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Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (0825)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Good morning.

[*English*]

I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 102 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I want to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are in person and the others are on the screen.

The thing to remember is that you're not allowed to take photographs of the screen or anything. You can get it later on online.

While public health authorities have said we don't have to wear masks, I'm going to wear one, and I hope you will all do so for your own protection and that of the people near you. There you go. I've made my point.

I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone that you speak through the chair.

Remember that the audio system is powerful. In order to spare the ears of the interpreters from damage, please make sure that your phones or other devices are not standing next to your microphone. Turn your microphone off—mute yourselves—when you're not speaking. Just before you speak, remember that sometimes an open mic as you hang up can make a lot of noise as well in the ears of the interpreters. Be aware of that.

This morning we're having a briefing with the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Pascale St-Onge, on her mandate.

Welcome, Minister.

You have a point of order, Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): I just want to confirm that we're going for an hour here this morning. We started 11 minutes late. I'm just wondering—

The Chair: The minister has said she will stay for an hour from the time she begins.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Okay. I didn't know that. That's good.

She'll be here until 9:26, then.

The Chair: Yes. I guess so. Thank you.

Accompanying the minister are Department of Canadian Heritage officials. We have Isabelle Mondou, deputy minister of Canadian Heritage, and Thomas Owen Ripley, associate assistant deputy minister of cultural affairs. He has been here so often I think I know him extremely well just by looking at him.

The minister has told us she will stay for an hour from the time this begins.

I'm going to give the minister a chance to present for 10 minutes, and then we will have questions and answers.

Begin, Minister. Welcome.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm sorry for the confusion this morning, but I'm committed to being with you for an hour. There's no need to worry about that.

Members of the committee, I would first like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded traditional territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you about my priorities as Minister of Canadian Heritage.

With me today are Ms. Isabelle Mondou, deputy minister of Canadian heritage, Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley, associate assistant deputy minister of cultural affairs, and Ms. Joëlle Montminy, senior assistant deputy minister of cultural affairs.

Defending and promoting our culture is very important to me. I've done it before, when I worked as president of the Fédération nationale des communications et de la culture. That's why, among other reasons, I decided to enter politics in 2021. I saw that there were a number of pressing problems, and I wanted to contribute to the solutions.

For several years now, the cultural and communications ecosystems have been experiencing major upheaval, largely because of the web giants' business model.

With change comes the need to adapt. The status quo is no longer an option. That is why, as a government, we are in the process of making necessary changes that will allow our culture's diversity to thrive from coast to coast for decades to come.

We have worked very hard over the last few years to modernize the legislation governing culture and communication. I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, who have contributed a great deal to the success of this legislation. I also want to acknowledge the work of my predecessors, ministers Guilbeault, Joly and Rodriguez, who paved the way and showed great determination.

We're on the verge of a major achievement. On the one hand, we're going to ensure that online communications platforms will help support the production of Canadian content in all its diversity, while, on the other, taking into account the fact that French is a minority language in North America.

The proposed legislation on online streaming is also important for shoring up an industry that generates considerable economic spinoffs and provides good jobs across the country.

Along the same lines, we are convinced that the public must be able to access reliable, independent news sources in order to contribute to democratic dialogue across the country. This is why the Online News Act represents a turning point. This legislation will ensure that news media are fairly compensated by the platforms that benefit from their work. With both of these acts, we responded with conviction and with the support of most political parties, who understood the importance of taking action.

● (0830)

[English]

Madam Chair, all this to say, as we look back at what our government has been able to achieve for arts, culture, information and our heritage, it's important to remember where we started, which is far behind, due to the Conservatives' lack of engagement and recognition for our cultural sector. The lack of interest was, in fact, damaging. Our vision as a government is shown in our track record of delivering historic support for arts and culture every step of the way.

We made the choice to support reconciliation, including promoting and preserving indigenous languages. Indigenous communities across Canada are doing this work, and we will continue to support them. In recent years, we've been there to support our creators, our venues, our artists and our artisans. We have always chosen to invest in culture, especially in times as difficult as the pandemic. Some have called this irresponsible spending, but we call it investing in our country and in the talent of our people.

I'm proud to be part of a government that recognizes that.

The cultural sector is immensely important. Arts, culture and heritage represent more than \$57 billion in the Canadian economy, and close to 673,000 jobs in sectors such as film and video, broadcasting, music, publishing, archives, performing arts, heritage institutions, festivals and celebrations.

[Translation]

I mention this because, since 2015, we've had to rebuild support for culture and the right to news media. Both of these sectors have been damaged by years of budget cuts and the Conservatives' inaction. We made these decisions in the belief that, as a country, we

stand to gain by promoting culture for the common good. That's what we call political courage.

However, in light of the enormous challenges facing the cultural and news media sectors, I come before you with concerns. I'm worried because, even today, some people continue to say that our culture, in all of its forms of expression, doesn't deserve to be promoted. It concerns me to hear, day after day, certain politicians telling tens of thousands of cultural and news media workers that their work does not deserve to be protected by fair and equitable legislation. It's dangerous and risky for a party to promise to roll back all the progress that we've made and that will allow us to succeed.

It's often said that governing means making decisions. I'd therefore like to conclude by saying that the Liberal Party has decided to make culture and news media a priority.

Thank you, and I'll be happy to answer your questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Now we'll begin with the questions. The first round is a six-minute round. As you all know, the six minutes is the questions and the answers.

We will begin with the Conservatives with Rachael Thomas.

Mrs. Thomas, go ahead.

● (0835)

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

Minister, thank you for making time to be here with us today.

My first question is as follows.

Yesterday, there was an announcement made with regard to Google and the government making a deal. Before I get into that, maybe I'll preface it. You stated that the Liberal government put Bill C-18 forward to "fix a commercial and power imbalance between tech giants and our news media sector."

The deal that was entered into yesterday between Google and the government would actually appear to show that Google forced the hand of the government. Google got everything it wanted: \$100 million spent, one agreement and one collective chosen by Google on their terms. It's clear then that big tech is actually in the driver's seat.

Is this your idea of fixing the power imbalance that exists between big tech and the news industry—by giving them more control?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Madam Chair, I disagree with my colleague's interpretation of yesterday's announcement.

First of all, I'd like to point out that Google, like Facebook, was opposed to the government legislating in this sector. It did not think the government should be doing this. We decided to proceed regardless, and pass legislation that creates a much fairer relationship between web giants and our Canadian media.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, I really want to be respectful toward you. I asked you a very specific question, and I would ask that you answer the specific question.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: That's exactly what I'm saying. Google didn't want legislation, but because we have legislation, the company is now required to pay a sum of \$100 million, to be indexed annually, to the Canadian media sector. Obviously, Google would have preferred to continue paying money only to those it wished to pay it to.

We made sure that local media, independent media—

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, just out of respect for time.... Thank you.

I will go to my next question, because it's clear that you don't want to answer that one.

