The Future of CBC/Radio-Canada". It provides a clear road map to protect and enhance our public broadcaster, independent of political change.

For many journalists, especially women, minorities and 2SLGBTQ+ members, the toxicity we face online and in person while doing our job is becoming overwhelming. Many are also routinely exposed to traumatic content, violence, tragedy and hate, leading to high rates of burnout, and 89% of members say they need supports in health, safety and mental well-being.

We urge the government to support stronger protections through the upcoming online harms act, particularly with journalist safety and mental health as explicit priorities. This would have to be a balanced approach to have harmful content removed from online platforms while not silencing charter-protected rights of freedom of expression or limiting freedom of the press.

Among media workers, 95% believe government action is essential to support the media sector—action like protecting both the Online News Act and the Online Streaming Act. We need you to resist pressure and coercive tactics in trade negotiations with the U.S. that seek to amend or water down this legislation.

Change happens all the time in the media. I started as a youngster, splicing film reels together with tape at a movie theatre. An early job for me was right here on Parliament Hill, as a physical camera operator for Senate committee meetings. I could now do a broadcast-quality video with the tech contents of my purse.

As media workers, we are all keenly aware of the inevitability of change. The Canadian Media Guild urges this committee to continue its leadership by centring workers in media policy decisions. This is not a workforce resisting change; this is a workforce asking for stability, fairness and a future.

Thank you.

● (0830)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The floor now goes to the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec.

Éric-Pierre Champagne and Stéphanie Mac Farlane, you have the floor together for five minutes.

Éric-Pierre Champagne (President, Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec): Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Éric-Pierre Champagne and I am the president of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, ou FPJQ. I have been a journalist for more than 30 years and I have been working at La Presse since 2001. I have been covering environmental issues for a dozen years.

With me is my colleague, Stéphanie Mac Farlane. She is vice-president of the FPJQ and editor-in-chief of Le Canada Français, a weekly founded in 1860 that serves the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu region.

The FPLQ has about 1,400 members working in various media professions. We are the largest association of journalists in Canada.

The first message I want to stress today is that without journalists, there is no journalism.

From every side, we often hear that journalism is dead. Nothing can be further from the truth. Despite the many difficulties, excellent journalism is very much alive in Quebec. I would even say that the quality of journalism in 2026 is superior to what was being done 10 or 20 years ago.

There are many examples, but I will provide just one as an illustration. Fifteen years ago, there were only a handful of investigative journalists in the media. Today, all the major media outlets in Quebec have investigative teams, not just a single journalist, regularly publishing stories of great public interest. Local and regional media, as well as new media, are also publishing impactful investigations, despite the lack of resources at their disposal.

Everything is far from perfect, but it must be admitted that true journalism is still very much alive, despite the many obstacles. In my view, that is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of the journalists in the Quebec media.

We at the FPJQ believe that the information produced by professional journalists is essential in a democratic society. In these times of polarization and disinformation, with artificial intelligence sweeping everything before it, we need journalists and quality journalism more than ever.

And yet we are facing a global phenomenon: the media business model is broken. At the moment in Canada, 70% to 80% of advertising revenue goes into the pockets of two foreign giants, Meta and Google. Let me ask you, what industry would manage to survive under those conditions? Those two giants have war machines that are allowing them to literally strangle the Canadian media ecosystem.

Nevertheless, public assistance, both federal and provincial, has helped to reduce the damage. Without that support, the picture would be very different.

We completely understand that, in the current financial situation, it is difficult for our governments to do more. They have to juggle a number of different priorities. That is why we are astonished to learn that advertisers can still deduct their publicity expenses on foreign platforms. The measure is in place as a way to promote Canadian media, but we fail to understand why corrections have not been made for foreign platforms, despite the repeated requests from the FPJQ and from other players in the media industry. Doing so would cost the Canadian government absolutely nothing.

The Online News Act, imperfect though it is, has produced results. Today, about 450 Canadian media organizations are sharing at least \$100 million from Google. It is high time for Meta to stop its detestable blocking of news on its platforms and pay Canadian media their fair share. We are asking the government not to negotiate a cut-rate agreement with a giant that spreads disinformation on its platforms.

Adapting copyright to this digital age also has to be done faster. Above all, our media must be protected from having their content destroyed by the giants of generative artificial intelligence. We too often forget that producing information comes at a cost, a significant cost. We cannot allow the tech giants to usurp journalistic content without the slightest compensation.

The overall situation remains a concern. In some regions of Quebec and Canada, we are slowly beginning to see media deserts. As you know, nature abhors a vacuum, so it will be quickly filled, probably with artificial intelligence, with all the dangers that entails.

The dangers are real. They are the elephant in this very room, one might say. So I invite us all to look beyond our partisan interests in order to serve the public interest that is so essential in this time of great upheaval.

● (0835)

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Next, we will hear from the Independent Press Gallery and Sheila Gunn Reid.

You have the floor for five minutes. Go ahead.

Sheila Gunn Reid (President, Independent Press Gallery): Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. My name is Sheila Gunn Reid. I am the president of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada, and I'm also the editor-in-chief of Rebel News.

The Independent Press Gallery supports independent journalists across the country with legal training, mentorship for young journalists and security resources, as working conditions for journalists in Canada become increasingly hostile.

In Canada today, if you don't take the money or join the club, you get shut out, or worse.

The Chair: Give us a minute. We have some sort of problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Champoux, you have a point of order?

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): There is still a problem with the sound. In the French, there's an echo, a duplication.

[English]

The Chair: We'll have to suspend for another moment.

I'll let you restart from the beginning when we come back.

● (0835)

(Pause)

● (0840)

The Chair: We're going to see if this works any better. The problem is that we have a delay through the translation, and there's also a bit of an echo.

I will remind all of the witnesses to make sure that if you take out your earpiece, place it far from the microphone. Sometimes that can cause a problem.

I'm going to keep talking to see if the problem has been resolved. Has it been resolved?

Is there still a problem? Do we have an echo? Can you hear me okay?

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: We are still hearing the floor channel underneath the French interpretation channel.

[English]

The Chair: We're hearing the floor audio at the same time as we're hearing the translation, which makes it very difficult for anyone to understand. We want to be able to understand our witnesses. It's very important to hear from you today.

Shall I keep talking? I'm not good at filibustering.

Mr. Champoux, can you speak instead?

Do you want him to speak in English? He's very good at that.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: Do you want me to speak in French and test the interpretation to see if the English channel has the same problem as the French channel? Are you hearing the floor channel at the same time as the English interpretation when people are speaking in French?

[English]

The Chair: We're going to try to manage. Maybe the witnesses, being cognizant of our audio problems this morning, could try to speak slowly and clearly, so that everyone understands everything they say.

Mr. Ntumba, go ahead.

[Translation]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): To be sure, I understand Mr. Champoux. I can hear the echo and it is not at all pleasant.

The Chair: Can we continue or not?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: It's better to go to English directly because listening to the interpretation with that echo is not pleasant.

[English]

The Chair: We'll try to continue. Please let me know if anyone misses anything important, and we'll go back and repeat it. We'll just try to manage that way.

Is everybody okay to proceed?

Mr. Champoux, go ahead.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: Do I understand that the problem is on both the French and English channels? Do we have the same problem, that we are hearing the floor channel as an echo?

• (0845)

Bernard Gagnéux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): The problem is with both the English channel and the French channel. I think we perhaps have to move a little way from the microphone and not speak too loudly. We can hear the interpreters fine. It's just that we can hear ourselves as background noise. There's no problem on the floor channel or the auxiliary channel.

The Chair: So everyone on this committee has to be bilingual.

[English]

Mr. Gagnéux is suggesting that we not speak too closely to the microphone or too loudly into the microphone.

Are we good to continue? All right.

I'm sorry, Ms. Gunn Reid. You have five minutes. Please continue.

Sheila Gunn Reid: Great.

I'm here on behalf of independent, reader-funded journalists who are being pushed out of Canada's media landscape, not by the market but by their own government. Canada already has a two-tiered media system. On one side are government-subsidized outlets. On

the other side are independent journalists who rely entirely on their market and their audience. We are increasingly denied equal access to both government and the public square.

Federal departments have decided who gets answers and who does not. An independent journalist was told by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada very recently that his organization does not qualify for these services. The services were answers to his questions. Global Affairs Canada has also done the same. The message is clear: If you're not approved, you're not entitled to answers.

