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• (1100)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 36 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 you. These measures are in place to help prevent feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including our esteemed interpreters. You will notice that there's a QR code on the card. It links to a short awareness video.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee commenced consideration of the main estimates 2026-27: vote 1 under Canada Council for the Arts; votes 1, 5 and 10 under Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; vote 1 under Canadian Museum for Human Rights; vote 1 under Canadian Museum of History; vote 1 under Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21; vote 1 under Canadian Museum of Nature; vote 1 under Canadian Race Relations Foundation; vote 1 under Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission; votes 1 and 5 under Department of Canadian Heritage; votes 1 and 5 under Library and Archives of Canada; vote 1 under National Arts Centre Corporation; vote 1 under National Film Board; votes 1 and 5 under National Gallery of Canada; vote 1 under National Museum of Science and Technology; vote 1 under Telefilm Canada; vote 1 under The National Battlefields Commission; referred to the committee on Thursday, February 26, 2026.

We will vote on those main estimates at the end of today's meeting.

We have with us today, for the first hour, the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages.

Also with us are officials, who will stay for the second hour. We have Francis Bilodeau, deputy minister; Andrew Brown, associate deputy minister; Joëlle Montminy, senior assistant deputy minister, cultural affairs; Blair McMurren, associate assistant deputy minister, cultural affairs; and Véronique Côté, chief financial officer.

Welcome to everyone. Thank you for being here with us today.

We will begin with an opening statement from the minister.

Should you wish to take them, five minutes are yours, starting now.

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages): Thank you, Madam Chair. I do wish to take them. I think you've given about half of my speech.

For clarity, I will repeat part of it.

Madam Chair, vice-chairs and members of the committee, thank you for being here and for inviting me to speak to you today on the main estimates for 2026-27 for my portfolio organizations and Canadian Heritage funding.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging our presence on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

In this time of uncertainty marked by a changing economy and a shifting global order, protecting what defines us as Canadians and defending our cultural sovereignty and our ability to tell our own stories in our own languages matters more than ever to every Canadian.

[Translation]

As we focus on building a strong Canada, the mandate of Canadian Heritage is central to these efforts. This mandate is also deeply rooted in our local communities, as culture is not limited to large urban centres. It's lived out in our cities, towns and rural areas. It thrives when we support local organizations and programs, empower local artists and creators, and ensure that Canadians, no matter where they live, have access to cultural experiences close to home.

[English]

As part of the 2026-27 main estimates, a total of \$1.9 billion is allocated to Canadian Heritage. This includes \$1.6 billion in grants and contributions, directly supporting local initiatives, projects and celebrations across the country, including Canada Day; \$218 million in operating expenditures; and \$33 million in statutory items. The funding will enable the department to deliver on its five core responsibilities: creative arts and culture, heritage and celebration, sport, diversity and inclusion, and official languages.

For example, main estimates funding of \$471 million will go towards arts and culture programming, ensuring that our creativity, culture and languages are protected in the face of the rise of AI and remain discoverable in the digital age. This funding will also support local journalism so that Canadians can access reliable local news, and advance our efforts to modernize federal support for Canada's audiovisual sectors so that our screen industries can continue to succeed with films, series and digital content that resonate with audiences at home and around the world.

In addition, renewed investments will support local festivals and events that bring people and communities together while expanding access to arts across the country.

• (1105)

[Translation]

Canada is a sport nation. Sport has the unique power to bring us together. As we make generational investments in sport, from the playground to the podium, the \$311 million dedicated to sport in this year's main estimates will help build a safe, inclusive and robust sport system. These investments will expand access to sport for all, support our athletes, act on the recommendations of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission and bring Canadians together around world-class sporting events that support jobs, tourism and local economies, such as the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup.

[English]

A further \$234 million is also dedicated to supporting communities targeted by racism, hate and discrimination. Everyone in Canada should feel safe, regardless of who they are, who they love and how they pray. This funding is critical to combatting hate, strengthening inclusion and creating opportunities to build bridges between people. It will also support the independent review of the Indigenous Languages Act happening this year. It is a landmark piece of legislation that has enabled historic investments of more than \$1.4 billion to help indigenous communities reclaim, protect and pass on their languages to future generations in their own way.

Main estimates funding of \$621 million will support our core responsibility to protect and promote Canada's two official languages, including the implementation of the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act. This is a crucial step in ensuring that workers and consumers can work and receive services in French, while clarifying the responsibility of businesses.

[Translation]

Finally, I am pleased that \$124 million is being allocated to expand access to our history and heritage, notably through the renewal of the Canada Strong pass this summer. As families plan their vacations, this pass will help them save money when visiting museums, historic sites and national parks, as well as when travelling by train. Last year, half a million children and 115,000 youth benefited from either free or reduced-price access to museums.

We are making life more affordable, but we are also passing on our history and shared culture to future generations. It's also why budget 2025 made clear commitments to protect what makes Canada unique and what brings Canadians together.

[English]

Budget 2025 provides an additional \$328 million for Canadian Heritage over four years. It is funding that will be made available later this year through the supplementary estimates. It also includes \$336 million over three years for Canadian Heritage portfolio organizations, the majority of which will likewise be reflected in the forthcoming supplementary estimates.

With respect specifically to the estimates today, Canadian Heritage portfolio organizations will receive \$2.4 billion in appropriations. Their work will directly strengthen the Canadian economy, support jobs, stimulate innovation and preserve and celebrate our cultural heritage.

Our culture in our nation is vibrant, unique and diverse. It's the thread that binds us together. As we build Canada strong for all, those investments are key to protecting what defines us as Canadians, strengthening our shared values, defending our cultural sovereignty and ensuring that our public institutions meet the needs of this sector and the expectations of Canadians.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I will now be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Andrew Lawton, welcome to the heritage committee. You have the floor to start us off, I understand. You have six minutes.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

One of the items under your oversight is the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which has a budget this year of, I believe, \$28.7 million. Are you aware of the museum's recent campaign against parental rights?

Hon. Marc Miller: Your definition of that, Mr. Lawton, is quite broad, so you'll have to elaborate, which I'm sure you will—

Andrew Lawton: I'm actually using the museum's definition. On March 31, they said, "Over the last few years, the 'parental rights' movement has been growing in Canada, which aims to deny 2SLGBTQI+ youth their fundamental rights."

The Museum for Human Rights, funded under your budget, says there are four myths perpetuated by parental rights. One of these is that parental rights are about protecting children. Another is that there are only two genders. Another is that parents should have the ability to raise their children as they see fit. Are those things—parents being able to raise their children—things we should be actively discouraging?

• (1110)

Hon. Marc Miller: I think you draw an easy conclusion to a number of the premises you're putting forward, Mr. Lawton. The first one we need to disabuse ourselves of is what my role is in telling a museum, which is indeed a portfolio organization, what to do or what not to do. There is a board that has the capacity to define policy, specifically, on dealing with human rights.

Also, I think you would agree with me that it is important to protect members of the LGBT community, including the younger members of it who are in the process of questioning who they are, and making sure that their human rights are respected.

Again, that's more editorial to something that is more fundamental, which is that museums do not have policy dictated to them by the Canadian government.

Andrew Lawton: The Museum for Human Rights says that the parental rights myth of protecting children is used as a justification for hate speech. Do you agree or disagree with that assertion?

Hon. Marc Miller: I think what you need to do if you're very interested in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights—it's in Winnipeg, a beautiful city—is visit it and perhaps organize a meeting with the CEO and ask her those questions yourself.

Andrew Lawton: You just give them the money, and if they want to declare a campaign against parental rights, that's totally fine.

Hon. Marc Miller: I think that's more of a statement than a question, Mr. Lawton.

Andrew Lawton: Okay. Thank you very much.

Creative export Canada also falls under your portfolio. This is a program to promote visibility and funding to help Canadian creative works achieve success abroad. I think all of us would like to see that happen. I'm wondering what the benchmarks for success are.

There's one here, a video game called Card Scramble: Viola's Diner, which looks to have been made in, like, 1997 by the graphics. It got \$400,000 to export an online game. How does an online game get exported, and why does that cost \$400,000?

Hon. Marc Miller: In fact, those nineties graphics get a lot of kids playing them. Perhaps you have played Minecraft.

I recently visited EA in Richmond, and 88% of the work they do, including Plants vs. Zombies and FIFA, is exported, and it generates massive revenue for Canada. I think that sort of speaks for itself. Smaller entities do need support, but you can scrutinize....

Andrew Lawton: You've answered the question, Minister.

Fruit Golf, which is a game that was under the creative export Canada program, got \$67,000. It has 22 reviews online, so clearly it

didn't achieve much success. Where's the benchmark for whether this sort of funding is actually achieving anything?

Hon. Marc Miller: If you were to put your review online it would have 23.

You are welcome to scrutinize....

Andrew Lawton: Your knowledge of math is wonderful, Minister, but that's not why we're here.

Hon. Marc Miller: Thank you. It was no walk in the park.

The reality is that the benchmarks for success are multiple. One, depending on the category that we are supporting.... The creative export strategy is important, particularly in an industry that has not done enough to export amazing Canadian content. You may question the form and substance of it, but I'm quite proud of that creative export strategy. The Prime Minister renewed it for \$20 million a year, because we have to make sure that our people are producing content that not only is consumed within Canada but also is exported.

The success of the massive game providers is one thing, and one benchmark to measure things by, but often these start-ups do have hesitating starts. That's the reality of it. We can't fail to invest in them simply because they may fail in the future. It's about taking risk.