It is unfortunate, though, that more power was put in the hands of big tech and that Google was given control over the terms, because the whole point of Bill C-18 was to help level the playing field. That what's been touted the entire time.

At the end of the day, what we've landed with is Meta walking away. It is no longer carrying the news. Google said it would stay and negotiate, but only on its terms, so the government and Google entered into a backroom and they created a deal. They cooked up a deal, and all of Google's terms have been met.

It is another example of big tech and big government colluding, and it will ultimately damage news in this country. It will damage accessibility to news and the choice that Canadians have with regard to news. Yesterday was actually a really sad day in Canada, because that's the impact it will ultimately have.

My question is with regard to this agreement that was cooked up. I'm wondering if you can describe the criteria that the government will use to determine whether a news business gets state approval to join a collective. What are the criteria that the government will use to determine whether or not an outlet is an eligible news business?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Madam Chair, a lot has been said, and I'd like to set the record straight.

The agreement reached yesterday with Google regarding the Online News Act is as follows: Google has committed to paying Canadian media \$100 million annually, which will be indexed to the rate of inflation.

With respect to the criteria regarding which media will have access—

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, again, with all due respect—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Madam Chair, may I answer the question, or am I going to be constantly interrupted?

[*English*]

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): On a point of order, Madam Chair, the minister was trying to answer her question. It would be great if the minister had the opportunity to respond and we could hear the answer to her question, rather than being interrupted by Mrs. Thomas.

The Chair: Please continue.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I trust my time was stopped.

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Perfect. Thank you.

Minister, my question was with regard to criteria—nothing else. I just want to know the government's criteria for determining a news business is eligible to enter into a deal with Google. It's just the criteria.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: The criteria are listed in subsection 11(1) of the act. They include independent news outlets, official language minority community news outlets, traditional news outlets and indigenous language community news outlets, as well as all media outlets providing journalism in Canada that wish to take part. They will be able to take part in the collective and the agreement with Google.

● (0840)

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

The CBC already receives \$1.4 billion in taxpayer money, and it receives another \$400 million in ad revenue and subscription fees.

Will the CBC be approved as an eligible news business in this deal with Google?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: CBC/Radio-Canada is eligible, based on the criteria in the act.

We have obviously taken into account the fact that CBC/Radio-Canada employs approximately one-third of the country's journalism workforce. This will be taken into account in the final version of the regulations, which will be published before the act comes into effect on December 19.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Minister, I am trying to be respectful, but you're disrespecting my time.

My question is this: How much will the CBC get?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: The regulations are currently under review by the Treasury Board, and the details will be unveiled before the act comes into effect on December 19. My colleague will find answers to her questions in the regulations.

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Google will ultimately get to determine which collective it enters into an agreement with. What criteria will Google use?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: News media will need to come together in a collective, which they will manage. This collective will not only negotiate with Google, but also redistribute the money in a fair and transparent manner.

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: There could end up being multiple collectives, though. It's not necessarily one.

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Under the act, it will be possible to have several collectives handling negotiations. It will also be possible to have a single collective negotiating on behalf of all media outlets.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I am going to go to the next questioner. For the Liberals, that is Lisa Hepfner.

Lisa, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here today.

Minister, I want to start by congratulating you on the deal that you announced yesterday. I think it's really good news.

News is so important. It's so important to Canada and to Canadians. I know this viscerally because, as you know, I was a member of the media for many years.

In Hamilton alone we're very well served by many media outlets. I think of CHML radio and The Hamilton Spectator, where I worked in the late nineties. I think of CHCH news, which is the TV station where I worked for 20 years. I know, from the people of Hamilton, how important it was for them to have their own stories told and to have these local voices.

We know this legislation is not going to solve all the problems. The news industry is really in a crisis. This legislation is not a panacea. It is not going to solve everything, but I think it will really help. What we have heard a lot of is, with Google and Facebook backing out of news, why don't we back down from this legislation? We're hearing that we need these services and we also need news, so let's just drop it all.

Please explain to this committee why it was so important not to back down, to continue with the fight and to continue talking with Google.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you so much for your question.

We've been talking for more than a decade about the fact that digital platforms disrupted the advertising market and that most of the revenues now flow to Google and Facebook. This has a tremendous impact on democracy and on our capacity as a country to have journalists all over the country to cover what's important for citizens.

We've been talking for more than a decade about how important it is to rebalance the relationship between those digital platforms and our news outlets to make sure they can actually negotiate the parts of the revenue that should be going back to our news sector, because it does bring value to those platforms. This is exactly what we've accomplished.

As you said, it probably won't resolve the entire crisis for the media because it's extensive and it's very important. Thousands of journalists have lost their jobs in the past decade, but this is \$100 million of new revenue that will be sent to the sector that will support local news and local journalism. It's extremely important. It's a first step.

Our government has been there to support the news sector and will continue to be there.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: In fact, since Australia implemented similar legislation, it found that the news sector is better off. There are more journalists hired today, and there is more news access for Australians today.

• (0845)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Yes, that's what was found with the Australian model.

However, our model is a bit different. It looks for the same outcome, which is to have a more balanced commercial relationship between the tech giants and our news sector, but we did it in a transparent way. We did it in a way so that we know it won't be only legacy media and big media that will capture most of this revenue. We made sure there is a place at the table for local journalism, for indigenous media and for official languages in a minority situation media. All these media that often feel they're being left behind, including independent media and new digital media, will have a seat at the table and will get their share.

Canada has done it in a different way. We learned from what happened in Australia, with a deal being done behind closed doors. We chose transparency. We chose to be open in the way we would do this. We're very proud of this.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: I'm sorry. I'm trying to hear you over the opposition members, who are being very loud across the table.

I appreciate your insights there.

How do you think the deal with Google, which was announced yesterday, will affect the negotiations with Meta?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I think what this shows is that the piece of legislation we introduced is viable and equitable. It shows that it works and that there is no good reason, except for ideological reasons, that Facebook won't comply with the legislation.

What we're seeing is that it is making a choice—an unfortunate choice—to open its platform to disinformation and misinformation, when indeed platforms are better off when Canadians can share news or have access to news that is relevant to them, their families and their friends. I think this is a terrible decision Meta is making, but we're seeing that it's doing this across the world.

We've seen recently that it has toned down access to news in the United States. It took out the news tab that European countries had access to. We're hearing that it won't renew the deals it has with newspapers in Australia. This is a huge business shift for a platform that said it was the people's everyday newspaper. Now it is pulling out from real, fact-based journalism.

Ms. Lisa Hefpner: To clarify, with 10 seconds left, it's not just in Canada.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Exactly—it's not just in Canada. We're seeing this happen in the United States. We're seeing this happen in Australia and in Europe.

Unfortunately, it seems to be a business decision that has nothing to do with our legislation, but it has great impacts here in Canada and it's deplorable.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Lisa.

Now we'll go to the Bloc Québécois and Martin Champoux.

You have six minutes, Martin.