The same pattern exists at the political level. We have seen elected officials refuse to answer questions from independent outlets. We have seen reporters arrested for attempting to question ministers. We have been denied access to federal leaders debates and forced to go to court, successfully twice, just to do our jobs. Increasingly, independent journalists are not just excluded; they're also treated like a problem to be managed.

The discrimination does not stop on Parliament Hill. Our journalists are routinely blocked from political events, not because we're disruptive but specifically because we're independent. At the Liberal convention, our journalists were refused accreditation. When they then were forced to conduct walk-and-talk interviews outside the venue, security was called on them at least twice—outside, in public, peacefully talking to people. In Edmonton, at Mark Carney's campaign kickoff, police were called on independent journalists simply for trying to ask questions—no disruption, no threat, just questions.

This is the pattern: Deny access, treat reporting like trespassing, and then escalate it to a security issue. Meanwhile, legacy outlets are waved through.

When independent journalists are shut out, it's not just reporters who are excluded; it's the millions of Canadians they represent. The distortion, however, goes deeper. The federal government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars subsidizing legacy media. The money overwhelmingly flows to outlets that already receive preferred treatment. This creates a closed loop. Subsidized media get access, and access reinforces their dominance. Independent media, who reject government funding as a matter of principle, are left to compete in a tilted market. I reiterate that we do not want these subsidies. We reject them, because government money in journalism is political contamination.

Government policy is also interfering with how we reach our audience. Legislation like the Online News Act has disrupted how news is shared online. When platforms block news links, independent outlets lose a critical connection to their audience.

Then there's Parliament Hill itself. The parliamentary press gallery, a taxpayer-supported institution made up largely of our competitors, controls access to the Hill. Independent journalists are routinely denied membership, blocking us from press conferences and daily government proceedings.

Let's be clear about what this system in Canada produces. Government decides who is a journalist. Government funds those it prefers. Gatekeepers control access to power. Policy limits how the rest of us reach the public. This is not a free press. According to Reporters Without Borders, Canada has fallen from eighth place in 2015 to 21st place in 2025.

• (0850)

Independent journalists are not asking for special treatment. We're asking for equal treatment. End discrimination in media access, ensure that no journalist is blocked from public institutions by their competitors, and stop using public policy to interfere with how independent media reach their audience. A free press is not funded, filtered and approved by the government; it is free to challenge it. Right now, that freedom is under pressure, and it's time to restore it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Next, we go online to the Macdonald-Laurier Institute.

Peter Menzies, you have the floor for five minutes, sir.

Peter Menzies (Senior Fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute): By now you have been informed by several people that the health of many news organizations in Canada is poor. The situation, if the mounting requests for subsidies are anything to go by—

The Chair: I'm sorry, sir. We have a point of order. I think it's because we don't hear you well in the room.

Mr. Myles, was that your point of order?

David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.): That's correct. I was wondering if we could just turn it up in the House, so we can hear it. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll see if it's the volume in the room that's the problem. You're our only online witness.

Could you speak again, sir? Start from the top, and we'll make sure that we can hear you.

Peter Menzies: Sure.

The cow jumped over the moon. The moon jumped over the cow. The cow jumped back over the moon and the moon jumped back over the cow. Then the cow jumped over the moon. How's that going?

Would you like a weather report? It's snowing here today. It's terrible. There's 20 centimetres of snow.

The Chair: All right. Please start from the beginning, sir. I'll start your time over.

Peter Menzies: Thank you very much.

By now, you've been informed by several people that the health of many news organizations in Canada is poor. The situation is that

if the mounting requests for subsidies are anything to go by, it is even more dire than it was in 2018, when publishers first convinced the government to get involved. That might indicate that while current solutions have provided hospice care for several companies, most journalists are now reliant on the corridors of power they are expected to patrol on the public's behalf.

Unless significant changes are made, that dependence is only going to grow stronger as the list of organizations asking for more money grows and grows. As it does, the playing field for the news industry will continue to be unstable and its content viewed with increasing suspicion. That, in turn, will suppress investment by innovators looking to create new, independent and sustainable 21st-century-appropriate platforms.

That has been the pattern since 2019, when the “temporary” five-year journalism labour tax credit for newspapers was introduced. Enhanced in 2023, it is now in its eighth year.

The local journalism initiative, which was initially announced as a five-year, \$50-million plan in 2019, also continues, enhanced.

The CRTC, meanwhile, is working on more financial support for broadcast-based news, while the CBC, the nation's largest employer of journalists, has received an additional \$150 million. Then there's the \$100-million Google fund, which partially offsets the loss of revenue created when Facebook was lost as a delivery platform. Of course, there is also the Canada periodical fund.

It adds up to a lot of money, but sooner or later news media will run out of other people's money to spend, so this is a good time to pause and reflect upon whether current approaches are achieving the desired public good outcomes, what those are, and what those who are experiencing success are doing differently.

If the public good is to sustain companies with broken business models, it must be accepted that this tilts the industrial playing field to the disadvantage of those trying to create sustainable, independent and trusted models. If, on the other hand, the public good the government is trying to support is a nation of well-informed citizens, an entirely fresh approach is needed. That begins with policy-makers developing an industry-wide policy platform focused on the 21st-century reality that all news media are converging on the Internet.

Surveys also indicate that a large plurality of Canadians worry that media dependence on government negatively impacts objectivity. Since 2018, trust in news in Canada has been in decline. Correlation is not always causation, of course, but this coincides with government funding of news organizations.

Alternative positive suggestions can be found in a Macdonald-Laurier Institute policy paper I co-authored, entitled “...and now, the news.” It details an alternative path forward to achieve a sustainable, trusted, innovative and independent news industry. I ask that you read it.

In the meantime, I propose the following steps to promote a sustainable, independent and trusted news industry. First, create a national news industry policy that views journalism organizations as a single sector. This would necessitate the industry forming a new all-encompassing association that could, instead of a government-appointed panel, determine what constitutes a qualified Canadian journalism organization.

Next, phase out direct subsidies and implement policies that not only encourage the production of news and employment of journalists but also ensure that what news is produced is actually consumed. Subsidizing consumers through enhanced subscription tax credits and/or tax deductions is agnostic, while encouraging news consumption, choice and competition. Portugal, for instance, pays for two-year digital news subscriptions for 15- to 18-year-olds.

Next, demand that companies benefiting from funding or government contracts are publicly accountable and prominently post details of these relationships; limit access to production-based benefits to not-for-profit organizations; insist that all recipients of direct taxpayer support provide space for rebuttal commentary, particularly as it applies to discussions of public policies impacting news organizations; and enhance copyright protections for news subscriptions.

The path the industry and the government are currently on is only going to produce increased demands for more golden handcuffs.

Thank you very much.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thanks to you.

We will now turn to questions from members, starting with MP Diotte for six minutes.

You have the floor, sir.

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

I want to start with Sheila Gunn Reid.

Sheila, you're both the editor-in-chief of Rebel News as well as president of the Independent Press Gallery. I know your organization has been in business since 2015. You're very well known, and you break news stories, yet you say you're being shut out by the Liberal government and others. Tell me a few specific examples of how you've been shut out.

Sheila Gunn Reid: I can speak directly to the Liberal Party of Canada. I mentioned in my opening statement that our reporters were denied accreditation at the most recent convention. They were subjected to doing walk and talks outside the venue. However, that's not the only way that we're shut out of being able to hold politicians to account on behalf of the public in this country.

Press galleries, including here in Ottawa and in legislatures across the country, keep our members from joining. Alberta is a specific exemption to that sort of practice. Even though the Alberta legislature press gallery voted to keep Rebel News journalists out, we were able to be accredited through the Speaker's office, because the Alberta government has a commitment to engaging with journalists across the political spectrum.

It is bizarre that a cabal of your competitors can get together after receiving government subsidies to protect their exclusive access to politicians. That's not how journalism is supposed to work.

Kerry Diotte: It seems that these days the vast majority of media outlets are getting direct funding from government. Isn't it inevitable that this would impact their objectivity?

Sheila Gunn Reid: We listened to the opening statement from the Canadian Media Guild, which implied very strongly that the majority of newsrooms in this country are government-subsidized, directly or passively, through tax credits through the qualified Canadian journalism organization tax credit structure. Where is the incentive, then, to hold the government to account, if your newsroom is reliant on the government for its survival?