Andrew Lawton: You mentioned supporting local journalism as being a key part of your role. It has been just under three years since Bill C-18 received royal assent, and local media outlets are still frozen out of being able to share their content on Facebook or Instagram, a direct response to government policy—a decision made by Meta, but a response to government policy. How are local outlets benefiting when they now cannot compete and actually get eyeballs on their content through the biggest ways that people would love to be consuming news?

Hon. Marc Miller: I won't get into, here, the ongoing discussions with Meta because they are difficult, no question. I would highlight the early success with Google that provided us \$100 million a year. It's up for renewal in a little bit. That went directly into small journalism to make sure they were being supported. It isn't an ideal situation, but I would highlight, MP Lawton, that when it comes to Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, these were bills that were notably delayed and filibustered in the Senate by your party.

Andrew Lawton: You're putting more money into the local journalism initiative, more money to bankroll media. Why not just stop blocking them from being able to access audiences that could monetize their content?

• (1115)

Hon. Marc Miller: That may seem to be a simple solution. It would not fundamentally transform the industry by allowing people to share news on Facebook. If you talk to Facebook, they have varying approaches as to what that actually meant. It was a declining revenue model, they think, for them. There's no question that it isn't ideal that people can't post news on Facebook.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

Thank you all for being with us today.

Minister, it's always good to have you in committee. The last time we spoke in the context of this setting was on supplementary estimates (B). At the time, you had just recently been appointed to your portfolio. I made a point of asking you about your priorities and how you thought those were reflected in the supplementary estimates (B). A lot has happened in this space over the course of the past few months. You highlighted this in your opening remarks as "a shifting global order". There was a conference in Banff; \$755 million was invested into sports in the SEU.

I would like to give you the opportunity to speak to, perhaps, how your priorities have changed over the past few months and whether you find that those are now reflected in these main estimates.

Hon. Marc Miller: Thank you, Mr. Al Soud.

First and foremost, I want to highlight the historic investment that's been put into sport. This has been 20 years in the making. It would be inaccurate to claim that victory for myself. It is really because of the leadership of Secretary of State van Koeverden, who has fought a good chunk of his career to make sure that people—whether in elite categories or not—have the opportunity to play sports because of what it does for the country and for kids themselves; their mental health, their physical abilities and their ability to succeed in school.

Thanks to that generational investment of \$750-plus million, our chances for our kids to podium in the next few years have just increased. Their chances of succeeding in school have increased. Their chances of being happier have increased. I think that's a good thing, and it falls squarely on the shoulders of Mr. van Koeverden for having convinced the Prime Minister and his colleagues to make that investment. It does fall under my portfolio, so I think that is a great victory.

I've been in this position for five months. It is becoming increasingly clear that we have to act quickly to make sure that we are dealing with our kids who are getting impacted by all the harms that we see online. We have lots of laws in this country that can punish, whether in a criminal context or a civil context, people once the harm has occurred. We have very few laws that protect the kids from the harm occurring in the first place. There are a variety of reasons why we are behind a number of countries. I won't rehash that, but I think that is a huge priority.

As always, protection of our official languages of two founding nations is key, as well as making sure that indigenous languages are properly supported, particularly in a year where the Indigenous Languages Act is up for review and there is a renewal process for the commissioners in place.

Also, given the importance the media plays, it's to make sure that we have a healthy ecosystem, as the media continues to be challenged by the reality in an ecosystem that is really very much under threat by disinformation, including deliberate misinformation. We have to make sure that we tread delicately, while also supporting independent news broadcasters, because that is a cornerstone of our Canadian democracy.

Fares Al Soud: Absolutely. A second angle that I want to take on here speaks to something that you highlighted. It's this idea of creating opportunities for the next generation. I know you know this is a topic of utmost importance to me. Our country is phenomenal at creating that talent; we have a lot of that talent here. I think of the Alphonso Davies' of the world, the Céline Dions, the legends that are David Myles, the occasional singing we hear from the Bernard Gagnéux' who we have here on committee.

Could you speak to the importance of creating and fostering that talent in our country and how, perhaps, Canadian Heritage and your department are best suited to do that?

Hon. Marc Miller: It's an exceedingly important question. A variety of programs are tailored to making sure that younger segments of the population have access to funds that they can use to explore their creativity. You may question what the eventual product is, and sometimes certainly it is questionable, but there are times when you see amazing successes, only because they were given what may seem to be a small amount from the portfolios that I have some authority over, or the portfolios that other ministers have the honour of being the lead on.

I would highlight a couple of things, including among them obviously the sports investment, which is key. That's been a long time coming. It will make sure that funds get into the various organizations that have been doing the job of raising our kids on the sports pitches, and it will do it in a safe way. We can't ignore what the safe sport commission reported and the conclusions that it came to about the toxic environment that some of our kids are exposed to. The last thing a parent wants to see is a kid being put in the hands of someone who they trust and have that trust violated. That is key now more than ever.

I think to my earlier point, to your prior question, it's making sure that we get potential online harms legislation right and that we strike the right balance between protecting our kids, protecting Canadians against the most egregious forms of harms, and the legitimate concerns in and around freedom of expression.

• (1120)

Fares Al Soud: Very few know just how phenomenal we are as a country in terms of our capacity for video games. I was in Vancouver not long ago, and I visited EA. In Montreal, I visited Ubisoft, Gameloft and Behaviour Interactive.

I'd like to hear you on that as a priority. The vast majority of Canadians do not know just how phenomenal we are at exporting what is a very successful entertainment segment.

Hon. Marc Miller: EA, in Richmond, has an amazing facility. I don't understand how employees get work done, given how wonderful it is out there. It is the producer of FIFA, which is the most used and consumed game. I got through COVID in part because my kids forced me to play Plants vs. Zombies. Anything more than 2D is difficult for my age group, as most people will concede. That is produced in Canada and 88% of it is exported.

Our export strategy isn't as developed as it should be. When it is, for example, through trade missions to Mexico, you actually see people who are giving you a return on the dollar that is twice the size of what you would see in other industries. That is incredible to me. In my own hometown of Montreal, the work Ubisoft is doing and has been doing for years is incredible. It generates an industry that supports hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs well into six figures.

The Chair: We totally played Plants vs. Zombies at my house. I had no idea it was produced in Canada. I have learned something new today.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Thank you for being with us, Minister, as well as all of you from the Department of Canadian Heritage. It's always a pleasure to have you at the committee.

Minister, you are satisfied with the measures adopted in the economic update. I hear you talking about investments in sport, which I must admit, are very welcome. We have been working on this for a long time and hoping to see money invested in amateur sports. This is a good thing.

That said, for several months now, our committee has been hearing from news producers and media representatives—primarily from news outlets, including many regional ones, such as those in Quebec, but also from across Canada—and they are unanimous: They want the same journalism labour tax credit as the one granted to print media.

So, I was really looking forward to opening the economic update document to see if we would finally find this tax credit. Well, I found it, so I felt a certain satisfaction. However, I'm going to need your help, and I also need you to help the news media, radio and television, because it's not clear. You say, "The Spring Economic Update 2026 announces the government's intention to seek the views of Canadians and stakeholders on extending the Canadian

Journalism Labour Tax Credit...". You're talking about consultations. Yet dozens of broadcasters, dozens of owners of regional media, newsrooms, and television and radio stations have come here to tell us just how necessary this is, how essential it had become. These included even major companies such as Bell, Cogeco and Videotron. They are unanimous: They need this tax credit; they need it, and it will give them an incredible boost.

However, what we see in the economic update is a bit ambiguous. We don't know if it's a commitment. We don't know if it will be implemented or when it will happen. We don't know what's missing.

Can you tell us whether these companies will get their tax credit or not?

Hon. Marc Miller: In my opinion, the question is not whether they will get it, but how they will get it.

As you know, this tax credit falls under the Department of Finance, particularly with respect to its implementation. It could amount to nearly \$6 billion. That's no small amount.

I would humbly say that the people I've spoken to recently are very pleased, but they're showing the same caution. They want to see the implementation of this tax credit, which, as you pointed out, will be granted to more organizations than just those in print media. However, many questions can be asked. In particular, and I'll be frank with you, it is not as easy to define who is a journalist—compared to print media—in what we see online, in media rooms, on television or radio stations, and so on. Should the credit be granted to anyone assigned to the newsroom? Should it be granted to the journalists themselves? Should caps be imposed on the largest broadcasters, even if it means favouring the smaller ones?

• (1125)

Martin Champoux: There is already a model in the print media world for defining criteria, so I don't think it would be very complicated.

I just want to tell you that we've been working on this for a few years now. For a few years, the Canadian Heritage ministers who preceded you were telling us that things looked promising and that the discussions were encouraging. In my opinion, we have had plenty of time to define the parameters of this tax credit. Given that an economic update states that we're moving forward, it seems to me we could have been better prepared, closer to a result, and could have announced a measure that would take effect within a reasonable time frame. Don't you agree?

Hon. Marc Miller: The work begins now. I prefer to see the glass as half full. There is definitely work to be done. This is the first time this kind of measure has been included in a budget-type statement. So it's no small matter. The journalism community is pleased, but cautiously so, as I pointed out. We're talking about taxpayers' money. It's a tax credit that could be in the neighbourhood of \$6 billion. So that's not insignificant. We must proceed with caution and fairness with regard to media rooms.

Martin Champoux: There's another issue that I've talked to you about a few times in recent weeks or months. It concerns the independent local news fund, which is suffering greatly from a shortfall following the acceptance of Global TV stations as recipients of this fund.