[*Translation*]

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

Minister, my initial reaction to yesterday's announcement was favourable. I thought it was good news. It's better to have an agreement than no agreement, so I'm happy about that. I think it would have been very serious if Google had stopped sharing news links.

However, I think there are still a lot of questions about this agreement. I think my concerns are shared by all of my colleagues and by many stakeholders in the news sector in Quebec and Canada. In particular, I wonder about the distribution of the money. You mentioned that a collective would manage this distribution. Since the beginning, I've been concerned about the place allotted to smaller players in a collective like this, which will likely cover hundreds of media companies.

This announcement has been well received, but there are a lot of details missing that might reassure these smaller players.

Can you assure me that you'll make certain that the criteria implemented and managed by the collective will be specific and rigorous enough to take regional realities into account? How will the

money be distributed among journalists in the regions versus those working in major centres?

If I understand correctly, it won't be the government managing how the money is distributed. However, this money must not be monopolized by the big media companies. You said earlier that you were going to make sure to protect the most vulnerable media outlets. Since the government is not going to manage this, I expect it will insist on extremely rigorous criteria.

I would like to hear what you have to say on this matter, because it's a concern for the regions.

• (0850)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you very much for your question and for the work you are doing on this committee to move bills forward, including the one that resulted in yesterday's announcement.

Indeed, in the final version of the regulations, which will be published a few days before the act's implementation on December 19, there will be more details on how the money will be distributed.

That said, some things are already clear in the act. The collective will have to represent all media outlets covered under subsection 11(1) of the act. These include official language minority community news outlets, traditional news outlets, of course, which still play a very important role in the country, as well as local news outlets and indigenous community news outlets.

The act therefore takes into account the fact that local and regional media have a very important role to play. We recognize their work. We are going to ensure that they have a place at the negotiating table and that they receive their share of these revenues.

Mr. Martin Champoux: This leads me to a question that was raised earlier about CBC/Radio-Canada. Ms. Tait, the Crown corporation's president and CEO, was in your seat a few weeks ago. She openly admitted to us that, in addition to the funding granted to the corporation, which is \$1.4 billion, CBC/Radio-Canada had other sources of financing, including advertising and subscription revenue. This other revenue amounts to \$400 million. That piece of information raised everyone's eyebrows. Although we were aware of this reality, the fact that it was announced so casually, in the current context, was difficult to take. I think some restraint would have been in order.

That said, we agreed here in committee, when we studied Bill C-18, that CBC/Radio-Canada met the criteria. CBC/Radio-Canada is also suffering the consequences of the arrival of the digital giants, but it isn't in the same boat as privately owned media.

In the current context, since we won't be receiving as much money as we'd hoped under an agreement with Google, do you think it would be appropriate for CBC/Radio-Canada representatives to announce that the corporation will not be joining the collective, in order to leave the money entirely for the media outlets that really need it?

Do you think this would be the right thing to do? Will you encourage them to do so?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I can't speak for CBC/Radio-Canada, which is independent of the government.

However, you are right. Under the act, the corporation is eligible. It is important to note that a commercial relationship is being established between Google and the media. It's important not to send the message that content produced by CBC/Radio-Canada isn't valuable to platforms like Google and Facebook, which make billions of dollars. I think that would be the wrong message to send.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Google makes billions of dollars, and we have only \$100 million to give back to our media companies.

I'll let you finish your comments on this.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I fully understand your point, and I know the media sector is concerned about it.

I can confirm that the public broadcaster's unique situation was taken into account in the final version of the regulations, which will be released before December 19.

Mr. Martin Champoux: My next question is about the recent testimony that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, has heard. You heard the comments of Bell Media, Québecor and Cogeco representatives, who all expressed their deep concern about the situation. Cogeco was not vague about what was coming, in other words, cuts will be made if nothing happens.

There's a tool that is easy to implement. You expanded it to make it available to print media. I am talking about the journalism labour tax credit. Cogeco, Québecor, Bell and several private news companies have said that it would be a huge help if the tax credit were extended to electronic media. In concrete terms, this means that newsroom jobs would be saved, especially jobs in the regions. It could even prevent the closure of regional radio stations.

Do you think this would be a good idea? Are you exploring this avenue, and do you think you'll have anything positive to announce to these companies before the holidays?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: That is one of the solutions proposed by media sector representatives. We are studying it very seriously, because we're obviously extremely concerned about the cuts that have taken place at TVA, CTV and other networks. We are hearing reports about the difficulties facing the radio and television sector.

We are looking at all possible solutions. The agreement with Google is a small part of the solution. Modernizing the Broadcasting Act should also provide more flexibility in terms of regulatory burden. The CRTC will be examining the possibility of setting up a fund to support the news sector.

Several pieces of the puzzle still have to be put in place to ensure the viability of news outlets, and to ensure that journalists can continue to play their role in our democracy. However, we remain extremely committed to supporting the sector and overcoming this crisis.

Mr. Martin Champoux: You know that—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Martin. The time is up.

I'm now going to go to Peter Julian for the New Democrats.

Peter, you have six minutes, please.

• (0855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you for joining us today. We hope you will come back often.

I'm going to ask you three questions. I would like brief answers, please.

[*English*]

First off, Laith Marouf, who was providing the most vile expressions of anti-Semitism and hate, was given a contract through Canadian Heritage. The NDP was the first party to call for the cancellation of that contract, and the government cancelled the contract. However, I want to know whether the money has been paid back—around \$125,000—and what steps have been taken within Canadian Heritage to ensure that those who promote hate in any form will no longer get contracts through the government.

Secondly, on Meta, in testimony before this committee just this week, the Center for Countering Digital Hate stated very clearly, and its studies have shown us, that Meta, in its algorithms, is promoting the most vile anti-Semitism. Meta is not only refusing to respect Canadian democracy with Bill C-18, but has also been cited numerous times for that expression of vile anti-Semitism and other forms of hate. However, we provide subsidies to Meta and Google, according to the Library of Parliament, that are in the order of more than \$1 billion every year. That is in the advertising tax credit as an indirect subsidy for Meta.

Why do we continue to subsidize Meta when it is not respecting Canadian democracy and when it has been implicated in the most vile expressions, through its algorithms, of anti-Semitic hate, Islamophobic hate, racism, misogyny, and homophobic and transphobic hate?

[*Translation*]

My final question concerns the agreement with Google.

We know that, with a crisis hitting news media across the country—we saw what happened at TVA—we need the web giants to contribute to our society and to the dissemination of news.

Google is also receiving this subsidy. Given that there is a shortfall between what the government was seeking and what we are receiving under this agreement, are you considering taking the subsidy away from Google? It represents \$1 billion for Meta and Google combined, according to the Library of Parliament. The government could give that money to the media, whose job it is to provide news and inform Canadians about what is happening in their communities.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank you for all the work you are doing on the committee to strengthen our laws. I commend you on everything you are defending here.

As far as the Laith Marouf case is concerned, I have to tell you that I obviously condemn all forms of discrimination. I find what happened in this situation unacceptable. I know that the Department of Canadian Heritage has taken steps to ensure that this never happens again. Since I was not there at the time, I'll let my deputy minister comment on what happened afterwards. However, I'll quickly answer your other two questions.