● (0900)

Kerry Diotte: Tell us a bit about Rebel News and the size of your organization. I would guess that you might be a larger organization than some of the press gallery members here in Ottawa. Can you give me some specifics about your audience, your reach, etc.?

Sheila Gunn Reid: Depending on the day, we are Canada's largest independent news organization. We have journalists all across the country. We have journalists in Australia.

I'll give you an example. During the “freedom convoy”, despite the fact that the CBC building is right across the street from where we're sitting right now, our coverage of the “freedom convoy” dwarfed the CBC's, because we had independent journalists, first-hand, in the streets, talking to people.

The media landscape is changing. You don't need satellite trucks or expensive newsrooms anymore, yet these organizations are not experiencing the market correction I think they so rightly deserve because of the government subsidies to failing news organizations. They are not innovating, because the government is hindering that innovation through subsidies.

Kerry Diotte: I was a member of the press gallery in Alberta, and I find it personally really galling that the Ottawa press gallery won't allow you to be a member. How does that even happen?

Sheila Gunn Reid: The press gallery itself is self-governing, but with that self-governance comes a certain level of protectionism. If working journalists in this country, from all parts of the political spectrum, want to hold their government to account, they should be able to. They should be able to work on the Hill. They should be able to scrum politicians from the left and the right and speak to their audience. The fact that this doesn't happen is reflected in the failing of the media landscape. Nobody watches the mainstream media anymore.

The viewership of the CBC is a statistical rounding error. Why do they think that is? It's because it does not reflect the diversity of this country and the political spectrum, regardless of the fact that the CBC mandate says it should. People are not tuning in and watching the mainstream media anymore, because they don't think the media cares about them. They are not being treated honestly by the media. That's why the media keeps coming hat in hand to the government, looking for more.

Kerry Diotte: Shouldn't Canadians and other journalists be troubled by this?

Sheila Gunn Reid: Absolutely. When we see the decline in the trust in the media in this country, we can point directly to how the media behaves. I'll give you an example of this. During the leaders' debate, there was some controversy that broke out in the media room. Now, all of that was caught on video. Independent journalists were subject to workplace harassment inside the media room at the debates commission. Rebel News journalists were at the heart of that. The CBC went on air, accused our journalists of misinformation and then denied us the right of reply. In fact, instead of offering us the right of reply, they called the SPVM on us. That's not appropriate journalism—

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

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: A point of order, Madam Chair.

I have left the speaking rotation so that my Conservative colleagues can finish. But it's impossible to carry on like this. It's intolerable. It's impossible to follow the interpretation adequately.

I really am asking for the problem to be fixed or for us to change rooms because, at the moment, we can't work like this.

[English]

The Chair: All right. We will suspend and possibly change rooms, because the audio situation is untenable.

• (0900)

(Pause)

• (0910)

The Chair: I am resuming this meeting. Thank you all for your patience.

I will turn now to Mr. Al Soud. You have the floor for six minutes.

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

Thank you all for joining us today.

So far, much of our discussion has been focused on government supports, the democratic importance of journalism and the risks posed by media deserts. Today, my questions will be geared towards the notion of content sovereignty, newer platforms contrasting traditional journalism, the challenges facing young professionals entering the space, and the distinct challenges facing Mississauga Centre.

[Translation]

Mr. Champagne, in communities like Mississauga Centre, people are often navigating through a number of information sources, sometimes in different languages, on different platforms, and with very different levels of confidence. I know that this is also the case in a number of regions of Quebec.

Diverse voices and perspectives are a strength, of course. But it also means that people are dealing with information sources that vary greatly.

In your view, how does journalism maintain its standards of credibility in that kind of fragmented environment?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: I would say that, in order to become members, the journalists whom we represent at the FPJQ must adhere to the code of ethics.

Our code of ethics is very clear. I won't go through all its provisions, but we have provisions on independence, on conflict of interest, and on things of that nature. That ensures a certain level of quality, of rigour, if you will. There are other organizations; the FPJQ is not alone. But it is one of the guardians of journalism in Quebec. We try to make sure that our members live by the rules.

As I said, we have about 1,400 members. They are journalists, researchers, anchors, almost every role in information. I am referring to journalists, I am not referring to columnists, to people with opinion pieces. That's another matter, another area. For journalists, we try to maintain the rigour by making sure they live by our ethical standards.

Fares Al Soud: The federation traditionally emphasizes professional and ethical standards as fundamental to journalism.

In your view, in the current environment, where the public often expects journalists to take a clearer position on the major issues, are those traditional standards changing?

• (0915)

Éric-Pierre Champagne: I know that raises a lot of questions. Perhaps I am showing my age. I am 59. I am a journalist and a reporter. I have never been a columnist in my life and I do not give my opinion in my pieces. I report the facts and try to achieve a balance.

So I do not believe that the standard should change. I feel that it is important for journalists not to be activists. I feel that they should provide balanced views and be rigorous in their work. That's the way it should stay, in my opinion, even in a changing world. I actually feel that it's what people want and what people expect from journalists. They expect that essential rigour in journalistic work. However, as I told you, I am not including commentators.

Despite the changes we have gone through, I feel that our standards must not be weakened. Quite the opposite, actually.

Fares Al Soud: Thank you, Mr. Champagne.

[English]

Mr. Menzies, you formerly argued that the challenges facing journalism are often misdiagnosed, that the issue is not simply revenue loss but changing audience behaviour and relevance. You've also argued that the media may overestimate the degree to which the public is engaged with its internal challenges, and you have been consistently skeptical of government intervention as a solution to the sector's challenges. What, in your view, if any, is the appropriate role of the government in ensuring the survival of local and public interest journalism?

The Chair: Mr. Menzies, did you hear the question? It was directed towards you.

Peter Menzies: I'm sorry, but I did not.

The Chair: I'll give you another minute, Mr. Al Soud. Do you want to repeat your question?

Fares Al Soud: I'm happy to. You formerly argued that the challenges facing journalism are often misdiagnosed, that the issue is not simply revenue loss but changing audience behaviour and relevance. You've also argued that the media may overestimate the degree to which the public is engaged with its internal challenges, and you have been consistently skeptical of government intervention as a solution to the sector's challenges. What, in your view, if any, is the appropriate role for the government in ensuring the survival of local and public interest journalism?

Peter Menzies: The main role should be to develop a truly national news industry policy. Right now, the problem is that they're kind of hopscotching. There's broadcasting over here, there are independents over here and there are newspapers here. There's really no such thing anymore, in the news industry, as separate areas. Broadcasters produce text news. Newspapers produce video and audio.

Right now, every time the government tries to address one problem, it creates an imbalance elsewhere. If you give the CBC \$150 million and it's a commercial competitor, you're actually tilting the playing field against non-CBC competitors. If you throw money at newspapers, you're tilting the field against broadcasters, so you counter that by doing broadcasters. This is a crazy way to do things. If you really want to get a good outcome, you have to understand, and look forward into the century, that this is a single industry—news—and then build public policies to support that.

One of my key recommendations—there are several in the paper—is to go ahead and subsidize the consumer, not the producer. There's no point in subsidizing the production of something that's not being consumed. I think it's the entirely wrong approach.

Maybe it was okay on a temporary basis, but on a long-term basis, you really need to sit back, take a look at this and stop shifting from crisis to crisis, trying to solve the problem individually.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds left.

[Translation]

Mr. Champoux, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Gunn Reid, my first question will be for you.

You describe Rebel News as a rigorous outlet. Do you do rigorous and high-quality journalism?

[English]

Sheila Gunn Reid: I would say that I am a rigorous journalist. I think that our journalists are committed to following the facts, wherever they lead.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: This morning, we had some technical problems here at the committee. Your boss, who is following the meeting in this very room, sent out a tweet saying that we had deliberately suspended the session in order to prevent you from speaking. Do you feel that that is what happened? Do you support the statement that your boss published on X? You saw what happened. Do you agree with that statement?

● (0920)

[English]

Sheila Gunn Reid: I cannot make any assertions about what caused the technical difficulties, if there were any technical difficulties. Mine was fine.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: So do you feel that it's good journalism to state, without checking the facts, that the Bloc Québécois knowingly asked for the meeting to be suspended because we wanted to prevent you from testifying?