In good faith, I think the CRTC thought that the digital giants would make their contribution and that this would replenish the fund so that everyone could continue to receive the same financial support. However, as we know very well, the digital giants are laughing in our faces. Nothing is moving forward with them. I don't see a foreseeable future where the GAFAM companies would contribute without fighting all the way to the highest court to challenge everything we want to put in place.

So there are regional stations in Quebec and Canada that are on the verge of closing—news stations that are often the only truly local voice providing information. They're going to close because this fund is essential. They're not asking for the moon; they're not asking for billions of dollars; they're simply asking for support until the GAFAM companies make their contribution. However, we don't see any of that in the economic update. Yet it would have saved their lives. They're a bit disheartened to see that there's no support or response from your team in this regard.

Can you give them a little hope?

Hon. Marc Miller: The worst thing I could do would be to guarantee a result, as much as I would love to hold out hope. I have plenty of hope, but I'm not going to guarantee anything. What I can guarantee is that I will work on it.

I, too, talk to people involved in newspapers and media rooms, particularly about the replenishment of the Canada periodical fund and the Canada media fund. We've already replenished them a number of times using taxpayers' money because these media companies are seeing their revenues decline precisely because of the GAFAM phenomenon you highlighted. Of course, the digital giants must do their part, and we're asking them to do so.

It's unfortunate that it's dragging on, and I'm working on it, but I can't guarantee anything, once again. We'll have to find interim solutions, especially because the court rulings bode well. We'll need to have a serious conversation with these organizations, which sometimes benefit from tax credits and all kinds of support from the Government of Canada and then drag us into court. It's very unfortunate.

As you know, in your riding, L'Express de Drummondville received \$400,000 to do local journalism. Such outlets should not be closing, but they, like other small journalism businesses, are facing new challenges in this media age.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

Thank you, everyone, for being here.

Minister, I'll continue in much the same vein as my Bloc Québécois colleague.

A number of media outlets in Canada, including in Quebec, of course, are saying quite clearly that the Government of Canada's advertising investments have plummeted in recent years, particularly because those funds went to GAFAM, and they have been left behind. I'm thinking in particular of regional weeklies and regional radio stations. They say that the Government of Canada is not setting a good example.

Don't you think it's the role of the Government of Canada to use Canadian media as communication tools to promote its services, projects or programs?

Hon. Marc Miller: You're not wrong, Mr. Généreux. The way the government promotes its initiatives has been the subject of debate for the past 20 years. Of course, people might scratch their heads a bit if we invest money in GAFAM. However, our advertising needs to be where the people are.

As for setting an example, I think the recurring replenishment of the Canada media fund and the Canada periodical fund in recent years set the example. This shows that the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring a healthier and more balanced ecosystem. That said, we can certainly always do better.

Bernard Généreux: I understand that all those funds exist and that this will likely lead to a much broader, global discussion on national media, particularly on how they are funded and how they cover the news. There are many questions currently being raised, even in Quebec, about how the media are subsidized. As the saying goes, you don't bite the hand that feeds you. So we find ourselves in a situation where, when a media outlet receives subsidies, people feel that it isn't impartial, since the money comes from the Government of Canada, of course, and the government is run by the current administration.

Do you also share the perception held by many people in the industry that news coverage, in general, lacks fairness? We are currently conducting a study on that. We've heard a number of different sources testify about fairness in news coverage itself and about funding, among other things. Do you also share this perception?

Hon. Marc Miller: No.

Fairness means that GAFAM pay their fair share. That's the first thing.

Second, in the case of CBC/Radio-Canada, it's an institution that has greater independence precisely because of its relationship with the government. That doesn't mean it shouldn't be accountable, but it has that independence precisely to ensure and strengthen its credibility.

When we invest in the Journal de Lévis, in the co-operative behind the newspaper L'Oie blanche or in periodicals in your riding, such as Les Éditions Info Dimanche, we don't ask them to say mean things about you.

Bernard Généreux: Of course not.

That does make me think, though, because I've seen some comments. You're talking about GAFAM. You said that we have to go where the customers are. At the end of the day, the consumer is always right, insofar as they get their information from wherever they want. Bill C-11 and Bill C-18 clearly didn't produce what you expected or what you had promised.

I'm going to make a little joke. I know you're a very humorous person. You promised to give CBC/Radio-Canada \$150 million. Those funds have been delivered. The president and CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada was here two weeks ago, and she admitted that she had received the \$150 million in question. However, in 2026-27, or rather in 2027-28, you plan to cut \$200 million from the CBC/Radio-Canada budget. Can the Conservative Party of Canada steal this idea from you of giving funds with one hand during an election year and, with the other hand, taking back the same amount, or even more, a year or two later? I find that to be an interesting approach. Honestly, it gives the impression that you wanted to support CBC/Radio-Canada by giving it \$150 million during the election period, but then, a year and a half or two years later, you're taking \$200 million away from it. I don't understand the logic there. I'm trying to figure it out.

• (1135)

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I will allow the minister to answer your question. That said, if you took less time to ask the question, you would have more time to hear the answer.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Marc Miller: With all due respect, Mr. Généreux, I think it is important to better understand the budgetary process. It gives us a snapshot of CBC/Radio-Canada's funding profile, but the estimates do not account for the subsequent replenishment. Saying that we give it \$150 million only to take back \$200 million is therefore a flawed equation. That's part of the budget cycle.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Hirtle, you are next. You have the floor for five minutes.

Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Minister. I, like you, am not much of a video gamer, but I have a musical theatre background, so I'm a big fan of live music and theatre.

I'm wondering this morning if you would outline some key priorities that your department is advancing to strengthen Canada's arts and culture sector.

Hon. Marc Miller: Do you mean in the live music...?

Alana Hirtle: Sure.

Hon. Marc Miller: It is an area of particular interest, especially because we see an ecosystem that I would say is subject to monopolistic behaviour in what we've seen in the U.S. Canada is not immune to large productions that are heavily influenced by Live Nation, especially with their joint venture with evenko in Quebec.

The thinking that I have to have behind this is whether we support ventures that are profitable or ones that need support from the Government of Canada. I think those are the two extreme views, and I don't espouse either of them, because, for example, when you look at investing in the Ottawa Jazz Festival, they have a component open to the public that we help support. It would be an incomplete argument to say that evenko and Live Nation are controlling it all, because we do want to make sure that people get to see open, accessible jazz, particularly the tourists who come to enjoy it and the folks who can't afford to pay for stuff in a theatre. That's one thing.

That's the reflection we have to put into how we fund theatre productions around the country and how we support small venues, whether they are small venues in big cities or small venues in smaller areas of the country. That is where we have a number of funding mechanisms to support theatres and creative minds so that people can get out and experience things off their screens, some amazing artists who cut their teeth in smaller venues and then go on to the world stage. Stratford is a great example of that, but there are also even smaller venues that sometimes attract only a dozen or two dozen people to see amazing work that is being produced and then ultimately exported onto the world stage.

Alana Hirtle: Thank you. That's a great response.

I'm going to give you an opportunity to recap some of the investments that your department is making in helping to grow Canada's creative economy.

Hon. Marc Miller: As members may have seen, the main estimates basically are a snapshot of my department at a moment in time. About half a billion dollars is specifically dedicated through a number of envelopes to make sure creative industries are supported. If you look at the impact of that in Canada and look at some of the statistics that the movie producers association is putting out, you see that this supports 118,000 jobs that contribute \$12 billion to the economy. That's not nothing, and it isn't money that we're just throwing down the drain without seeing a return on investment.

Obviously, some of the shows that I mentioned earlier are doing amazingly well on the world stage, but there are ones that are consumed here, sometimes over dozens of seasons. I've visited the set of *Murdoch Mysteries*, for example, and former prime minister Harper had a small role in it. I think he enjoyed it. It was an old-school role, so it was fitting.

These are all produced here in Canada, and they allow people to get modest support from the Government of Canada, including sometimes less than modest tax credits. They employ, in the case of the movie producers association stats, 118,000 people in Canada and, in the aggregate stats across the industry that my portfolio supports, several hundred thousand jobs in an economy that contributes \$64 billion to Canada. That's not nothing, and it rivals any of the industries that we speak about in Parliament, sometimes a little more often than this.

● (1140)

Alana Hirtle: That's excellent. Thank you.

In the time we have left, can you elaborate on efforts to incorporate or promote indigenous arts, language and culture?

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes, and I think the nuance there is that we have to make sure that we are providing the support to indigenous people and communities to do this themselves, as opposed to what we've perhaps done in the past, which was to dictate a stylized version of what that represents and perhaps what seizes the imagination of non-indigenous people.

The independent Canada Council for the Arts does amazing work in making sure that indigenous voices are represented. The indigenous languages commission has done a great job over the last.... Again, they're independent from me, but we do fund them through the portfolio organizations in making sure that they are advocating for the revitalization of indigenous languages, which comes and is expressed through the arts.

I'd say the indigenous screen board has done amazing work, with productions that members have heard of, like *North of North*, which is now into its second season and is doing great, and it is done in their own way, in their own voices.

As well, there are other envelopes, which I could probably spend more than five minutes on. They exemplify exactly what you're getting at, which is indigenous people using this moment in time to leverage their own voices and show Canadians what they're capable of.

The Chair: Thank you.

Given your original question, I'll take this quick opportunity to advise this committee that the latest Michael Rubinoff production is playing in Hamilton right now at Theatre Aquarius. I saw it on the weekend, and it was brilliant. It's The Tragically Hip musical, *It's a Good Life If You Don't Weaken*. Everybody should go and see it.