With regard to Meta, we have seen that this company refuses to be held responsible for the content that appears on its platform. It does everything to avoid responsibility. We are looking at everything we can do to further support our media. The tax credit you're talking about is obviously one of the solutions we're looking at to provide more support for our sector and to encourage people to advertise, first and foremost, on Canadian media. We are looking very seriously into this possibility.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm glad to hear that.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: As far as Google is concerned, I think we have to recognize that it has chosen a different attitude and approach in Canada. It has chosen to abide by the act and to work with government and the media sector to play its part in ensuring that Canadians have access to content made in Canada for Canadians. This must also be recognized.

I'll let Ms. Mondou answer the question about the Laith Marouf case.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): In terms of recovering the funds, four stages have now been completed. First, a collection agency was hired. Second, an agency ascertained the assets that the organization still has. Third, we applied to the Canada Revenue Agency to have any money from the organization that is paid to the Canada Revenue Agency turned over to us. Finally, a lawsuit has been filed with the court.

We also set up a training program for our analysts to ensure that they conduct more thorough research on social networks. Our employees have received training on anti-Semitism. An attestation has been added to the procedure to make it clear that, in applications, no contravention of the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms will be tolerated. Finally—

• (0900)

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'd like to ask another question related to online harms. It concerns the suicide of a 12-year-old child, who had been subjected to all kinds of online pressure. We see all the hate that is spreading online.

When will we finally have a bill to fight online harms?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: That's an excellent question.

Our government is absolutely committed to introducing legislation to combat online harms. This is obviously a complex piece of legislation. It has to respect freedom of expression while providing stronger protections for children and adolescents.

We are going to bring forward a bill as soon as it's ready. What happened was really awful. When we see that young people are committing suicide because of what they endure online, it's absolutely horrifying. The whole government should be concerned about it and do more to combat online hate.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

That's it, Peter. You've run out of time. You're a little over time.

Now we're going to the second round. It's a five-minute round.

We begin with Rachael Thomas for the Conservatives for five minutes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Minister, I noticed that you answer my questions in French, but other English questions you answer in English, if they are from your Liberal colleagues. I realize it's completely your choice. We're a bilingual country.

If at all possible, I would love to have it in English.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: On a point of order, that's not appropriate.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Can everyone please stop shouting?

There are at least five people shouting for a point of order.

Clerk, did you see who was the first one?

Go ahead, Martin.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Chair, I don't need to remind my colleague Mrs. Thomas that the people who appear before the committee, like the members of this committee, can express themselves in the official language of their choice. We have an extremely efficient interpretation service. I have the opportunity to witness that regularly. I think the minister has every right to answer in the language of her choice. What I heard was insulting to Quebeckers and francophones.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair—

[English]

The Chair: I think Lisa was before you, Peter.

[Translation]

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: I was going to raise the same point of order. I don't think we can ask her to answer in one language or another.

[English]

The Chair: Peter, is it on the same point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, I wish to raise the same point of order.

I just asked two questions in English, and the minister was entitled to answer in the language of her choice.

For anyone to question bilingualism in this country is offensive to everyone. I do hope the member will start respecting the official languages and this committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. Those are valid points of order.

Mrs. Thomas, continue.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, I am on the same point of order.

The Chair: You are on the same point of order. Okay, we have paused.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

My observation is that the Liberal member was afforded the opportunity to be answered in English, and I was not afforded that same opportunity. I recognize that we're a bilingual country, and by all means, you can answer in either language. I'm just curious if you would be willing to answer in English.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I have to go back to the original point of order, and that is that the person speaking should choose what language they wish to speak in. If the minister chooses French, that's fine, and if she chooses English, that's fine. We cannot make her answer in whichever....

Okay. Good.

Please continue. Do you want to ask a question?

Go ahead, Michael.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): On a point of order, I think the fact that the Conservative Party has demanded that a member speak only in English goes against everything this country has been built on.

When we come into this chamber, we have two official languages that everyone is afforded, and the fact that the Conservative Party is demanding that a member use only one language, to me, is just unacceptable. It needs to be noted that it should never happen at committee. It should never happen in the House of Commons, and it's just something that goes against our very values as Canadians.

• (0905)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau. I think I highlighted that when I responded earlier on, but it is a valid point of order. The minister can answer in whichever language she chooses.

Mr. Noormohamed, is this something new, or are we going over this again?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: It is something new on a related matter.

As Mr. Coteau has pointed out, it is reprehensible for anyone to demand or suggest that one language be used.

Mrs. Rachel Thomas: I will be clipping that.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: You're already clipping...? That's great.

May I finish what I was going to say?

The Chair: Order. This is not debate.

Please continue, Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: What I find particularly reprehensible is the question as to why somebody has chosen to use a particular language. It's one thing to make the demand. It's another thing to ask why a minister chose to use a particular language.

This speaks to something very dangerous and very irresponsible on the part of the Conservatives. I think it would be valuable and important for Mrs. Thomas to retract that assertion, because I think it is in the interest of all of us in this room to not play silly games around the use of our official languages.

The Chair: All right. We will get back to Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, just for Mrs. Thomas's education, having been brought up in an English environment and having learned French in school, there are numerous times when you have a vocabulary in one particular language that allows you to speak more easily in that language. That is the principle of official bilingualism.

For the Conservatives to put in question official bilingualism is absolutely reprehensible, and I just can't believe how radical and extreme this party has become since the member for Carleton took over.

The Chair: Thank you.

I am going to now suggest that I do not want to entertain any further points of order on this issue. I have ruled, as the chair, that the member, Mrs. Thomas, has a question on the floor. She can question the minister, and the minister can answer in whichever language she chooses. Let's not carry on with this for too much longer. Thank you.

Mrs. Thomas, go ahead with your questions, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, when I asked you about the amount of money the CBC would get, you said that they have one-third of all the journalists in the country. We know that the draft regulations suggest that the money from the \$100-million fund that Google is generating will be divided up according to the number of journalists who are in each news business.

I am assuming, then, that the CBC will get one-third of the \$100 million, which is \$33 million. Do you believe that's just when we consider the local newspapers, ethnic newspapers, BIPOC newspapers and indigenous newspapers that will get only a small pittance, and when in fact your government claims that this bill is about supporting local news and small outlets?

That is not the case. One-third of the amount will go to the CBC. According to the PBO, 75% of the total will go to the big players, such as the CBC, such as Rogers, such as Bell and such as Torstar.

How will this bill support local, ethnic and BIPOC news outlets?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to answer in my mother tongue because I have a lot of respect for my colleague's questions. I want to make sure that I'm using the right vocabulary, answering in the right way and being clear in my response.

As I said, the final regulations will be published before the act comes into force, which is scheduled for December 19. We are taking into consideration the fact that CBC/Radio-Canada is a major player in journalism and that it is important for a portion of the \$100 million from Google to also go to local, independent and indigenous media, in short, all the media my colleague named. We also want to support them, because they are essential to democracy, and we're going to make sure it happens.