[English]

Sheila Gunn Reid: I didn't say that.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: Yes, but Rebel News, through its boss, did say it on X. I am just raising the point. You yourself have spoken about the diversity of voices, the rigours of journalism and so on. So I thought it important to emphasize that what happened this morning was a technical problem. The Bloc Québécois did not try to stop the proceedings. On the contrary, we tried to fix a problem so that everyone could provide their comments correctly in both official languages. The result is that those who take an interest in the topic can follow our debates and hear what each of you has to say, as the frequently disparate voices that represent journalism today. I just wanted to make that point.

I would also like to welcome all the witnesses and to thank them for being here. We on this committee find the study to be very important.

My first question goes to my friends the independent journalists.

Ms. Villalba, Mr. Lamoureux, in today's journalistic landscape, is it difficult to be viewed as a credible journalist when you are an independent one? Given the large and growing numbers—I say that with no negative sense at all—of new, independent journalists using new platforms for their journalism, is it difficult to be viewed as credible?

Samuel Lamoureux (Professor, Communication, Université TÉLUQ, Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec): Good morning, Mr. Champoux.

I am a member of AJIQ's board of directors. I also conduct research into independent journalism. I feel that the issue is not whether it's hard to achieve recognition. The issue is whether it's difficult to see one's work valued in an online environment, in which the information economy is now completely in the hands of online platforms whose business model is based on profit. The economy is no longer based on employment, it's based on profit.

It is easy to produce online. It's very easy to publish content. A number of people are doing that, journalists, influencers and even a blend of the two. It's certainly very easy to publish content online, but it's extremely difficult to have it valued. It's almost impossible, especially in French. Online, if you speak French on YouTube, Meta or TikTok, it's almost impossible. You need private sponsors, but if you have them, you may have an ethical problem.

For me, the issue is not about credibility, but about the value of the work. The work has been devalued because we're now in a profit-driven economy and no longer in an employment-based economy. Of course, I am talking about the digital economy. That is the issue.

Martin Champoux: Mr. Champagne and Ms. Mac Farlane, I am going to ask you a similar question.

Mr. Champagne, this is not your first visit; I know that we have previously discussed the difficulty of maintaining or improving journalistic credibility of those working in traditional journalism. By that I mean media organizations that have been established for a long time. This very changeable universe is a challenge for career journalists, such as you at La Presse or those who work for Le Canada Français like Ms. Mac Farlane.

How can the FPJQ make sure that the values of journalism, the basic fundamentals of the craft, are upheld in a landscape full of commentary, opinion and activism? What means do you have for maintaining the credibility of your federation and your members?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: I would say that our first tool is when we hand out press cards to those who apply to become members of the FPJQ. As I explained earlier, we have criteria, specifically to abide by our code of ethics.

Of course, people also have to work as recognized journalists. We check that. It takes a little less time to check someone like me, because I have been there for a very long time. But for new applicants, we will check the type of work they do. Do they work as journalists? Is that their principal occupation? I understand the reality of freelancers, of course, but if a freelancer also works in, say, a marketing firm, that might become a problem.

We have criteria like that. We issue, or do not issue, press cards, which are, in a way, a seal of credibility. That's more or less how we control things.

• (0925)

Martin Champoux: One sometimes hears voices suggesting—perhaps a little more loudly these days—the need for a professional body of journalists. Some voices are for, some are against, likely all with valid arguments.

Do you have an opinion on that? Do you think it would be a tool that would help to distinguish commentary or opinion-based journalism from independent and factual journalism? What do you think of the idea?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: We feel that it is not a good idea.

You are right that we hear a lot about a professional body, but we do not hear about the problems that there would be to establish it.

First, a professional body becomes a media licence. From the outset, that creates a problem vis-à-vis charters of rights and freedoms, because it establishes who has permission to function in the media.

A professional body also formalizes relationships between professionals and clients or patients. That's not what journalists do. There is no individual relationship with the public; the relationship is collective. That's a difficulty too.

We feel that another difficulty is deciding who gets a card, who can become a member. In this new generation, a lot of journalists have studied journalism. But there are also a lot, like myself and my colleagues, who have studied physics, chemistry, history. Including it all can become very difficult.

The Chair: Thank you.

I am sorry, but we have run out of time for that question. Perhaps we'll be able to come back to it later.

[English]

I'm going to give Mrs. Thomas the floor for five minutes.

Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you very much.

My question is for Mr. Menzies.

One of the things you said in an interview with The Hub was, "The era of a free, independent, trusted media in Canada is finished." That's quite a bold statement, so I would like to ask you to explain why you draw this conclusion and what the implications are.

Peter Menzies: Well, the industry is no longer independent. It's largely dependent on government subsidies at the moment. In Quebec, it's almost 100% of newsrooms, between provincial and federal subsidies. The image of independence is gone. What once was sacred, as I tried to put it recently, this detachment between media and government.... That relationship should never be cozy. It should never even have the appearance of being cozy. If you're going to have a default, to steal a phrase from somebody else, it should always be bad in terms of that. It can be cordial, but it shouldn't be cozy. That has sort of ended the image of independence.

That's not to insult any journalists. They may be pure as the driven snow, but the public doesn't see them as independent anymore. Once you've lost that connection with the public, then really that era has ended, and we're now in a new era. It's an interesting new world, and if we continue down the path that we're on, as I tried to point out with the demands for this subsidy, the strengthening of this bond between journalism and government is only going to grow stronger. As it grows stronger, public faith in both institutions is going to decline.

Rachael Thomas: During the interview, you commented on exactly this with regard to public trust towards media. You made the statement that subsidies fuel a trust deficit and that an erosion of trust could lead to a growing group of people drifting towards unprofessional online news sources.

Do you care to expand on that?

Peter Menzies: There's been a fragmentation of the marketplace that is pretty obvious to most people. One difficulty with it is that you have to shop around these days. If you're inclined to the right of the spectrum, there are a number of advocacy journalism organizations, as I call them, that you can go to, where you can get your opinions reinforced. They can also produce some fresh news, but it's unlikely that you're going to go there.

It's the same on the left of the spectrum. There are dozens of them. You're not going to go there and say, "Gosh, I never thought of things that way before," or, "Gee, I didn't know that," or, "That MP that I thought I hated, maybe she's not so bad. Maybe she's not a crazy lady."

There's nothing that disrupts the flow of your predetermined thinking unless you shop around. That's dangerous, because you start to get a very segmented society, and people start to view peo-

ple with opposing views as a danger and a threat, so all of a sudden those opinions have to be managed. Once you get one government thinking that they need to manage these opinions they find objectionable, another government's going to come along and manage the other side. I think it's a very dangerous road that we're walking down right now.

● (0930)

Rachael Thomas: One observation that I would make, and data seems to back this up, is that, as the media becomes more partial in the sense of either taking the left side of the political spectrum or the right side of the political spectrum and then amplifying that view without consideration of what might be in the middle or even just telling a story without any sort of angling to it, because we see less and less of that, to your point.... As all that happens, trust is eroding. People don't know when they're being told the factual truth and when there's storytelling involved from a particular angle or trying to make a particular point. How do we overcome that in our system?

Peter Menzies: I think journalism itself is at fault for that quite a bit. The abandonment in many newsrooms of the idea of objectivity goes to a broader conversation about social changes and that sort of stuff. That is not what people want. Journalists' first obligation needs to be to their readers, and they need to serve readers the way they want to be served. The way they want to be served is to be given all the facts and to be able to make up their own minds. You can offer some opinions elsewhere if you want, but please just serve me.

I don't think that's happening that well. I think part of that is that journalists themselves and newsrooms themselves need to recommit to some of the core values. I mean, it's never been a perfect business. It's always been a rough and tumble business, but they do need to get back to the core values of being straight shooters and being objective or aspiring to it as much as they can. We all know that it's hard, but there are all kinds of things in life that are hard.

The Chair: That's a point well made. Thank you, sir.

I'm going to turn now to Mr. St-Pierre.

[Translation]

The floor is yours for five minutes.

[English]

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to sub in for MP Royer.

I studied journalism very briefly in my early 20s. It's been a few years and, unfortunately, I transitioned to law school instead. It's nice to be here today, because I get to live my past. I briefly wanted to be a war reporter, but I digress.

[Translation]

I would like to thank all the witnesses for joining us.

Mr. Éric-Pierre Champagne, can you specify one or two reforms to aim for? Could existing strengths in the field be used to fill any gaps that may exist, such as information deserts in rural areas or financial volatility? What would be your recommendations to the committee?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: Yes, understood.