[Translation]

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

Martin Champoux: Minister, you spoke earlier about the tech giants. We all agree that they are thugs and do not make life easy for us. Something must be done.

Beyond the fact that they are currently challenging our recent laws in court, is the government doing anything? Are you in regular contact with Meta or Google? We know it's a bit easier with Google, given its co-operation, but what about Meta, for example? Do you have any leads that would suggest that one formula or another could be considered to ensure that digital giants contribute and accept the reality that, when you make billions of dollars in a country, it is only fair to contribute to its ecosystem?

Hon. Marc Miller: That is an argument being raised in court.

As I pointed out earlier, people are entitled to question the effectiveness of legislative measures resulting from Bills C-11 and C-18, but those bills took an inordinate amount of time to pass. People may criticize the CRTC, but the fact remains that the Conservatives are to blame for how long it took the Senate to pass these bills. I think this is the longest it has ever taken for bills to be passed in our history. They should have gone through much earlier.

So, here we are. There are hundreds of millions of dollars that could be freed up specifically to support our creative sector, the media sector, which is struggling.

Yes indeed, every time I talk to these people, I talk to them about discoverability and I tell them how wonderful it would be if we could see where the puck is going so that we can discover our local stories.

Look, I don't want to call anyone a thug, but—

Martin Champoux: I can get away with it—you, less so.

Hon. Marc Miller: I know. You're a member of the opposition.

However, I can offer the example of the *Vitrierie Joyal* series, which was released over the weekend and is a huge hit. It's produced by Prime Video. Yes, the production received tax credits from Canada and Quebec, but it's a huge hit, and it's by Prime Video.

These platforms are here to stay. However, I want them to operate fairly. I want our local content to be discoverable. I want them to stop telling me that all we have to do is select French in the settings to see what we're entitled to see if we want to view franco-phone Quebec culture. I don't want to hear their bogus argument about the integrity of their algorithms anymore. Anything is possible online, and I think we have every right to demand Canadian culture from the people who are making money at the expense of Canadian taxpayers.

Martin Champoux: The important takeaway for me is that you are in ongoing dialogue with these companies. The lines of communication are not severed. There is hope to be found in the new products being released. We can reasonably expect that at some point, they will decide to get on board.

● (1145)

Hon. Marc Miller: Yes.

Martin Champoux: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Miller, there has been a request by members that I ask whether you have an extra 15 minutes to stay with us until 12:15. Do you have a hard stop at noon?

Hon. Marc Miller: I have a hard stop.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will quickly move, then, to Mr. Diotte.

You have the floor for five minutes, although I understand you'll be sharing with Mr. Waugh.

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): That's right, Madam Chair. I'll split with Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Minister, in your opening remarks, you talked about diversity and inclusion and funding that in your department, but many Canadians say that the CBC doesn't truly have a diversity of opinion.

We've heard several times at this committee from experts who have studied the CBC. There was Mike Fegelman, editor-in-chief of Honest Reporting Canada. His organization did a two-year study of the CBC's coverage on the Hamas-Israel war and found that the CBC elevated radical voices, including a radical anti-Zionist hate group. He said that giving them this platform bestows a kind of credibility, which they don't deserve. The study found that the CBC promoted ideology over facts and did so at the taxpayer's expense.

Another official from Honest Reporting Canada told us the CBC "is beating a very one-sided drum, a very one-sided narrative.... CBC is not telling Canadians how to think about an issue. They're showing Canadians what to think about [an] issue, and that should not be the role of our public broadcaster."

It's clear that many Canadians don't trust the CBC. Considering it's your department funding the CBC, what's being done to address the very broad and dangerous issues of bias in reporting?

Hon. Marc Miller: I'd preface this by saying being independent, like the CBC should be as part of the fourth pillar of democracy, is critical. Independent doesn't mean unaccountable. I'm entitled as a citizen to have my views on what the CBC, or any other organization, reports, but I think it's important to recognize that I have to respect its independence while I may have different views on the content and scope of its reporting.

It's that type of thinking that is currently guiding the reform that is under way at CBC/Radio-Canada. That is something I think any parliamentarian would agree with, regardless of whether they share the views you have expressed or think they're completely wrong and false.

Kerry Diotte: Another gentleman we heard from, Mr. Amir Epstein of the Tafsik Organization, was particularly upset with the CBC. He said that it rushed to judgment and reported propaganda from Hamas that Israel bombed a hospital and killed hundreds of people when, in reality, the bombing was a misfire from within Gaza and Israel didn't do it at all.

Does that concern you?

Hon. Marc Miller: It concerns me that any news organization needs, at all times, to be punctual and accurate in its reporting.

Kerry Diotte: He also said that this contributes to anti-Semitism in Canada in a very real way, and we know that anti-Semitism has gone through the roof.

Does it concern you that the CBC would contribute to anti-Semitism?

Hon. Marc Miller: I would first have to share his conclusions to have that concern.

Kerry Diotte: Have you read that report from Honest Reporting Canada?

Hon. Marc Miller: I have read the same summary as you have.

Kerry Diotte: Thank you.

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Thanks, Kerry.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

I see we may have another Laith Marouf incident with Canadian Heritage.

You're trying to claw back \$99,500 that, in the multiculturalism and anti-racism program, you gave a group out of Toronto last year. This year, you denied them on March 30 and went back and looked at some of the posts from this Toronto group.

How successful have you been in getting some of this \$99,500 back?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Waugh, I share presumably the same concern you're expressing. The court case that is currently involving Toronto Palestinian Families is under way, and because I don't want to compromise the outcome of it, it would be imprudent to comment on it any further.

• (1150)

Kevin Waugh: I'm just flagging it, because I thought we learned our lesson from 2022 with Laith Marouf, who took \$133,000 and walked away from this country with over \$100,000. I'm a little disappointed, again, with the department not only last year but this year. Thank heavens on March 30 you made the correct decision that they're no longer up for the grant.

There is another one I want to talk about. Canadian Heritage paid \$72,000 to see the advance copy of the StatsCan report on the police report on hate crimes from March 30.

What was in that report that made Heritage pay \$72,000 upfront to see that report?

The Chair: We're over time, so give a quick answer, please.

Hon. Marc Miller: I will simply say two things. We did change the funding parameters after the incident with Mr. Marouf. It is disappointing not to see the same results; I will agree with you. Perhaps we have been able to prevent other types of funding.

As regards the StatsCan issue, this is news to me. I'm glad to provide a supplementary answer in the future, but I don't have anything additional to support an answer today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I turn the floor over to Ms. Auguste, I have a question from a stakeholder from the Woodlands Cultural Centre, a Six Nations museum in Brantford. I'm sure you're familiar with it.

They're wondering about your department's plans to complete the review of the federal museum policy. I believe it was last updated in the 1990s. They're wondering how the plan will align with UN-DRIP.

We know that this committee has heard about some of the challenges of repatriation of first nations items and sacred artifacts, so give us a general overview, if you wouldn't mind, sir.

Hon. Marc Miller: Thanks, Chair.

Any repatriation of indigenous artifacts, whether inside Canada, to communities, or outside Canada, to proper holding and then to communities themselves, is a multi-year process. Given the sensitivity of the issue and the sheer number of artifacts involved and identifying them across institutions, with every cultural minister that I've spoken to, including my colleague in France, I've highlighted the concern that many indigenous groups are seeking to repatriate some of their items, often a great number of which are considered sacred and not treated in the sacred context that is due to them.

My question about the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is whether the museum policy itself is the proper space for a repatriation policy, because we're not talking about bringing them back to museums; we're talking about bringing these sacred things that never should have been in museums in the first place to areas of the country that don't have the facilities to house them properly or may not necessarily have the protocols and the relationships ready to do that.

I think that's why there is more reflection to be done about how that gets articulated. There was a member who advanced a private member's bill many years ago that never got royal assent, or may have died on the order paper, specifically dealing with repatriation of artifacts. That is one solution. Maybe a stand-alone law is the way to make sure we are doing this right as opposed to simply modifying a museum policy and calling it a day. There are much better ways to do this.

This will require funds and the support of the Government of Canada. We've supported some of the repatriation from the Vatican, but that's only a very small part of the story.

The Chair: Thank you for your thoughtfulness.

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

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the minister and all the other witnesses for joining us.

I'd like to talk about the Canada Strong pass, which—over the summer alone—generated \$60 billion in economic benefits and also enabled, as you mentioned, nearly 500,000 young people to travel across Canada. In my community of Terrebonne, many young people told me that this allowed them to broaden their horizons and visit Canada.

Could you tell me about the value of such a program for you and your department?

Hon. Marc Miller: In the current climate, many people are wary of visiting the United States, largely because of the way that country behaves. We all know the situation—I won't talk about the 51st state, because we're all fed up with that discussion. The reality is that people are opting out of the United States as a tourist destination. So they're turning to Canada, which has so much for them to explore—including our national museums and our great parks. The pass gives them the opportunity to enjoy our national parks at a low cost and to travel on Via Rail trains, among other things. It's wonderful, when the trains are on time, of course. The pass also gives them the chance to enjoy our national museums.

The results are clear. This winter, we renewed the program so that young people could visit museums. I was at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum here in Ottawa to see young people taking advantage of this pass. They can also enjoy other major national museums that define our beautiful country and are a source of pride. It's great that young people can enjoy them. There's no better way to get young people away from their iPhones than to take them to a museum so they can discover all that is beautiful and defines us as Canadians.

• (1155)

Tatiana Auguste: Thank you very much.