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I understand your good intentions. Unfortunately, they're misplaced. Those local media outlets will receive very little and possibly nothing at all.

This bill has killed them. Big tech has colluded with big government to do away with news in this country. There will be less choice for Canadians and less access for Canadians. It's a shame.

Let's not forget the fact that, actually, Google isn't signing on to Bill C-18. It's actually been granted an exemption.

Minister, when you celebrate the success of Bill C-18, let's look at this. Facebook walked away. It's not carrying news anymore, so it's not under Bill C-18. Google is the second one the bill applied to. It applied for an exemption. You entered into a backroom deal with Google, and it got what it wanted. Bill C-18 technically ap-

plies to no one. It's an absolute failure. It's a boondoggle, Minister. Let's be really clear about the facts here.

My next question is with regard to Laith Marouf, who received \$130,000 from the heritage department. He used that money to perpetuate vile comments towards the Jewish community and towards the francophone community, which you claim to defend. Meanwhile, that \$130,000 has been outstanding—

• (0910)

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, I don't think the minister ever defended it. I think you got the answer about things being done, the sequence in the department and its going to the courts right now. I don't think there was any sense that anybody condoned this.

Can you please get to your question without being misleading? Thank you.

Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

It would be wonderful if Mrs. Thomas might address her comments through the chair rather than to the witness.

Also, perhaps she might not raise her voice and scream unnecessarily at the minister when we're trying to have a respectful conversation here.

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, continue with your questioning.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, \$130,000 was given to Laith Marouf. He continues to hold that money, even though he was told by your department to pay it back more than 16 months ago. He continues to use that money to perpetuate his vile conduct towards the Jewish community. Just a few days ago, he was out on social media putting some of the most heinous comments up for the public to observe.

Your department has sat there and done nothing. You sit here with a smirk on your face.

Through you, Chair, the minister sits here with a smirk on her face.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: I have a point of order. Direct comments through the chair, please.

An hon. member: It's disgusting.

The Chair: I'll have order right now, please.

I do not want people shouting at each other.

Mrs. Thomas, I think you have gone a little too far. You are actually berating the witness and you are misleading the committee at the moment.

Go ahead and ask your question, whatever it is. Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Chair, I'm simply making an observation with regard to the conduct of the witness, who happens to be the minister.

Chair, she does sit there with a smirk on her face right now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Everyone is speaking at the same time. I would like some order in this committee, please.

Peter, was it you who said “point of order” first? Go ahead, and then we'll go to Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Peter Julian: I find Mrs. Thomas' behaviour at this committee....

She said a few weeks ago that she wanted to make this committee “hell”. It does a disservice to Canadians. It does a disservice to the Conservative Party. She needs to stop acting in such a childish, immature way.

The Chair: Be very careful. We're getting close with the language we're using, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Chair, we asked the minister to come so that we could get answers to questions. We did not ask the minister to come so that we could listen to diatribes from members of the opposition and Mrs. Thomas in particular.

I took great umbrage at the fact, although I didn't say anything about it, that when we were having the last exchange, Mrs. Thomas chose to say to me that it was okay and that she had already clipped her request. We're here to do work. We're not here to look for sound bites and clips.

Perhaps we might consider the decorum and demeanour that we are using so that we can have respectful conversations. I am very concerned, as Mr. Julian is, about the degradation of the dialogue in what should be an important conversation with the minister and with one another.

The Chair: Mr. Noormohamed, I think I commented on that already, so I would like us to move on.

Now, with regard to imputing thoughts to people before they speak, I think we should move away from that. None of us can read minds. I'm learning. I'm trying to learn how to do that, but I don't think that anybody here has learned quite how to do it.

If the minister smiles, which I notice she does a lot when she's answering her questions, I don't think we should impugn her motives for that.

Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas. I've been stopping the clock. You have 33 seconds.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, I don't.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: We have four minutes and 10 seconds that we've used up.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I've been stopping every time I've been interrupted.

The Chair: We have been stopping the clock every time there was a point of order.

All right, I will give you another two minutes, Mrs. Thomas.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Give her one minute and 50 seconds.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, I have 50 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Oh, you have 50 seconds left. That's right.

The Chair: No, you only had five minutes. You cannot have four minutes and 10 seconds left. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I'm giving myself less time. You're giving me two minutes. I'm saying that I only have 50 seconds.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I thought it was minutes that you were showing me. I couldn't read it very well from a distance without my glasses.

Go ahead and have your extra seconds.

● (0915)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay.

Minister, why are you allowing Mr. Marouf to get away with continuing to use taxpayer money to post heinous comments with regard to the Jewish community? Why aren't you going after the \$130,000 that he must pay back to taxpayers?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Madam Chair, I'm here in good faith to answer my colleagues' questions, and I refute all of the member's claims.

The deputy minister made it very clear that legal proceedings are currently under way against Laith Marouf. We have always denounced anti-Semitism and hate speech. We do not tolerate it in the Department of Canadian Heritage or in the government.

I've spent my life defending minorities and others, including members of the LGBTQ2+ community, and I will not allow my colleague to say just anything about me. I refute all her claims. It's shameful to sit here and have to listen to that, Madam Chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

The Chair: Order. You have 22—whatever you have on your thing—seconds. Are you finished with your questions?

An hon. member: We're done.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I'm going to go to the Liberals.

Ms. Gainey, you have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you for joining us and for your contribution today. It's a pleasure to see you here with your colleagues.

[*English*]

I would like to talk a little bit about CBC/Radio-Canada.

[*Translation*]

Cuts were made during the Harper years. You've been talking about rebuilding these institutions for some time now.

[*English*]

We continue to hear rhetoric about defunding the CBC and about the value of the CBC. I would like to hear your thoughts on that. Why is the CBC important? What are the potential impacts of that kind of rhetoric on those institutions and on our country?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you very much.

Actually, I have also been a staunch defender of our public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada. All democratic countries have strong public institutions to ensure high-quality journalism all across the country. I also defend it to ensure that our public broadcaster supports our producers, creators and artists. We want it to showcase Canadian stories by and for Canadians, and we want people to discover them.

Unfortunately, like all media, our public broadcaster is facing the media crisis, and its revenues are currently affected by the situation. Let's not forget the constant attacks by the Conservatives on our public broadcaster, which unfortunately has to defend itself. I'm very proud that, as soon as we came to power in 2015, our government restored to the public broadcaster the funding that had been cut by the Harper government.

We need to have a discussion about the future of CBC/Radio-Canada because the media crisis has had a profound impact on everything. We must ensure that our public broadcaster continues to fulfill its mandate and represent media in both official languages across the country, in addition to eight indigenous languages.

Ms. Anna Gainey: Thank you very much. I share your point of view.

I'm curious to know your opinion on the following question.