But first, I would just like to provide some clarification on the previous witness's comment about the independence of media that receive public funds. Let's go and ask François Legault, of the Coalition Avenir Québec, whether he found that the media was treating him kindly. I don't feel that media are not independent because they receive public funds—quite the contrary.

Now, one of the requests I made a little while ago was about the tax credit for advertising costs. We are absolutely disgusted that advertisers placing ads on foreign platforms can deduct 50% of their expenses. An advertiser placing an ad in the New York Times or USA Today or in any other media cannot deduct those expenses. However, if it is on Facebook or Google—foreign platforms, remember—they can deduct those expenses. This is completely unfair for Canadian media who have to do battle with giants equipped with advertising war machines. The giants get an advantage too, simply because companies advertising on those platforms can deduct their expenses.

The FPJQ and other players in the industry have been making that request for a very long time and nothing has been done about it. I just don't understand. It would cost the government nothing. I will make the request again and I hope that we will be heard because it is something that could help. I feel that almost everyone around this table would agree. There is no reason to encourage foreign platforms that are known for spreading disinformation.

• (0935)

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you for that recommendation. It's certainly noted.

I would like to commend the journalists of La Presse and Le Devoir in Quebec. They are very strong and that is important for democracy in Quebec and Canada.

I am curious to hear your opinion on the role of influencers on social media. I am thinking of Alexplique, for example, who is playing a major role. Can you talk about the role of influencers in journalism?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: There's no denying the phenomenon; it's clearly a factor. You mentioned Alexplique. What she does is interesting, I find. But what people like her do is simplify, abridge. Without the work of so-called traditional media—I prefer the term “trusted media”—I have no idea how they could do what they do, which is to look at several sources and summarize them, especially for young audiences. They do good work—I am not saying otherwise—but, without the work that journalists do in other media, big and small, perhaps they would find it harder to do what they do. We commend what they are doing, but we must also remember that their kind of reporting can only happen because of a larger ecosystem.

Eric St-Pierre: Thank you.

Ms. Villalba, can you talk about the health of francophone media markets in Quebec and also in francophone minority communities outside Quebec, such as Franco-Ontarians and Acadians? Are the targeted support measures achieving the desired results?

Samuel Lamoureux: What do you mean by “health”? Do you mean economic health?

Eric St-Pierre: I mean economic health, financial health.

Samuel Lamoureux: Are you talking about the health of the media in rural communities?

Eric St-Pierre: I am talking about rural communities, but also the challenges faced by francophones outside Quebec. I'm thinking of New Brunswick or Ontario.

Samuel Lamoureux: I am doing a research project right now. I have interviewed about 25 journalists mostly working in rural areas, like Côte-Nord or Gaspésie. These are local media. I have none in New Brunswick. What I see is that regional media are barely hanging on and have very few resources. When I interview them, they tell me that once there were 20 of them. Now there are 10, but with the same amount of work, and social media content on top. Basically, there is too much work and too few employees to do it. One person is now doing the work of five, but with no better pay and fewer resources.

Facebook blocking news content in those regions is huge. In some regions, like Gaspésie and Côte-Nord, Facebook was like the town square. Everyone shared information there. When Facebook blocked the news, it was a major shock to information in some rural communities, that's for sure.

I have done research on Facebook. From an economic perspective, Facebook has replaced journalism with fake information since 2024. If you look at Facebook's accounting, you see that 10% of its revenues now comes from online scams, from fake information and advertising, from online casinos and from things that are illegal. It seems to me that this would be one major aspect of the regulations that could be imposed. What company can have a business model based on online scams? It's illegal, at least as I see it. Facebook has replaced information with fraud. It has a major impact, especially on rural communities, that's for sure.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Martin Champoux: Two and a half minutes is not very long, but I will try to use the time wisely.

As I said just now, I am all for diverse voices and opinions. I want people to be able to find information wherever they want, even if they are seeking to confirm their own opinions. Having an ecosystem like that is fine, but things have to be well-defined and clear. There must be one code of ethics that applies to everyone, from one end of the spectrum to the other. It matters little whether they are in the business of providing opinions, or in rigorous journalism.

Earlier, we were talking about Alexane Drolet, or Alexplique, who is doing good work in making information accessible. She tells the young people who come to her to not trust her only but to go and shop around in the information sources, because having a variety of sources is important. Farnell Morisset also popularizes information, but that's where my question about ethics arises. When you read the subtleties between the lines, you may possibly be able to see that he leans more to one side than to the other. But now we learn that he is jumping to provincial politics for the Liberal Party. I find that adds to people's cynicism; they already have a hard time trusting their sources of information.

I would like to hear your quick opinion on it. I know that we only have two and a half minutes. Mr. Champagne and Ms. Mac Farlane, please start.

Éric-Pierre Champagne: The problem you have just described is not a new one. We might mention Bernard Drainville and Christine St-Pierre. There are lots of examples.

● (0940)

Martin Champoux: André Platte too.

Éric-Pierre Champagne: Yes, the situation exists, I agree with you. It does create a bad taste and can undermine trust. But we live in a free society where people can make their own choices. With Farnell Morisset, I would make one distinction. He was not a journalist and has never claimed to be one.

Martin Champoux: No, but he popularizes society issues in the form of journalism. That is why I said I am for diversity just now—

Éric-Pierre Champagne: I understand and share your discomfort.

Martin Champoux: Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. Mac Farlane.

Stéphanie Mac Farlane (Editor-in-Chief, Le Canada Français, Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec): We were talking about ethics before. Actually, when a journalist turns to politics, we immediately withdraw their press card as our code of ethics requires.

Martin Champoux: Meanwhile, however, in this universe where information can be gathered from different sources, confusion remains. Something is not really clear; people cannot distinguish between a journalist and, in this case, Mr. Morisset, who does not do journalism. He has never claimed that he does, but that's not really the way people will perceive him.

I know I will not have the time to go deeper in this round. But I think it is part of a broader discussion we should have.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

This is our fourth meeting on the state of the journalism and media sectors. That's about eight hours.

On how media ownership impacts fairness in media, I'll go to you, Mr. Menzies. You've had three decades in newspaper. You were with the CRTC as vice-chair for four years.

When I look at the National Post, it's owned 62% or 63% by a hedge fund in the United States, by Chatham Asset Management in New Jersey. That was, I think, a turning point in this country. All of a sudden, the newspaper industry, the major newspapers in many cities, changed when that happened. I don't have to tell you that when you go down Deerfoot Trail, you can see that the iconic Calgary Herald building has now been sold. The letters of the Calgary Herald are off the building. It's now a U-Haul facility.

I would like your thoughts on media ownership. How could we let a hedge fund from the United States buy our most precious newspapers in this country?

Peter Menzies: First of all, I sort of cross myself every time I go by that building.

How? The companies were emerging from bankruptcy under Canwest. That was how Postmedia was initially set up. The ownership structure has changed over the years. I suppose it happened for the same reason that subsidies became popular. It's because the companies were too big to fail. Politicians don't like massive failures on their watch, so you tried to get the best deal you could, even if it wasn't a great deal.

In terms of the ownership set-up, when you have a hedge fund, you have an entirely different financial model. You need to feed the beast. That becomes a priority. There isn't time for long-term thinking. There isn't time for long-term structures and that sort of stuff. You need to make those payments, and you need to make them on time. That becomes the priority. That can be a big issue.

If you have a proprietorship ownership, like The Globe and Mail, you can appeal to the owner to be patient, hang on, not lay people off and try to invest in journalism. I think that approach has generally worked pretty well for The Globe and Mail.

Essentially, if you have a free press, it means you can be whatever you want. The only time it makes a difference is now that the government has gotten into funding, government and people such as yourself, Mr. Waugh, have to look at it and ask what is being funded here. Is it a hedge fund or news?

That is why I think that one of the ways out of that is to get around to funding the consumer. Let them choose what they want to read or not read. Subsidize that through tax credits to them. Then the market can actually work, and you get some sort of feedback. You get a flow-through impact to successful operators.

In my 30 years in the business, who owns what and how was never the government's business.

Kevin Waugh: When you were on the CRTC for the four years.... You had 10 years there as an adviser, along with Konrad von Finckenstein. I was at Bell Media. Telecommunications companies like Bell and Rogers all of a sudden started buying assets in this country.

Where do you see that? You were there during Bell Media's taking over of the CTV network. You were there when others, like Rogers, started to do Sportsnet and so on. Where is the fairness in that? Is it just that the telecommunications companies, like Bell, Rogers and so on, have deep pockets and can do whatever they want?