My second question has to do with official languages.

In Quebec, we're fortunate to be a community that's predominantly francophone. We're always looking at things from the perspective of protecting the French language, but I also think we're somewhat seen as francophiles. In other words, we want to promote the French language elsewhere and in francophone minority communities.

I would like to hear how your department promotes French, not only in Quebec, but also in francophone minority communities across Canada.

Hon. Marc Miller: First, we are talking about 10 million French speakers. While my responsibility in Quebec is shared with the Quebec government, I also have a responsibility toward minority language communities, and I most often speak about francophone communities outside Quebec.

The bilingualism strategy, which has a \$4 billion budget, allows small communities to benefit from our programs to ensure that people have access to services in their language.

Meanwhile, a Senate committee is currently studying the overhaul of the regulatory framework for businesses under federal jurisdiction. That involves francophones' right to receive services in their language. The regulatory framework will immediately affect our responsibilities in Quebec and will be implemented two years later in minority communities, whether in French-speaking Ontario, Acadia, or other small communities across the country.

We are therefore assuming our responsibility and doing what we must do—although we have not necessarily always done it well.

I'd also like to mention the billions of dollars allocated for integrating newcomers, especially in light of the new 12% goal for francophone immigrants. These newcomers will be welcomed primarily into small communities, given that Quebec controls its own permanent immigration. Therefore, integration implies a responsibility to ensure that services are provided in French. I am thinking more specifically of education and health care services.

The Chair: Ms. Auguste, if you don't mind, I'm going to call on the next speaker now, since it's almost noon.

Mr. Champoux, you have two and a half minutes, after which our time with the minister will be up.

Martin Champoux: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak again, since it allows me to clarify something the minister said earlier regarding Via Rail delays. I am a regular Via Rail user. I love Via's services. When there are delays, most of the time it's because of Canadian National. That's another issue—which might be better discussed by another committee—but it's still very important, and frankly, everyone would benefit from a more reliable passenger rail service.

Again, I'm pleased to have one last question for you. I'm straying a bit from today's topic, but it's an issue that could be relevant to this committee.

Recently, we conducted a study on the effects of social media on children and adolescents. The report from this study is highly anticipated. Many people believe that access to social media for young people should be restricted or banned—some propose the age of 16—as is the case in other countries. During our study, whose report will be released shortly, we heard thought-provoking arguments regarding a blanket ban on social media access for young people.

Following a convention you held in Montreal during the April by-election, rumour had it that the government was preparing to introduce legislation to that effect.

Do you think a bill regarding young people's access to social media will be introduced? Will this fall under your department's purview? Where do things stand on this? Can you provide further details?

• (1200)

Hon. Marc Miller: That's a shame, because I wanted to talk to you about the Drummondville Poutine Festival, which we support. I certainly hope to see you there.

Martin Champoux: I'll be expecting you. I'll show you around the poutine vendors, and we'll listen to The Offspring and other Quebec artists performing this year.

Hon. Marc Miller: I believe that as a federal government, we must take action. Frankly, we have no choice when we see the harm being done, especially to young people. It's not limited to young people, but as a father and a minister, I have a responsibility to ensure we're doing the right thing for our youth. We know the impact. The science is increasingly clear regarding the effects of social media and screen time, especially on younger children. We're talking about brains that aren't fully developed yet.

We must take action. If an age limit is to be imposed, it must be part of a broader strategy. We know the system is porous. Even if we restrict access, people can get around it fairly easily. Australia has shown us the results—it doesn't work perfectly.

However, such a measure must be part of a bill aimed at harm reduction—specifically, reducing the most serious harms—while respecting freedom of expression.

In my view, such a measure should be implemented as soon as possible, but there is still work to be done before anything can be proposed.

Martin Champoux: I sincerely hope that, when this bill is introduced, the government will engage in a broad conversation and also listen to proposals from opposition parties, as this is a responsibility we all share. I hope you will also bear in mind the feedback we received during the study our committee recently completed. This is a very important issue. I have reservations, but I agree that we absolutely must take action. It is extremely important to act quickly, as you said. I hope this will be done with a great deal of openness and that a variety of opinions can be taken into account. I hope this will not be done solely in response to a public outcry demanding that we take a firm stance and simply ban access.

Hon. Marc Miller: It is precisely because I have deep respect for my colleagues in the House, regardless of political affiliation, that I have not spoken out more publicly.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes while the minister leaves. We will then have about an hour with officials.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

[English]

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

I believe Mr. Lawton is up next to ask questions of our officials.

You have the floor now for five minutes.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you very much.

I will be asking questions about Bill C-18. I'm not sure who is the best suited to answer them.

I want to delve into whether this is actually living up to its stated purpose, which was to provide something of a lifeline to media in this country. Who is paying into the pot, so to speak? Who is actually funding this project so far?

Francis Bilodeau (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): I think the minister mentioned that, at this point, the potential funders are a combination of Google and Facebook. Google has paid into the fund.

Andrew Lawton: You said potentially funded, but it's just Google that's actually paying into it.

Francis Bilodeau: It's Google at this point.

Andrew Lawton: Of that, 7%, as I understand it, is going to the CBC. Is that correct?

Francis Bilodeau: That's correct.

Andrew Lawton: How much of that is going to larger media outlets?

Francis Bilodeau: I'll see if Blair has more specifics on that.

Blair McMurren (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage): The Canadian Journalism Collective is the entity that's administering the Google fund. It has done its reporting. It has just disbursed the second year of the funding and there's very rich data around where that's going.

It's governed by a collective steering committee that tries to balance that out. It's an ongoing calibration to ensure that the smaller, local outlets benefit.

Andrew Lawton: Can the department point to one single local outlet that has been able to prevent itself from going under because of this funding?

Francis Bilodeau: I don't think we'll be able to draw the line of who's been prevented from going under but, as Blair said, there's significant information on the recipients.

Andrew Lawton: Does the department have numbers on how many small and independent media outlets there are in Canada, versus how many there were when Bill C-18 received royal assent?

Francis Bilodeau: We do.

Do you know them offhand, Blair?

Blair McMurren: It's a good question. This is data I know this committee has been interested in having, through the previous study and the one that's being wrapped up.

We have completed phase one of the local news directory project, which we believe will help us get at this information. We're proceeding to phase two. We'd be happy to provide some information about that.

Andrew Lawton: I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Generally speaking, are there fewer or more small and independent media outlets now than there were when Bill C-18 received royal assent?

Francis Bilodeau: We're aware that the numbers declined due to issues around revenues and particularly around ads, as you will know. My understanding is that, to date, there are 459 recipients of the funds provided by Google. Whether or not those funds provided by the government have prevented them from going under is not something we would be able to assess.

Andrew Lawton: Okay.

Reading from the summary of the bill, it's "to enhance fairness in the Canadian digital news marketplace and contribute to its sustainability." It has failed.

• (1210)

Francis Bilodeau: The sentence you've read says, "contribute to its sustainability", so that's something we're assessing. Certainly, there have been a number of recipients, so to that extent, it is providing supports to a number of organizations. As I mentioned, I believe the number of organizations that will have received funds is around 459.

Andrew Lawton: There are fewer independent and small media companies now than there were when this bill came into effect, though.

Francis Bilodeau: There are dynamics, as we've discussed, around their funding profiles and their funding sources—

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Bilodeau, you don't need to protect the government's policy. I'm not holding you to it.

Francis Bilodeau: I'm saying I agree that there are fewer. What I'm unable to answer directly is what the impact would have been absent the measures taken by the government.

Andrew Lawton: When we look at the effect of Bill C-18 and, specifically, the responsive measures taken by Meta, which mean that no news can be shared on Facebook or Instagram, there are greater tools available to your Torstars, your Postmedias and your CBCs to reach audiences than there are to the individual local radio station in St. Thomas or to others.

What is the department doing to ensure that these independent outlets have access to online audiences now, given that the Liberal government policy has blocked them off?

Francis Bilodeau: Blair, do you have anything to add on this one?

Blair McMurren: We have a whole suite of program supports for these kinds of outlets. Some of them involve business development to look at how they can react to the situation they find themselves in, vis-à-vis—

Andrew Lawton: The situation they found themselves in because of government legislation.

Blair McMurren: One of those programs is called the collective initiatives component of the Canada periodical fund. It will help them change their business operations to find new audiences online, for example.

Andrew Lawton: It strikes me that the CBC doesn't need 7% of this budget. It could be better suited going to independent outlets.

Francis Bilodeau: The measures in the bill have been brought forward in a way so that the CBC is eligible. It's being paid the funds as per the measures that were passed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Royer, you now have the floor for five minutes. Go ahead.

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

Welcome to our committee today.

I thought I would begin by enticing you, Deputy Minister and your department, and hopefully Minister Miller, to take a little tour of my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, including Anmore and Belcarra, on the beautiful west coast of B.C. I'll begin by painting a picture of some of the organizations that contribute greatly to my neck of the woods.

We have organizations such as the Port Moody Arts Centre, the Place des Arts and the station museum. We have active sports clubs, like the Coquitlam Express Junior A Hockey Club and the Port Moody Soccer Club. We have community media, like Tri-Cities Community TV and Freshet News. With a 46% immigration population, we have very active independent ethnic community TV producers, such as Parvaz media and KTV. I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the Festival du Bois, the much-loved festival put on by the Société francophone de Maillardville every year. These, and so many others, are bringing people together.

It's all happening on the unceded territory of eight nations. These are the Kwikwetlem, Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam, Squamish, Katzie, Kwantlen, Qayqayt and Stó:lō peoples.