[*English*]

Are the platforms better with news on them?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Yes, I certainly think so. In fact, by participating in our system and talking to the government to make sure the regulations work, Google is demonstrating that it is a better platform, by delivering Canadian news and ensuring that Canadians can continue to access this information.

All platforms should do more to combat hate, disinformation and misinformation. We know the consequences this can have on our society.

Meta should do the same, that is, take responsibility for what happens on its platforms and recognize the repercussions on democratic life and society. At the very least, Meta should ensure that, to combat disinformation, it disseminates quality information produced by journalists who comply with codes of ethics.

Ms. Anna Gainey: Thank you very much.

I have no further questions for the moment.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have one minute and 32 seconds left.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'll jump in.

The Chair: Michael, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much for being here, Minister.

There are so many parts that make up your mandate letter. Can you just tell us maybe one item you're really excited about that's outside of the items we discussed today?

• (0920)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: One of them I'm really looking forward to talking more to Canadians about is the future of CBC/Radio-Canada. It is part of my mandate letter. It's something I hold dear because I respect the role, the mandate and the mission of our public broadcaster.

It's time that we have a great conversation about its future, because the landscape has changed so much with the arrival of digital platforms and the fact that the advertising money is going more toward those platforms instead of our own platforms and Canadian companies. Therefore, we need to make sure CBC/Radio-Canada, its mandate, its role and its mission are in adequation with the situation and the current market. This is probably one of the next things I will talk about with stakeholders from the sector but also with Canadians.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to go to Martin Champoux.

Martin, you have two and a half minutes, please.

Before we turn on the clock for Mr. Champoux, I want to say that the minister had said she would stay a full hour. Now, we only have five minutes left to the time that she came in, so I'm going to ask the minister if she has to leave at that time or if she can stay for 10 minutes longer for two more questions in the round.

If not, that's fine. We will just end with Mr. Julian.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I respect the work of my colleagues on the committee, so I will stay for another ten minutes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Martin.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Minister, the cultural sector has put forward a lot of arguments in recent months. It is having a hard time recovering from the pandemic. The programs have not met their expectations and needs. Expectations and hopes were high following the economic statement, and media headlines have not been kind about that economic statement. The cultural sector is angry.

I'd like you to respect one condition when you answer this next question. You are not allowed to tell me that you worked to reform the Broadcasting Act. I want an answer for the cultural sector.

Is any money coming for the people in that sector? Is anything happening on that side?

If not, beginning April 1, it will be a disaster for many organizations in the cultural sector.

Are we going to let them down?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I have spoken with stakeholders in the cultural sector. The fall economic statement really focused on housing, and especially on measures to help all Canadians. I am thinking of tax and legislative measures. I know that the cultural sector needs support. We are continuing to work hard. We have been there for those in the sector, and we'll continue to be there for them.

Mr. Martin Champoux: That's what we hear all the time. You say that you're there and that you'll continue to be there because you love culture. Right now, however, the request is very clear. This is an emergency. The cultural sector needs an influx of funds or, at least, some hope. We need to reassure the people in the sector that there will be money for them in the next budget. They need a commitment. Otherwise, it won't be possible for them to anticipate or plan their activities.

Predictability is what allows the cultural sector to make plans. Its members are not going to put up their homes as collateral to hold a festival in their region. They need to know that the government will help them.

What's next for them, in concrete terms?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: We are continuing to work to ensure that the sector is adequately supported. I understand the importance of festivals and live entertainment in every region. It's also a very important economic vector for tourism, and we're going to do everything we can to continue supporting the cultural sector. We are well aware that it is still suffering the consequences of the pandemic. People aren't going to concerts and shows as much as they used to.

We are supporting this sector. I can't tell you anything more about the upcoming budget, but what I can tell you is that we're working hard to be there and to continue to support the vitality of this sector.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Peter Julian, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, I'd like to come back to the question of online harms. Last year, in 2022, multiple ideologically motivated killings in North America were carried out by right-wing extremists. We all saw it. We talked about homophobia, anti-Semitism, hate messages and racism.

All these online harms are still happening. Why is the government still waiting to take action? Why do we still not have a date for the introduction of this important bill?

• (0925)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I agree with you that we need to do more to fight extremism, to take action against the far right. What happens online has repercussions in real life. This is reflected in people's actions and in society.

It's important for this bill to be properly drafted, for it to be well targeted and for it to achieve the goals we want to achieve. We will introduce it as soon as it's ready to achieve the right balance.

Mr. Peter Julian: Will it be ready by December, January, February? When will the bill be introduced? Can you give us a date?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I'm as keen as you are to get it done quickly, but I can't give you an exact date. I can tell you that it is a priority and that as soon as the bill is ready, it will be introduced. We hope to have the co-operation of all the political parties, to ensure that the debate is healthy and serves to strengthen the bill, so it can come into force as soon as possible after it is introduced.

Mr. Peter Julian: Okay, but time is of the essence.

Your department has also launched the local journalism initiative. The program was supposed to be renewed, but there's no mention of it in the 2023 Fall Economic Statement.

Why is the federal government dragging its feet on this program? Can you assure us that it will be renewed?

My final question concerns the challenge of safety in sport, which we've been studying for some time. Why hasn't the government set up a public inquiry into safety in sport?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Naturally, I can give you no assurance as to what will be in the budget, but I can tell you that I'm extremely aware of how important the funds distributed under the local journalism initiative are and the impact they've had. They've enabled community radio stations to hire journalists and occupy what had become a media desert due to the media crisis. It's a very important program, and I hope we can maintain it.

On the subject of safety in sport, my colleague Ms. Qualtrough will be appearing before you shortly. During my time as Minister of Sport, I wish I had been able to set up the inquiry. It was very important to me. My colleague will be able to give you an update on that, but I'm very proud to have achieved, with the department, a major reform within national sports organizations for greater security, accountability and transparency.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The next question goes to the Conservatives and Martin.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

One of the things you started talking about was the importance of culture. I don't think things have changed much around this table. I've been here for many years on this committee, but I'm the only one who has a membership to the National Gallery sitting around here, and I'm the only one who goes frequently to the National Arts Centre. Keep that in mind—

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a membership.

Mr. Martin Shields: Good. Finally. Thank you. It's good to see, because that has changed since I started this and pulled out my membership and nobody had one.

As you see, it's across parties, and we support culture. Therefore, when you impinge one group over another, I get a little frustrated by that kind of opinion.

There's another number I've said many times, and it's come up a number of times over the years. It's the 30% of advertising that the federal government has moved into the big techs. I have about 13 weekly papers in my riding, and when I met with them, they said, "We used to get that 30%, and now we get zero."

If this government were really serious about supporting our weekly and local media, it would move its advertising away from the big techs that it calls its enemies. I've heard it in this room many times. Go back to supporting our weekly papers.

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you very much for the question.

I commend your involvement with the National Arts Centre. It's great to see you supporting arts and culture, but the government also has a role to play regarding not only financial support, but also the statutes and regulations implemented to ensure the vitality of our cultural and media industries.