When you were at the CRTC, was it kind of a rubber stamp, when in fact they did buy the CTV network and others?

• (0945)

Peter Menzies: They can't do whatever they want, because they make a transactional agreement with the CRTC. The CRTC gives them a licence, and in exchange for that, they agree to follow certain guidelines and certain rules. That's what happens with all broadcasters—

Kevin Waugh: Let me say this, though. I come from Saskatoon. Bell Media no longer has a weekend local newscast. When I was there for 39 and a half years, we had a noon, a six and a late night. We no longer have a weekend newscast.

I will challenge you on the CRTC, because I've had Ms. Vicki Eatrides in this room. The CRTC no longer follows up with local television news, checkmarking what their licence was supposed to do. It's changed from when you were there for 10 years to where it is today. It's too busy with other things going on.

The CRTC, as you know, was radio and television. Now it is trying to regulate the Internet. There is the problem. You were there. You could hardly do radio and television. I just gave you one example of Bell Media not fulfilling its contract of doing local news in Saskatoon and Regina on weekends at six and 11:30 at night.

Peter Menzies: Sure. That happens. They probably wanted to stop because nobody was watching it—

The Chair: I'm sorry. We don't have time for that answer.

Mr. Menzies, I don't mean to cut you off. I think Mr. Waugh made his point himself. I gave him some time to finish his statement.

I will turn now to Mr. Ntumba.

[Translation]

The floor is yours for five minutes.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My greetings and thanks to our distinguished witnesses.

The work that we are doing is very important for the state of media in Canada.

Mr. Champagne, earlier you were talking about ethics. Could you talk to us about the media crafts, and journalism in particular? I am somewhat echoing what Mr. Champoux was saying: Have we not reached the stage at which you really feel that an organization

should be established to oversee the general state of the media in Canada, to follow up when required, and to make sure that the code of ethics applies to all?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: I can't really speak for the rest of Canada because our organization is primarily based in Quebec. So let me tell you about Quebec, because I have no detailed knowledge about the situation in other Canadian provinces.

We have the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, the FPJQ, but we also have the Quebec Press Council, which you must also know. It's a self-regulating system. The council is basically made up of journalists, of media employers, and of representatives from the public. It handles complaints. When complaints about journalistic work are filed by members of the public, they are heard by a committee representing the three groups I have just named. They check for breaches of ethics. Any penalties are moral in nature. The penalties are not financial or of any other kind. But I know no journalist who likes to receive a black mark from the press council.

To my knowledge, the Quebec Press Council system is quite unique in Canada. I can't think of an equivalent anywhere else. So we have to celebrate the dynamic nature of the Quebec media industry and the way it regulates itself. It's not perfect, but is still a cut above anything else in the rest of Canada, or in the United States, where things are worse.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Lamoureux, you represent independent journalists but I feel that your work has connections to the media. Let me harp on a bit more about establishing a professional body.

Take doctors and engineers as an example. When their professional bodies give them a black mark, they do not want any others.

If journalists also ran the risk of a black mark on their record for not following the ethical rules, would it not be an incentive for them to do so?

• (0950)

Samuel Lamoureux: As Mr. Champagne said, we have the Quebec Press Council as well. We have not talked about it before. So, if you wanted, you could make government assistance conditional on membership in the Quebec Press Council. That would be quite an easy way to guarantee some kind of independence.

However, I do not think that it would be useful to have a professional body. The quality of the journalism is determined by the readers. Do the people read and interact with the journalism? The relationship between readers and journalism is a unique one. For the entire history of journalism, there have always been official media and alternative media, people who want a closer relationship with the community. There has also even been literary journalism, meaning authors writing books of a journalistic nature. Journalism can also be a literary technique that authors can borrow.

Creating a professional body serves no purpose. We already have the press council and it would be quite possible to make any government assistance conditional on membership in the council. All questions about pseudocontamination and all debates would be settled if we did something like that.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Menzies, earlier, you talked about subsidizing the consumer rather than the media. Could you explain exactly what you mean?

[English]

Peter Menzies: Well, I think you could enhance the tax credit for buying a subscription, or you could make it purely tax-deductible in the same way you would make a charitable donation tax-deductible.

Say you gave each family, each household, 1,000 dollars' worth of tax credits per year that they could spend on subscriptions. They could spend it on a subscription to *Le Devoir*, *La Presse*, *The Globe and Mail* or whatever they chose. You subsidize their consumption of the news. There's money going to the consumer to choose, money that, again, flows through to the publishers, because they get the money from the subscription. However, there is no association, then, between government and the publisher. It's an arrangement between the government and the consumer. It's there to promote for the government, if the government wishes, the public good of having a well-informed public, but it's agnostic in terms of where they spend it. If it's a qualified Canadian journalism organization, I suggested a different way to do that.

This way, people are free to consume the news that they want, and government can subsidize the behaviour that it wants without putting the publishers in a conflict of interest.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

The floor now goes to Mr. G  n  reux for five minutes.

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

My thanks also to the witnesses. What we are hearing today is really fascinating.

Mr. Champagne, in your opening remarks, you mentioned "real journalists". What is your definition of journalism?

  ric-Pierre Champagne: Defining a "journalist" is always difficult. However, when I talk about journalists, I see them as reporters who verify facts, who present the public with those facts, explain them and make them accessible. That's what journalists do. It has nothing to do with giving one's opinion.

This does not come as a surprise; I have said it publicly in a number of forums. As I see it, there are too many opinion pieces in our media and I have no problem saying so, even though I am president of the *F  d  ration professionnelle des journalistes du Qu  bec* and I work at *La Presse*. Above all, I want to represent journalists and reporters; that is what's important to me. The public does not want to be told what to think. They want to be given the facts, they want a clear picture of an increasingly complex world. As I see it, that's what journalists do and that's what journalism is.

Bernard G  n  reux: Ms. Reid, do you have the same definition?

[English]

"What is a journalist?"

Sheila Gunn Reid: Journalism, I believe, encompasses opinions. It does first-hand news gathering, analysis, investigation and access to information, but I also believe that it does involve opinion journalism. Every major newspaper in this country has an editorial section, and we would not say those people are not journalists.

What I think distinguishes a lot of the truly independent journalists from government journalists in this country is that they're honest about their political biases. They don't try to obscure them in the way we see at the CBC or the *Toronto Star*.

• (0955)

[Translation]

Bernard G  n  reux: Mr. Lamoureux, did you understand the question I opened with?

Samuel Lamoureux: How do we define journalism?

I would say that journalism means reporting news with a view to the public interest and striving for the truth. Basically, that's it.

Ms. Villalba, you can give us your opinion too, if you want.

Bernard G  n  reux: "Journalists" from *Rebel News* have just done an interview with the leader of the *Parti Qu  b  cois*. I put the word in quotation marks because people here may not believe that they are journalists, which isn't necessarily my opinion. The interview made a lot of waves, so to speak, in other generalist media, like *Radio-Canada*, for example.

How do you see that? It was in the headlines last week.

I make no secret of the fact that I have been a "Radio-Canada guy" from birth. I still listen to *Radio-Canada* every day. It's where I turn for my information. However, I saw the reaction in the world of Quebec journalism, in *La Presse* and on *Radio-Canada* specifically.

Mr. Champagne, how do you interpret that reaction? My impression is that the division between left and right in the world of Quebec journalism was made plain last week when this happened. Do you share that opinion?

  ric-Pierre Champagne: No, not at all. The problem is that *Rebel News* is always referred to as a publication on the right and that is why it is not accepted and its journalists are not recognized. That's not the problem at all.

Mr. St-Pierre Plamondon has a perfect right to talk to whomever he wants. I certainly respect that. He has the right to meet with someone from *Rebel News* as well as people from other media. He won't hear any criticism from me about that.

Bernard G  n  reux: It caught my attention when I saw Mr. Dumont's reaction on TVA, and when the Prime Minister went to Radio-Canada and the host, Mr. Masbourian, thanked him for his trust during the interview. I feel that it showed that kind of relationship that the public generally makes with subsidized media like Radio-Canada, which receives \$1.4 billion.