All of this culminates in an incredible project that horseshoes around the Burrard Inlet called the presence of ancestors. It's a collaboration of five house posts created by a Coast Salish artist, Tasha Faye Evans, other indigenous artists and the Port Moody Ecological Society. It really showcases my riding. It's an incredible place to visit any time of the year.

With the new budget, how might these groups see themselves reflected?

Francis Bilodeau: As I think you know, the department manages a grants and contributions envelope that is close to \$2 billion. There have been new investments in arts, culture and sports, both through budget 2025 and through the spring economic statement. More recently, there have been very significant investments in sports.

In the context of the recent budget, we've seen new investments in the Canada arts presentation fund and building communities through arts and heritage, and ongoing investments through the Canada music fund, the Canada Media Fund and Telefilm Canada.

We support an ecosystem of programs, both in direct funding and through portfolio organizations, that are intended to provide direct support for organizations—in many cases, smaller, community-based organizations—so that they can grow the talent, the arts and the culture that are so important to Canada.

My colleague, Joëlle, is responsible for the cultural sector, so I'll see if she would like to add anything specific.

• (1215)

Joëlle Montminy (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage): As the deputy minister said, these additional investments are much needed. As you know, we have heard—and I'm sure you've heard as well—that inflation has created significant pressure on a lot of arts organizations.

It's providing that additional funding but also talking to organizations about how we can continue to support them in finding that space where they can become more resilient, and then how they can continue to function and grow the programming that we want to enjoy as Canadians and how they can structure themselves to continue finding different sources of funds as well.

There are different conversations. Again, these investments are really important, as well as the ongoing dialogue, to make sure that we continue to support them in getting stronger and more resilient.

Francis Bilodeau: I will highlight the celebration and commemoration program that supports local initiatives, a number of them funded in your area. We can talk about the Canadian Cultural Festival and Canada Day in Coquitlam. Through our programming, these types of initiatives and supports for community-led initiatives are being funded across the country.

Zoe Royer: That's incredible. I think that responds very nicely to some smaller organizations.

In the metro Vancouver area, which my riding is part of, there are also what we call the “G-8”, the larger, well-established organizations: Ballet BC, Arts Umbrella, Arts Club, Bard on the Beach, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Vancouver Art Gallery, etc.

There's also an emerging player: Ballet Vancouver. It is repatriating some of the top-performing Canadian ballet artists who are coming back from companies like the American Ballet Theatre. Some of them were trained in my riding.

How can these bigger groups meet with your department? Are you accessible and open to meeting with them? What programs can they tap into?

Francis Bilodeau: I am now about five months into the department and some things are quite striking to me. I've had the opportunity to travel a bit around the country and meet our stakeholders. The extent to which people within the department are connected to their committees, to their stakeholder groups, etc., and are known and sought after is incredible. Some of my colleagues might want to speak to this.

I have great pride and happiness to see that level of connection between the department and the various stakeholders, whether it's on the multiculturalism side, the arts and culture side, or the sports side. We aim to be a department that is accessible to our stakeholders in hearing their concerns and supporting them through the important work they do.

Zoe Royer: That's music to my ears. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hello again, everyone.

Mr. Bilodeau, the minister mentioned a figure earlier when I asked him about the expanded tax credit for digital media newsrooms. He said the measure would cost \$6 billion. I don't understand how this measure could cost \$6 billion. Earlier, I didn't have any figures before me, so I took the time to look into what the \$6 billion cost of this measure might entail.

Could you give me further details on how this tax credit amount was calculated? Quebec has granted one under another measure, so I imagine the government must have used the same estimates to determine what the tax credit would cost.

• (1220)

Francis Bilodeau: To give you further details, I think we will have to provide a more direct answer at a later time. A number of factors will depend on the parameters, such as whether a maximum amount is set, for example. Expenditures will depend on the parameters of this tax credit and how the program is designed. All of these factors can affect the potential figure.

Martin Champoux: I understand, but it's an existing tax credit for journalism labour in print media, so you already have a model you can follow. What's more, the Government of Quebec included the tax credit in its most recent budget. Again, you can use that framework as a guide.

Do you think it could actually cost \$6 billion? Unless a decision is made to fully cover all journalists' salaries, is \$6 billion a realistic number?

Francis Bilodeau: I believe the Department of Finance came up with the estimated cost of the tax credit. I wouldn't want to speculate on the figure, but I would be happy to get back to you with more detailed numbers.

Martin Champoux: That's great.

By way of background, Quebecor is definitely the largest journalism employer in Quebec, if we don't include Radio-Canada. Quebecor estimates that it would amount to roughly \$3 million a year. Let's assume, then, that it's \$3 million for Quebecor. If I do the math, taking into account all TV and radio newsrooms across Canada, I find the minister's estimate surprising.

I would very much appreciate it if you could provide us with the numbers. Perhaps you could work with the Department of Finance, if it would help you get back to us with more exact numbers. We'll wait for you to get back to us with that information.

I want to ask you something about Google's annual payment of \$100 million. I think everyone welcomed that announcement. We found out that Google was choosing the organization that would distribute the money. That may have been an aspect that went undetected. I'm not sure we anticipated that Google would choose who was going to distribute the funds.

Has the feedback been positive thus far? Are you satisfied? Is Google's annual \$100-million contribution being distributed properly?

Joëlle Montminy: Yes, you're right. During the process, Google chose the collective it wanted to work with to disburse the funds, the Canadian Journalism Collective.

I think we all paid close attention to the organization in its early days. It's worth noting that it didn't exist beforehand, so it wasn't already disbursing funds. It was created for that purpose. Arrangements and adjustments were made. I would say the organization showed that it was attuned to what was going on, to make sure the funds were distributed in a way that satisfied the needs of the ecosystem as a whole. As we know, the media sector has small players, medium-sized players and big players. Good representation was in everyone's interest. It was also important to make sure that the terms and conditions for disbursing the money were satisfactory. A governance structure had to be set up.

Obviously, we don't have any oversight of that process. The CRTC oversees the distribution of funds and the manner in which they are disbursed. That said, on our end, we haven't heard about any issues at this time. It's going well.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

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

Kevin Waugh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Welcome, department officials.

I really didn't get an answer about the heritage department's paying \$72,000 just for the advance copy of StatsCan's March 30 release on police-reported hate crime. Who made that decision in the department? I take it the minister doesn't know much about it, if anything at all.

Francis Bilodeau: I will see if my colleagues know. This would have been before my time. It would be unusual for us to pay for it in advance.

Kevin Waugh: It wasn't before your time. This was March 30.

Francis Bilodeau: It would be unusual for us to pay to see an advance copy. It would not be unusual for us to enter into an agreement with StatsCan to co-fund certain studies it does. If that is the case, then it wouldn't be unusual for us to have an advance copy and to see surveys that would have been done in collaborations we have done.

Kevin Waugh: You would pay \$72,000.

Francis Bilodeau: I'm not speaking to specifically this one.

StatsCan does work partly on cost recovery where the work it is doing is of interest to a department. It doesn't pay, itself, the entirety of studies, with exceptions, obviously, for those that are core to its mandate. Where there are areas of interest to departments, it will often seek financial support from departments to undertake studies. That would be a normal course of a payment. Under that normal course of things, it would not be unusual for us to see an advance copy before it's publicly released.

● (1225)

Kevin Waugh: You were going to ask somebody else on the panel if this was normal. You had turned to another official—maybe Andrew; I don't know.

Francis Bilodeau: I was seeing if anybody had direct knowledge of this one. I'm not seeing it around the table. I'm happy to come back to you more directly on this one. What I'm saying is that it would not be unusual, if we've co-funded a research project by StatsCan or a survey by StatsCan, for us to both pay and have an advance copy.

Kevin Waugh: How often does this happen with the department? To me, \$72,000 is not chump change.

Francis Bilodeau: I would say that it's actually a fairly common occurrence for departments to co-fund studies with StatsCan. It is actually a normal course of business that I have seen in other departments as well.

Kevin Waugh: Was there something in the report that you were worried about or flagged?

Francis Bilodeau: Generally, data around hate events or others within Canada would be of interest to us in terms of multiculturalism. Those are things we would be interested in knowing and understanding and deepening our understanding about. They would be of general interest to the Canadian public, in line with our mandate.

Kevin Waugh: On the multiculturalism you just brought up, I was disturbed, again, that the department.... Here we are again, tracking \$99,500. You see, I was here in 2022, when we never did get the Laith Marouf money. He ran off to another country. We tried to get it and got a little bit of it.

Thank God you stopped the 2026 grant, but how will you retrieve last year's nearly \$100,000 grant from this group?

Francis Bilodeau: Do you mean the Toronto Palestinian Families?

Kevin Waugh: Yes.

Francis Bilodeau: I think the minister spoke to this and to the fact that there have been measures taken in that space. It's currently a function of legal proceedings. In respect of the legal proceedings that may be occurring, we won't be commenting further.

Kevin Waugh: When you issue grants like this, do you go back? I see that you did go back on March 30 of this year: We have some flags here. We'd better not give them the 2026 grant.

When did you start the procedure of trying to get back the 2025 grant of \$99,500 from this organization? When was it first brought up?

Francis Bilodeau: Again, I won't speak to the procedure. This is relatively recent, as you will have seen in the news media. The gov-

ernment is taking measures. It has previously assessed, and on the basis of that assessment is now taking steps. Again, I won't comment on the details of this one, because it is subject to legal proceedings.

Kevin Waugh: Okay.