Measures like the ones you mention—advertising investments that can be made in our Canadian media—are one way of supporting the sector. I agree with you, and we're looking at how we can do more. In particular, I think the fact that municipalities removed public notices from most local media also dealt the sector a serious blow. All levels of government need to do more, the provinces—

• (0930)

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: Not in my riding, ma'am. I would disagree with you 100%. My weekly papers carry the municipal advertising constantly, so you're wrong.

In my riding, the weekly papers are carrying all those municipal notices. They are, so for you to say that.... That's a mistake. You're not aware, then, of what our weekly papers and our municipalities are doing.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Can you please direct the members of the Conservative Party to speak through the chair rather than pointing fingers at the witness?

The Chair: Yes. I have been allowing that to happen.

Please address the chair when you're speaking to anyone else. Thank you. Go through the chair.

Mr. Martin Shields: Let's move to the next question.

There's \$100 million on the table, which we talked about. Is it 100% cash, or is there a gift in-kind in that \$100 million?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I want to be clear that I was referring to places like Quebec, where municipalities now have the option of publishing their public notices on digital platforms rather than in local newspapers.

As for the \$100 million Canadian, Madam Chair, that is real money, and it will be indexed to the cost of living and paid out each year. As for other services offered by Google to the media, such as technology or advertising services, it's up to the media and Google to negotiate amongst themselves.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: You're saying that it's \$100 million cash. There was no in-kind in the past, from this past year—nothing. There was no in-kind in this past year.

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: The Online News Act will come into force on December 19. Google will then negotiate with the collective.

In the regulations, it will be specified that Google must pay \$100 million a year, indexed to the cost of living, to the media collective. It will be paid in cash.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: In the collective that they are going to be negotiating with, are you suggesting that everybody's going to be at that table? The weekly papers in my riding are going to be represented by whom?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: The collective is responsible for representing all media that meet the criteria set out in subsection 11(1) of the act. All media outlets who come forward and want to have an agreement with Google will be part of the collective, which is obliged to represent all of them.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: Who's determining who's in that collective? Is the government determining it, or is Google going to determine it?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: That was already determined in the act passed in the spring, which received royal assent. Further details on the distribution of the money will be set out in regulations to be published a few days before the act comes into force, scheduled for December 19.

However, all eligible media must be part of the collective. The collective will be required to respect them and distribute the money transparently, in compliance with the act and its regulations. In addition, it will be overseen by the CRTC.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: When you use the word—

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I'm sorry, Mr. Shields. Your time is up.

I'm going to go to Michael Coteau.

Michael, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much.

I'm going to split my time with Mr. Lemire. We'll take two and a half minutes each, so if you can let me.... Actually, maybe I should put my timer on. Maybe you could just give me a sign.

Again, thank you so much, Minister, for being here. I think the heritage and culture department and the work it does is so important for the well-being of this country.

I was able to serve as the minister of culture for three years in Ontario. Just seeing the impact of culture from an economic standpoint, from an inclusive perspective, bringing people together to share a similar narrative and to capture their similar values.... It's so important to our communities.

I remember that, in Ontario, one of the biggest challenges that the large institutions like the ROM, the McMichael and all these other agencies had was diversifying their base of people coming in. I know that many museums today struggle, and cultural centres struggle in bringing that next generation of young people into their institutions, as well as people who may be new to Canada.

How serious an issue is this nationally? What is the government doing about building cultural services and departments that are more inclusive for people?

• (0935)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: Thank you very much for your question.

I agree with you that culture, especially large institutions such as museums and art institutes, have a great responsibility to make sure that their doors are always open to the diversity of our communities. They need to reflect the Canadian population, which is great.

We are now 40 million people. It is a very diverse country, and I think that's our strength. Of course, our cultural institutions need to make sure that they are in this great place where we can have safe conversations around art and culture that give us a reflection of where society is and what the great challenges are. Something that I love and respect about artists is the fact that they can make us think about where we stand and where we are as a society.

Arts and culture need to do that more. This is part of the conversation that we need to have in the next year and a half. How do we do this? How do we support all of these cultural institutions to achieve that goal? Of course, it starts with governance. These institutions are more and more diverse—

Mr. Michael Coteau: I think my time is up, and I don't want to take time away from my colleague.

Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lemire.

[Translation]

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Coteau. I really appreciate that.

Minister, at a press conference on May 11, you made the following statement:

[English]

I would like to reiterate my commitment and clear any doubts that may remain. I will respond to the requests from athletes and survivors for a national inquiry.

[Translation]

The word used in English is “inquiry”.

[English]

This is a legitimate request and I'm working to be able to announce this as soon as I can....

[Translation]

In your opening remarks today, you said, “governing means making decisions.” That's interesting. Two and a half months passed between the time you made the statement and the time you changed departments. Naturally, the fact that you didn't take action fuelled my cynicism and loss of confidence in the government.

Why didn't you take action on this independent public inquiry during those two and a half months?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I'd like to thank my colleague for his question, Madam Chair, and for all the work he's done on safety in sport.

When I said those words, it was my intention to follow through. However, it's not something that can be done overnight. It's not easy to organize a national discussion on such significant issues. We have to make sure we do it the right way. Unfortunately, there was a cabinet shuffle, and I was unable to continue the work. I do know, however, that my colleague Ms. Qualtrough, the new Minister of Sport, will be here to talk more about what she plans to do about safety in sport.

Like my colleague, I was really disturbed when I heard all the stories. Clearly, there must be discussions about what to do next.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Minister, are you still prepared to support a public inquiry into sport?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: I said it was something I'd liked to have done. Now it's out of my mandate, but I will obviously support the government if it decides to go forward. It's a discussion that could not only result in innovative solutions, but also involve the provinces and territories, as this is an issue that should be of concern to all levels of government. Everyone needs to be at the table to further protect young people.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Do you find it acceptable, as it is rumoured, that CBC/Radio-Canada's budget cuts were split equally between French and English services, when we know that CBC's and Radio-Canada's budgets are far from equal?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge: The public broadcaster is independent of the government, and I'm going to let it manage that internally. However, our government is very clear on the fact that Radio-Canada must play a very significant role in defending French, not only in Quebec, but also outside Quebec, in official language minority communities. I expect CBC/Radio-Canada to uphold its mandate.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Minister.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Minister, I want to thank you for staying the extra time, I appreciate it. I apologize for any disruption that occurred.

I want to thank you for being here.

We will suspend for a few minutes while the minister leaves. The officials will stay to finish the remainder of this meeting.

Thank you.

• (0935)

(Pause)

• (0940)

The Chair: We are ready to begin.

We have two new members of Canadian Heritage here. If I could find their names, that would be great. They are David Dendooven, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy, planning and corporate affairs; and Joëlle Montminy, senior assistant deputy minister, cultural affairs.

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to the other two officials for staying all of this time.

We will begin again the questions and answers. We will start with the Conservatives.

Kevin Waugh, you have five minutes, please.

• (0945)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, again, to the officials.