Let me take another tack now. Radio-Canada receives \$7 million from the fund provided by Google. Do you agree with that? On Monday, we had witnesses here who said that small, private, regional TV stations are on their last legs. They are forced to reduce all their costs and to move heaven and earth in order to survive, while an organization that is already subsidized to the tune of \$1.4 billion gets \$7 million more. Do you see that as reasonable?

  ric-Pierre Champagne: With all respect for my colleagues in Radio-Canada, whom I greatly admire—

The Chair: Please reply quickly.

  ric-Pierre Champagne: —I don't think that Radio-Canada should touch those \$7 million, considering the challenges in the entire Canadian industry. It's a pity, really.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. G  n  reux.

[English]

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

[Translation]

David Myles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My thanks to everyone here today.

I agree with Mr. G  n  reux. This is still a major craft. Journalists still have standards, I believe. However, under pressure from the big digital platforms and their algorithms that promote the most polarizing things, I am wondering whether sometimes the searching that members of the public do leads to more and more of those things being published for the public as a result. So, what is the challenge today, for a journalist who lives by the standards, when faced with the success of the algorithms that cause polarizing material to be published?

My question is for Mr. Lamoureux and Ms. Villalba.

• (1000)

Samuel Lamoureux: I feel that there is a lot of debate on public funding. In my view, the role of the government is not to keep funding the media for ever and ever. One of its main roles, however, is to put an end to the asymmetry in certain markets. At the moment, there's a lot of asymmetry in some markets.

Google has developed a vertical monopoly in digital advertising in Canada. I read where the monopoly was compared to a major bank also owning the Toronto Stock Exchange. Imagine if a private company issued shares and also owned the platform on which those shares were traded. Think of the extent to which that could cause asymmetry and conflicts of interest in the way Canada's economy operates. Surely, regulation would automatically ensue.

In terms of digital advertising, Google controls the advertising industry and the platform on which the advertising appears, as well as controlling Android and Google Chrome, actually. It's a disaster.

It stifles innovation and it affects both consumers and the media. If this were not all digital, the government would have become involved already. But we seem to be saying, oh, it's digital, oh, it's special, it's new, and so on. But if it was a company that was not digital, regulations would be in place already.

The same goes for Facebook, whose monopoly is horizontal. Those are the issues that I see as the really major ones that need to be addressed. These informational asymmetries must be stopped. It's not about the funding; it's about the asymmetry.

  ric-Pierre Champagne: Allow me to intervene. I completely support my colleague. I would like to add something that is often forgotten. In Quebec, all media are showing record levels of audience and readership. That is unprecedented and a little shocking. Despite the financial crisis, media outlets have never had so many readers. The reason for the financial crisis is in the asymmetry that Mr. Lamoureux pointed out. As I was saying earlier, the model is literally broken. I know of no industry that could survive in that climate. If this were not about the digital world, if it was a bank, for example, the government would have intervened a long time ago to prevent such a monopoly.

David Myles: Do you think that could have an effect on journalism itself?

  ric-Pierre Champagne: Do you mean on the quality of journalism?

David Myles: Yes.

  ric-Pierre Champagne: I would say that, despite everything, the resilience is to be admired. Very good journalism is being done, but it is forgotten. People are always criticizing journalism. Yes, too much of our media is opinion. But investigative work and reportage are being done. We can't forget that because Quebec and Canada have good journalists and good media.

[English]

David Myles: I have a quick question for Mr. Menzies.

When you speak about consumer-driven subsidization, I wonder if you wouldn't run into the same problem by then having to qualify certain journalistic organizations as "qualified journalistic organizations". Would you not run into the same perception of interference or relationship?

Peter Menzies: You wouldn't if the government got out of the business of doing that. If the industry were smart enough—and it hasn't shown that it is to date—all the sectors, the broadcasting sector and the print sector, would form a national association, and they would decide who is a journalist in the same fashion that medical societies decide who is a doctor and legal societies decide who is a lawyer. They would decide, because the government has absolutely no business, through whatever means, deciding what a journalist is.

Industry and the government could get themselves out of that problem by having a proper national organization, and they could fight it out there. You wouldn't have to get involved. You'd just say, "Okay, where's your list?"

David Myles: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: The floor now goes to Mr. Champoux, for two and a half minutes.

Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Villalba and Mr. Lamoureux, in your opening statement, you brought up the fact that independent journalists are actually freelancers who have no access to government assistance, such as the Canadian journalism labour tax credit. We are actually trying to extend that to electronic media, to radio and television stations, all of whom are looking for it. You also have no access to various forms of assistance available to organized newsrooms. You are independent journalists. You have no assistance. You do not even have a tax credit for your work.

You spoke earlier about getting status as artists under the Status of the Artist Act. You are not looking for the benefits, just the same tax status. What specifically are you requesting that would help you in your work and let you earn a little more than minimum wage?

Léa Villalba: At the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec, we are certainly trying to establish a fee schedule. The Union des Artistes has much the same idea: to force the media to pay us decently. As freelancers, of course, we work with professional media, so we are recognized as journalists. Many are members of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, because we are journalists of the same standing. Of course, it is easy for a media organization to pay less for freelance work. We are seen as cheap labour, in a way. So I feel that a minimum level of salary, corresponding of course to the company's circulation and budget and to the work that needs to be done, could still help freelancers.

Do you have any other ideas, Mr. Lamoureux?

• (1005)

Samuel Lamoureux: I want to talk about employment insurance for independent workers. I know that it's perhaps not quite in line with the committee's study, but it's another major issue in Canada.

Can independent workers have access to decent employment insurance? I once read some articles on the #PasSansFilet movement, decrying the fact that a lot of independent workers were not eligible for employment insurance. It's worth taking a look, I'd say.

Martin Champoux: You were talking earlier about eligibility for funds, for subsidies and for assistance being restricted to media companies meeting certain criteria, such as membership in the Quebec Media Council, for example. The Online News Act has that requirement.

In terms of Google's \$100 million fund that we talked about earlier and the \$7 million that goes to Radio-Canada that we are questioning, there is also a membership requirement, not necessarily in the Quebec Media Council, and a requirement to meet fundamental criteria in the principles of journalism.

Mr. Champagne, do you agree with the FPJQ suggesting that a specific status, like that of an artist, be granted to independent journalists? Do you agree with them organizing to have fee schedules

established so that the media hiring them could not go below the rock-bottom price, if you will?

The Chair: You can answer the question, but quickly, please. Thank you.

Éric-Pierre Champagne: It is something we could look at. We are open to the idea. We understand that there are all kinds of issues and I fully understand the freelancers' reality.

The Chair: You did that very well. Thank you.

[English]

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

Kerry Diotte: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Mr. Menzies, you probably recall that we worked together at the Calgary Sun back in the day. You've had a long and storied career in journalism and with the CRTC. As you know, and as everybody in Canada knows, the CBC gets almost \$1.4 billion from the Liberal government. How on earth can a media entity remain objective in its coverage, given that huge sum of money?

Peter Menzies: Thanks, Mr. Diotte. I remember, and I won't tell if you won't tell.

How do they remain objective? I think that's a big challenge. I think it's an enormous challenge. It's a challenge for public broadcasters everywhere. The best way for it not to get into the situation the CBC was in a year and a half ago, when it had roughly 40% of Canadians comfortable with defunding it, is to be as good as possible at the job.

The firewalls that are necessary.... You can get into all sorts of structural things, but it really just becomes a matter of self-awareness in a newsroom and aspiring to the principle of objectivity, which I fear has been abandoned by journalists in recent years. It's part of the woke movement that objectivity is impossible and what matters is the narrative. Until journalism itself gets back to aspiring to objectivity, as it did for about 100 years, I don't think there's any hope that money won't distort the equation.

Kerry Diotte: Like me, you watch the media closely. Do you think the CBC is biased in favour of the Liberal government and against Conservatives?

• (1010)

Peter Menzies: Well, most newsrooms.... You've worked in them. I've worked in them. They tend to lean to the left. They're arts grads, but as long as there's a balance of ideological views in the newsrooms, then you're going to get some self-correction inside there. You know, if it's too biased this way, you're going to go by an editor who puts a stop to it or somebody else who objects to it in terms of that.

The answer to your question is that I do think that there is bias displayed over a period of time at the CBC in that fashion, and I think a lot of it has to do with the cultural composition of its newsrooms. I think it misinterprets diversity and doesn't allow for enough intellectual diversity. I think we've seen some very public incidents of that lately.

Kerry Diotte: Could you describe a couple of incidents that bothered you about how the CBC covers things?