FIFA is five weeks away. How much is the department spending on FIFA in Vancouver and Toronto? Give me the ballpark number.

Andrew Brown (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): The amount that the department is providing to Toronto and Vancouver, the host cities, is the \$220 million that was previously announced to support their operations. There is some other funding being provided by the Government of Canada to support the hosting of the games. As was announced in budget 2025, there was also \$100 million there, largely to support safety and security in relation to the FIFA World Cup in Canada. Finally, in last week's spring economic statement, there was also an announcement of some additional funding, a total of about \$145 million, again in relation to safety and security related to the FIFA games.

I think that really sums up the financial investment the Government of Canada has made, continuing to work to ensure that Canada can benefit, to the extent possible, in terms of travel, tourism and developing business opportunities among people who visit Canada for the tournament.

The Chair: Thank you.

Doly Begum, welcome to the heritage committee. You have the floor for five minutes.

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Good morning, everyone. I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to join this committee for a little bit.

I know that there has been conversation about reliable, high-quality journalism. As we see the new age of social media, what worries me, especially with a lot of our seniors...and it's not because my dad sends me WhatsApp news videos, or what he considers news videos, and I then have to call him about and say, "Dad, that's not real. That's not true." It also happens in my community. I hear about it. A lot of folks, especially seniors, and of course our youth as well, who are exposed to this end up in situations where they're exposed to fake news or misinformation. It's not really trustworthy.

I know that there have been some steps. Could you elaborate on some of the steps that have been taken to strengthen public trust in Canadian news and to really combat the misinformation going on in these kinds of outlets?

● (1230)

Francis Bilodeau: I would say you could break it down into two components.

One is around strengthening the financial support for Canadian news media, as well as supporting organizations like the CBC as a public broadcaster, to ensure that there are reliable sources of news.

The other part you're bringing forward is around online safety. The government has signalled the intent to bring forward safe social media legislation, building on a previous bill brought in by the government around online harms.

We are pursuing a dual approach. The aim is to provide supports for Canadian news sources to make sure there is reliable news, and to advance initiatives, including recently reconvening our advisory panel on online harms and safe social media to build up an ecosystem that supports safe access.

I'll turn to my colleagues who are leading some of these initiatives.

Blair McMurren: As the deputy said, our support for the journalism and news media sector is a response to misinformation and disinformation. Our support will improve the quality of information that is circulating in communities.

For several years, the government has invested in a program called the digital citizen initiative. This has funded action research in this space with leading researchers, community advocates and organizers to look at this issue and to try new approaches, including in minority communities where it could be an issue, potentially, but also very broadly. The results of that research are widely disseminated now and are available through our departmental website. It can give a flavour of best practices with regard to working with communities and looking at issues of information intake.

Doly Begum: On that point, one of the things I find important is having different voices in our outlets as well. I know you have taken some initiatives. Could you speak to some of those aimed at the diversity—indigenous journalism, media organizations and diverse voices—that reflects the fabric of Canada?

Blair McMurren: I can field that one.

This is an important part of our broad-based support for journalism, through the Canada periodical fund, which funds a wide range of publications. There are eligibility criteria designed to improve access for different minority communities. These could be official language minorities or 2SLGBTQ audiences. That's been built into our broad-based programming.

At the same time, under the action plan on combatting hate, we've invested in a specific initiative called the changing narratives fund. It is specifically designed to invest in the pipeline of talent for journalism coming out of these communities. We're coming at it from different angles.

I would point to that one in particular. It's a time-limited program from which we hope to learn valuable lessons for mainstreaming these practices in other programs or perhaps for investing in that program going forward.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Diotte, I'll pass the floor over to you for five minutes.

Kerry Diotte: I don't think I got great answers from the minister about the whole issue of the CBC. It's interesting that you're now talking about misinformation online. Well, if truth be told, a lot of people think the CBC is involved in misinformation.

This is to the deputy minister.

I will recap some of the testimony we've heard from witnesses.

Mike Fegelman, editor-in-chief of HonestReporting Canada, said their “two-year study on [CBC's coverage of] the Hamas-Israel war” found that the CBC “elevated radical voices”, including a “radical, anti-Zionist hate group”. He said, “Giving them this platform bestows a kind of credibility, which they don't deserve.” This study also found that the CBC “promoted ideology over facts...and did so at the taxpayer's expense.”

It's clear that many Canadians don't trust the CBC. I hear it all the time.

Considering that your department funds the CBC, what's being done to fix this?

Francis Bilodeau: I am aware of the report you referenced. The minister gave one part of the answer, which is that it is certainly normal in Canada and other countries to ensure that public broadcasters have a clear level of independence from the government. There are important reasons for that, and they are baked into the structures and governance of those organizations. That's intended.

That being said, it's also expected that the CBC, within its own operation, be accountable to Canadians and take on the highest levels of the standards of professional journalism. That is also baked into the expectations set for it. It has mechanisms in place, like an ombud, that allow for complaints and for looking into any of those allegations.

Again, I'm aware of the HonestReporting Canada report. We have taken note of it. We have also taken note of dissenting voices within the journalism community vis-à-vis that report.

Kerry Diotte: Getting further into the whole idea of independence, how can an organization be truly independent when the government gives it \$1.6 billion?

Francis Bilodeau: Again, there are a number of publicly funded organizations that are intended to be independent. Think of the Bank of Canada with regard to some of its decisions, or the competition commissioner's own decisions. The CBC has structures around it that are intended for this. The government looks to have a role on the board but is not able to interfere with regard to programming. That's very intentional.

There are ongoing discussions and reviews across the world regarding public broadcasters. The tendency has been to think about how to strengthen the independence of those public broadcasters.

Kerry Diotte: When they violate their own standards, what is done? I know the CBC has a very high-sounding standards package, yet we heard from Amir Epstein of Tafsik, who said that the CBC reported that Israel bombed a hospital and killed hundreds of people.

What was done when it was found out that this was false—that it wasn't Israel that bombed the hospital but rather Palestinian ordinance that caused the damage and killed hundreds of people? What happened there? We fund the CBC.

Francis Bilodeau: It's a useful question. In that context, I will talk a little about the role of the ombud and the measures put in place, or intended to be put in place, in order to strengthen the journalistic integrity of the CBC.

Joëlle, can you fill that in a bit?

Joëlle Montminy: As you may be aware, like any broadcaster, the CBC has a very robust system to uphold journalistic independence and the highest journalistic standards, including through the ombud system they have, where anyone can make a claim—

• (1240)

Kerry Diotte: They failed miserably in that instance alone.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.): Thank you very much for being here.

We had a really robust study on artificial intelligence and its effect on the creative industry. We heard a lot of concerns, particularly around the protection of intellectual property and the importance of copyright. I think we can all agree that there is more and more content on our streaming services that is AI-generated. Now they're saying that it's up to 30% or 35%.

The question is for Monsieur Bilodeau, because I know he has much experience from the Department of Industry and is now here in this department.

I am wondering what you foresee as some of the challenges and how the department can respond to those challenges, particularly given your experience, coming from Industry and being, now, at Heritage.

Francis Bilodeau: Thank you. It's an interesting question. Again, a lot of governments are grappling with the realities of AI. It is part of industries, and it creates both opportunities and specific challenges.

With regard to AI in the cultural industries, as I believe you know, we've started more robust engagement with AI and the potential impact on the industries, including this: What does that mean with regard to regimes around copyright? How should we be thinking about them, both in how AI systems can ingest copyrighted or copyrightable materials and in how they might be used in production? To that end, we recently had a consultation and a summit, in Banff, to hear and to engage with those in the cultural industries

about what that means for their own industry. However, it was also to try to bring together people who are from the AI industry, who are innovating in that space, with cultural creators, so that they can identify and start to think about how the industry will evolve and what benefits can be drawn from it.

There are very real potential upsides, but there are also industries that are being profoundly changed in how they're structured, including the revenue streams around those. Those are fundamental questions, I think, for us, but also for governments around the world.

Blair has done a lot of work in that space and was at the summit.

I don't know if there's anything you would like to add to that.

Blair McMurren: You were an active participant at the summit. You heard some of the discourse and debate about this. It is live debate in terms of the legislative piece. That debate will continue but, in the meantime, as the deputy said, there are some very compelling sets of practices emerging. You might recall that MusicAI was at the summit, talking about how they use AI themselves to police the infringement of copyright and to build a service that can help artists navigate the current complexities.

We think examples like that are great. If there were opportunities to help support that form of creative technology, that could be a useful role for government, at the same time as we look to the legislative and regulatory piece, which is also our responsibility, of course.

David Myles: One question we've asked, about AI in general, is about the adoption. In Canada, we talk about people being comfortable with adopting it. With my being on this committee, I can't help but think that, if we want adoption in general by the public, it would help if we had the confidence of artists. Right now, I don't feel like we have the confidence of artists, judging by what we heard in the committee, and particularly when they're worried about having their intellectual property and some of their fundamental economic levers, as businesses, potentially compromised.

How do you see the relationship between public trust and cultural/artistic trust? I think there's a connection there.

Francis Bilodeau: In many ways, artists shape our identity and create pieces that are public. As you flagged, the challenges there are around issues of copyright, licensing, and whether or not there's recognition and transparency when something that's been created by an artist is used in the training and then the subsequent creation of product by AI.

Topics that are under consideration are things like clear identification of what's been done by AI versus an individual, clear issues around how you build and advance licensing rights, conversations about copyright and the recognition of what is or is not copyrightable. There are active debates. Those are exactly the issues we're engaging in, with the artists and cultural industries, to try to think how we can build out a regime that supports creation within culture and arts in Canada; maintains that capacity; and is reflective of the changing potential economic dynamics that are brought about, not just by AI specifically but digital as well.