Peter Menzies: I can't, because I don't watch it very much anymore, in part because I get frustrated and it's not good for my blood pressure. However, I would say that Tara Henley and Travis Dhanraj are probably better sources to get a good answer to that sort of question.

Kerry Diotte: What is the solution? Specifically with CBC, what would you do if you could wave a magic wand?

Peter Menzies: I think you certainly have to get it out of being a commercial competitor. I think that if the government's going to.... If you want a public broadcaster—and there are some good cases, like up north, CBC North.... I think that's not a region that has a market. You can't let market forces serve the far north, so I think there's good reason for a public broadcaster there, but you have to get it out of the commercial business, because the commercial business, both out of Toronto and Montreal, distorts its coverage.

In English, it's trying to serve primarily the GTA, which is a key advertising market. It's similar for Montreal in French. You have to get it out of that and make it a pure-play public broadcaster, for starters, and then you need to overhaul it with a proper, fully pan-Canadian approach that focuses on what its core mandate is, which is just telling Canadians all about other Canadians, and to stop being a commercial competitor and trying to pretend that it has to battle with CNN and be a sort of mini-CNN in Toronto.

Kerry Diotte: You said in a column that government-funded subsidies have turned media into a distrusted ward of the state. Can you briefly elaborate on that?

Peter Menzies: Well, I believe it is. It's dependent on the state, and it is increasingly distrusted. It's merely a statement of fact.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Fares Al Soud: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Robertson, thank you for joining us today, and thank you for your patience.

Earlier, you said that you could now make broadcast-quality content with the contents of your purse. I thought that was funny, but it's also entirely true, and it highlights how quickly things have changed in this space.

We've heard quite a bit on radio over the past few meetings, but I'll be candid in saying that it's not really my generation. I would listen to it occasionally on the way to school with my father in the morning, and on the way back while a hockey game played in the background, but what these new spaces have done is create new entry points into journalism, specifically for younger voices, I find.

From your perspective, do you find these formats represent a meaningful expansion of opportunity for journalists, or are they simply shifting the space into a new age?

Jane Robertson: I think that when it comes to this discussion about media, we have to take in the consumers' appetite, and they are expanding into spaces like Twitch streamers or YouTube channels, where my children watch hours and hours of Minecraft content. This is now media.

With a cellphone, you can be anywhere broadcasting live, so this is disrupting the space. Traditional media spends a lot of money to have broadcast-quality equipment and studios and journalists and investigations, but someone with an iPhone can have a million subscribers, and that's where younger folks are turning to get information.

The media sector is being completely disrupted by this, and we have to take that into account, especially with respect to AI. People are using it to generate what they should say to broadcast to millions of followers, and using it to distort the information. We have to recognize that for what it is, and all the media players have to adapt to that.

• (1015)

Fares Al Soud: That's fantastic. Very quickly, I'll leave with this last question.

[Translation]

For many young journalists today, the point of entry to the profession is through independent journalism. Have you seen any trends affecting those going into journalism today?

Samuel Lamoureux: What sorts of trends are you referring to?

Fares Al Soud: I am talking about any particular trends in character, or things about them that are unique.

Samuel Lamoureux: If you want to be a journalist today, you have to have the calling, meaning that you are passionate about the craft. I was once a lecturer in a school of journalism. I taught it. People do not want to do it for the money. They want to produce new stories, to find the truth, to protect democracy, to challenge power. The craft is about passion and a vocation. It's much like teaching: You have to want to teach. People feel a strong calling.

They answer the call first. Then, when they get into the craft, they are disillusioned: is it actually possible to practise the calling?

Léa Villalba: I would say that they may be characterized by the desire to be neutral. It's true for every journalist, I feel, even the younger generations. However, they want to do things differently. Some want to try other formats, like videos or podcasts. That's what's new, I feel. It has been that way for perhaps 10 years. But the desire to be neutral remains, to tell the truth, to show both sides and to add value to the true journalism we have been talking about from the beginning. I would say that the evolution has been in the formats.

Fares Al Soud: Great.

Madam Chair, I am sharing my time with Mr. Ntumba.

The Chair: Mr. Ntumba, you have a minute and a half left.

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Champagne, if you had to identify one or two targeted reforms that could use the sector's present strengths to address current gaps such as rural media deserts or financial volatility, what could you recommend to the committee?

Éric-Pierre Champagne: I quite understand that the government's capacity to help the media is limited. However, the government must provide conditions that help the industry. Earlier, we were talking about asymmetry and the problems that the two tech giants are causing, problems that we seem to want to ignore. That is a real problem. The government does not need to take money from its own pocket in order to put programs in place that are fair for all Canadian media. In my eyes, that is hugely important.

There is one more thing. I keep coming back to it. I fail to understand why we do not change the legislation so that advertising costs on foreign platforms can no longer be a tax deduction. It makes no sense. Given that we want to protect our digital and cultural sovereignty, I do not understand why we do not correct that.

Samuel Lamoureux: Could I add something?

[English]

The Chair: That brings us to the end of our question period for today.

I have a question for members at the table. Does anybody have input on the schedule that was circulated by the clerk earlier this week? You can come back to me later if you haven't had a chance to look at it. I just thought I'd put it on the table in case anybody has a response.

Go ahead, Monsieur Champoux.

[Translation]

Martin Champoux: Madam Chair, I was thinking that we should have a little more time, given the technical problems we had. We have some notices of motion that we tabled by the prescribed time. We would like to debate them this morning.

The Chair: We have to finish the meeting before 10:30 because there will be another committee meeting in this room at 11:00. We can continue for a few minutes.

Martin Champoux: So we have a few minutes. With everyone's good will, things should move quickly. I think it can happen. We can try.

The Chair: Do I have unanimous consent from the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

The two motions you have received both have to do with sport. We know how big sport is. It comes under the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Perhaps there will be a standing committee on sport some day. Until that time, this committee handles it. Of course, I recognize a number of the faces here because we did a study together on safe sport.

The first motion actually follows up on that study and the report we tabled. It reads as follows:

That, following the tabling of the report of Future of Sport in Canada Commission, the committee invites Commissioner Lise Maisonneuve to appear for at least two hours, as well as the Secretary of State for Sport and the relevant public servants for at least two hours, in order to analyze the conclusions of this report which was tabled on Tuesday, March 24, 2026.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

I'll say to the witnesses that you are free to go. You can stay here if you like, but we are done with questions for you, if you have somewhere else to be. You're welcome to stay, if you'd like to follow this.

Mr. Myles, you had your hand up.

[Translation]

David Myles: Yes, I want to move a minor amendment. I move that the secretary of state come for an hour and that the officials come for two hours. I believe that it would be quite normal for the committee to do things in that way.

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, the floor is yours.

Sébastien Lemire: So are we proposing that we have a three-hour meeting, two hours of which are with the commissioner and one hour with the minister and the officials?

David Myles: No, I am proposing a two-hour meeting. One hour would be with the secretary of state and the officials and one hour with the officials. That would be two hours in total.

Sébastien Lemire: Agreed. That is what we normally do.

The Chair: So, is that a friendly amendment? Is that the right term?

Sébastien Lemire: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Is it the will of the committee to adopt the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

The second motion follows up on the excellent work of Radio-Canada's Romain Schué and refers to articles published on March 26, 2026 that mention scandals, particularly financial ones, relating to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will soon be upon us in Canada. It reads as follows:

In light of the Radio-Canada investigative report on Canada's commitments to FIFA for the 2026 World Cup, particularly regarding secret demands such as the delivery of essential services and tax exemptions, and given the soaring costs, the committee invites to appear before the committee for at least one hour each, as soon as possible and before the first match of the competition is held in Canada:

the Minister of Finance,
the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture,
officials from Public Safety Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,
Soccer Canada and FIFA;

That the committee demands that all contracts signed by the federal government with FIFA, as well as an assessment of the costs of their expenditures in connec-

tion with this event, be disclosed to the members of the committee before the first meeting is held.

The Chair: Mr. Myles, you have the floor.

David Myles: We had already agreed to do another study before the end of the year. We have studies up until the end of May.

In addition, all the information on the costs is public. This is normal practice. They are the same as the practices used for the women's World Cup last year. So I do not want to support this motion.

The Chair: If there are no other comments, we can vote.

(Motion negated: nays 3; yeas 2)

[English]

The motion is defeated.

That's all the time we have for today.

Thank you, colleagues.

The committee is adjourned.

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