There is an analogy between what's happening in the AI space and digital, where the structures and economics of sectors...and they're not all the same. The music sector will not be the same as the visual arts sector, which will not be the same as the performing arts sector, as examples. How each of these is being impacted by digital and AI is, I think, core to what we are currently engaging in and discussing, and Parliament will be engaging in and discussing.

In a way, online news and online streaming, both pieces of legislation, were an initial step forward in creating a regulatory environment that attempts to deal with the digital realities facing some of our sectors that are being transformed by digital technologies. However, the dialogue, the engagement and thinking through the policy are things we'll welcome from this committee, but they are also things the department is advancing.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

We now go to Mr. Champoux for two and a half minutes.

Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We talked about AI. We also talked about young people's access to social media, misinformation and disinformation. The digital citizen contribution program is a tool to counter disinformation, increase digital literacy, and help Quebecers and Canadians become better digital citizens. Nevertheless, the government made major cuts to the program. I wonder why. Did the program get the job done, meaning we're all social media and Internet wizards now, or did the money go to something else?

Why were the cuts made? What steps is the department taking?

Joëlle Montminy: We did indeed make progress. In our view, the program helped move things forward. It mobilized civil society to think about ways to counter disinformation and create a favourable environment for young people to develop those skills. We know of countries that are doing a good job of that within the school system. We initially created the program to start that conversation by issuing calls for proposals to support research projects. They are available on our website.

That said, we are currently considering our approach. Instead of continuing to do the same thing and hand out grants and contributions for individual research projects as we've been doing for a number of years, we are thinking about next steps. How do we encourage people to keep acquiring the right tools and support their efforts to counter disinformation?

Martin Champoux: I'm going to switch topics.

Neither the government's fall budget nor its economic update leave much room for certain parts of the cultural sector. Cultural groups are very concerned about that, since they were expecting to see more support. They're seeing the opposite, with programs being cut and responses to funding applications being delayed.

In the face of that reaction, how do you respond to cultural industries, particularly Quebec's, which I have more contact with? They're very worried and concerned—and rightly so—about what they see as the federal government's withdrawal from support for culture.

Francis Bilodeau: I don't necessarily agree with the idea that significant cuts to culture were made. There were major reinvestments in 2025, even as budgets were being cut government-wide. There were actually considerable investments in the Canada Media Fund, the Canada music fund and the Canada periodical fund, in addition to reinvestments. In that regard, I'm not sure I agree with the idea that funding was cut. In fact, I think funding support for culture remains fairly strong. As far as the main estimates for our department are concerned, we are at \$1.9 billion.

• (1250)

Martin Champoux: All the people in theatre, performing arts and entertainment broadcasting who desperately needed financial help have been completely overlooked. Yes, it's true that the production and audiovisual sector saw investments, but entertainment broadcasters, small theatre producers and small event halls feel totally forgotten. They are the very foundation of our system, our cultural ecosystem.

Joëlle Montminy: Of course there is always more to do. We realize that help is really needed across the ecosystem. You mentioned sectors that continue to argue that they need more help. That is something we will keep working on.

However, as the deputy minister said, the 2025 budget did contain some rather sizable investments, despite a very difficult economic context.

In addition, our department was somewhat spared in the government-wide cost-cutting measures, precisely to protect our funding.

As for last year and next year, I think we're well positioned to keep supporting the sector and ecosystem.

Martin Champoux: How much time do I have left, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You ran out of time a while ago, Mr. Champoux.

We have two members left, and then we have to vote on the main estimates.

We now go to Mr. Généreux for three minutes.

Bernard Généreux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before I get to my questions, I'd like to know something. Mr. Bilodeau, can you provide the committee with the Statistics Canada report you paid \$70,000 for?

Francis Bilodeau: Of course. We will follow up with the committee.

Bernard Généreux: Thank you very much.

I want to follow up on the questions about Bill C-18. You admitted that there were fewer media businesses now than there were before Bill C-18 was passed. In the end, it didn't fulfill the commitment to keep Canada's entire journalism ecosystem intact. We know that many media organizations are in dire straits.

What is your department's advertising budget? Where do you spend the money? Do you have the answers to my questions?

Earlier, I told the minister to lead by example. If your department doesn't lead by example, how can we ask private businesses to do that in Canada?

Francis Bilodeau: Our department's advertising budget for 2025-26 was \$709,000.

Bernard Généreux: How much of that was spent in Canada and how much went to GAFAM?

Francis Bilodeau: About \$100,000 went to GAFAM.

Bernard Généreux: If I understand correctly, then, \$600,000 was spent in Canada.

Francis Bilodeau: I can't confirm that the remainder in its entirety was spent in Canada. I can get back to you with those details later.

Bernard Généreux: All right.

For the entire government, it's \$80 million, I believe, and the vast majority of that was spent outside Canada. I don't think I'm wrong, then, but I'll wait for the detailed information from you.

Francis Bilodeau: Yes, it's about \$80 million, but it's not under our control. It's actually administered centrally by the Privy Council Office.

Bernard Généreux: The minister talks about social cohesion. We can debate the terminology, but the reality is that many local media organizations aren't seeing any of the federal money that is going to the media. That is the observation we consistently heard from witnesses.

I imagine you follow our proceedings regularly. What do you think of the comments we've heard from witnesses on the subject thus far?

Francis Bilodeau: We are definitely very aware of the comments that were made regarding media spending. The department is

examining those issues, and we will support the government if it decides to go in one direction or the other.

It's not something our department is responsible for, however. We can comment on the implementation.

In short, it's an issue we are aware of.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Myles, you now have the floor for three minutes.

David Myles: Thank you very much.

I would like to ask about the indigenous languages program. I know there has been increased funding into this program over the last number of years. I've seen first-hand as an MP for the last year how important these programs have been.

In my riding of Fredericton—Oromocto there are a number of very engaging Wolastoqey language programs that have had a huge impact on self-confidence, pride of place, identity and being able to truly engage. We're seeing that language is at the core of so many other markers of social improvement.

Could you speak to those programs in particular and why they're so important?

• (1255)

Andrew Brown: Sure.

Ever since the passage of the Indigenous Languages Act in 2019 there's been increased investment in our indigenous languages program. Communities across the country have now been relying on it in terms of supporting them in their own efforts to revitalize indigenous languages.

There are something like 70 indigenous languages across the country and the vast majority of them are in an endangered status. Communities are living through a period where many of their elders, their only fluent speakers of the languages, are reaching their final days. They are working as quickly as they can to find ways to capture, document and share their knowledge with younger people so they might learn and be able to carry on the language, which is so important to their communities and their culture.

That's exactly what we've been hearing when we have had the opportunity to meet with indigenous communities across the country. I was most recently up in Whitehorse in March, at the time of the Arctic Winter Games. We met with indigenous representatives from eight different first nations who talked about the huge impact that it's had on their communities. We also heard from youngsters who were meeting with elders and learning from them, first to learn the language and later to become teachers of the language, so that both the language and the culture can be passed along.

Yes, it's been tremendously important. Investments have increased, but we also continue to hear from indigenous communities that it's not enough.

One of the other important things that I'm sure the minister mentioned very briefly in his opening remarks is that the review of the Indigenous Languages Act has been launched. It is work that is under way and is going to be important in terms of providing advice to the minister and Parliament about potential changes that would be needed to that legislation and that could better help support the revitalization of indigenous languages across this country.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

That's the end of our question period. If any of you would like to leave, you're welcome to do so.

We are going to take a couple of minutes to pass the main estimates. I don't think we need to vote person by person, but let me know if anyone disagrees. I read out the main estimates at the beginning of this meeting, so I won't read them again.

CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

Vote 1—Payments to the Council.....\$357,666,546

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Vote 1—Payments to the Corporation for operating expenditures.....\$1,263,214,311

Vote 5—Payments to the Corporation for working capital.....\$4,000,000

Vote 10—Payments to the Corporation for capital expenditures.....\$116,038,000

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Vote 1—Payments to the Museum for operating and capital expenditures.....\$25,407,184

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Vote 1—Payments to the Museum for operating and capital expenditures.....\$76,855,199

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION AT PIER 21

Vote 1—Payments to the Museum for operating and capital expenditures.....\$8,080,571

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE

Vote 1—Payments to the Museum for operating and capital expenditures.....\$30,041,517

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN RACE RELATIONS FOUNDATION

Vote 1—Payments to the Foundation.....\$12,000,000

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$4,878,929

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$218,269,156

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$1,606,092,571

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$135,944,977

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$33,394,401

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE CORPORATION

Vote 1—Payments to the Corporation for operating expenditures.....\$56,681,299

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

NATIONAL FILM BOARD

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$72,476,403

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

Vote 1—Payments to the Gallery for operating and capital expenditures.....\$40,831,313

Vote 5—Payments to the Gallery for the acquisition of objects for the collection and related costs.....\$8,000,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Vote 1—Payments to the Museum for operating and capital expenditures.....\$41,029,594

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

TELEFILM CANADA

Vote 1—Payments to the corporation to be used for the purposes set out in the *Telefilm Canada Act*.....\$111,632,291

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

THE NATIONAL BATTLEFIELDS COMMISSION

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$13,833,559

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the main estimates 2026-27, less the amount voted in interim supply, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Well done, committee. Thank you very much for your time.

The meeting is adjourned.

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