I just recently toured the RCMP museum in Regina. This government wants to move the RCMP Depot out of Saskatchewan, out of Regina. That will be a battle that the Conservatives will always fight. Regina deserves the Depot. Regina deserves the museum.

The museum—with this Liberal government, I don't have to tell you—is struggling. The mandate letter from 2019 says, “We're with you.” Budget 2021 says, “We're going to give you some funding.” It wants to become a national museum, as you well know, but it is seeing no action from this government. It sees the precinct museums gobble up all the money: the one in Halifax and the one in Winnipeg. We're hoping that the one in Regina can come through some day and actually have some resources to be a national museum.

Where is this in today's pecking order with the department? Is the RCMP museum in Regina going to get national status?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: You're right. There has been a commitment by the government to install a museum of the RCMP in Saskatchewan, in Regina. There has been quite a lot of work done with the administration. I have to say that it's an amazing administration, which has done consultations to really work at becoming a national museum. We have resources in the department to assist in that work. We have worked closely with them. They are at the point now where—you're right—they need further investment to become a national museum.

I have to say that I receive letters almost every day from constituents who are supporting the next step. I think it's a good question that you can raise with the people who are making the decisions in the next budget.

Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Who makes that decision?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I will say that it's the government.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: We often talk about truth and reconciliation. I mean, this is where it should start: right at the RCMP, the museum, the Depot. To be blown off for five years... This government started this conversation in 2019. We're already heading to 2024. I met with the executive of the museum. They are frustrated, and they want answers. I think they deserve answers.

Ms. Mondou, what do you think they should do?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I wouldn't say that there has been no work during the last five years. Actually, we have worked very closely with them, doing some of the work you are talking about. They have gone out there. They have worked with the community to better understand what the community needs, including on the reconciliation file. I have to say that they have done tremendous work in collaboration with us. We have been working for the last couple of years on moving further on the national museum. We have great collaboration there.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: How close are we?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I think we are ready to move to the next step, which is really defining what the museum is going to look like and what budget is going to be needed. For that reason, I think it's a good conversation to have in the context of the next budget.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: The minister was here and talked about indigenous voices being at the table when, in fact, Google's \$100-million donation is going to hit the tracks this June. I have a number of reserves in Saskatchewan that want to start their own radio stations. I think you're aware of that. Where do they fit in?

All that I have right now is Missinipi in La Ronge. I can tell you three or four other reserves in my province that want to have their own communications networks.

I didn't get a chance to ask the minister, but it's interesting that indigenous and northern voices will be at the table. What do I tell my three or four reserves in Saskatchewan that want to start their own networks? Where does this leave them today?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Madam Chair, I have two answers to that.

The first one on Bill C-18 is that, as the minister said, indigenous newspapers, print and radio will be included, and they will be at the table. They have already engaged.

The point you've raised is very important. They're trying to make sure that everybody in Canada knows about it and that no small community is forgotten. The outreach is going to be very important, and there will be a call when the legislation comes into force to make sure that people can raise their hands.

I also want to mention another program to you. We have in Canadian Heritage a broadcasting program for the north. If you want to put me in contact with those organizations, I will be happy to follow up with them.

• (0950)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I think what's happened here is that their voices have not been heard. I have seen this with newcomers coming to this country, and I've seen this with indigenous voices not being heard in traditional media. They want to have their own network now. They want to start this. They're concerned that they're going to be left out of this. I'm just relaying the message that I'm receiving from four or five reserves in my province.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I think it's a very important message. They should not be forgotten.

You may know that in the department one of the things we've founded is the Indigenous Screen Office. It is giving indigenous people the capacity to do, under their own sovereignty, movies and

productions of their own. I think you're raising a very important point, and I think Bill C-18 is putting the rules in place to make sure their voices are not forgotten.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I think that's time.

The Chair: Thank you, Kevin.

We're going to the Liberals, with Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed for five minutes.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here with us today, in particular Ms. Mondou, who was a colleague of mine at the Privy Council Office almost 20 years ago. It's good to see her in this role.

We've heard a lot today from the minister.

We heard from the minister yesterday about the importance and the value of the agreement with Google. One of the things I was wondering about—and if you could talk a bit about—is a comment the minister made yesterday about the notion that, if there is a better deal somewhere else in the world, Canada reserves the right to reopen and move towards that.

For the benefit of those of us in this room who may not have heard the whole statement and have more information, could you walk us through what that actually means?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Yes. Thank you.

Basically, the concept is drawn a bit from international law, where we have the most favoured nation clause.

The idea is that this negotiation will continue across the world, and Canada wants to be able to reopen the regulation if we find out that Google does a better deal in another country. That's very much the same principle that we use in international law. It's applied in that context.

We'll keep following the file. We'll keep attuned to what's going in the world. We have committed to reopen the negotiation and basically the regulation if needed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I want to go back to a very important question that Mr. Shields asked earlier of the minister.

The \$100 million is cash on the table from Google, and it's indexed. Is that correct?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: That's correct.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: That's annual...?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: It's CPI indexation. It's what we normally use in any legislation.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Good, and then on top of that, the minister also mentioned that there were other services that Google was providing. Can you talk a bit about that, but for avoidance of doubt, can you also confirm that the value of that is outside the \$100 million that was in cash on the table?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Effectively, the \$100 million in cash, annually indexed, is a given, and it's all in cash. There is nothing that will prevent Google from entering into other deals that are non-monetary, as they do now. They provide all kinds of services, training, conferences, etc. It is valued by the sector. They will be able to do that on top of the cash value of the money that is in the regulation.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you.

I want to switch gears a bit. We've heard a lot about the CBC in this committee, as you know. Can you talk a bit about the way in which the CBC contributes to providing information and news to rural and northern communities, where they may not have as much access, and what that means in terms of ensuring Canadians have access to good-quality information?

● (0955)

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I will start, and then will ask if my colleague wants to add something. Essentially, Radio-Canada and CBC have a presence in the north. This has been a long-standing commitment of theirs. I should mention too that they're going to launch the... They have announced their indigenous strategy too, which has been developed very much in the spirit of working in the north and working with indigenous communities.

In addition to that, they are present in local communities. I think that, when the chair of the CRTC came here, she mentioned some localities in which they have added journalists recently. They found out that there was not a lot of media left on the ground, so they are trying to really be present where there are not a lot of journalists to serve the public.

I don't know if my colleague wants to add something.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage): The only thing I might add is that CBC/Radio-Canada is unique in that it has a mandate prescribed in legislation, and that includes reflecting Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences and serving the special needs of those regions. That is why you see, when CBC/Radio-Canada comes in and is licensed by the CRTC, there are special conditions of licence ensuring that they meet the needs of those communities.

The Chair: Thank you. I think that's it.

Before I go to Mr. Lemire and Peter, I just wanted to say that we started this committee at 25 after, so we can go to 25 after in this room. I just wanted to get a sense of the committee. Do you want to do that, or do you just want to finish this round?

Mr. Peter Julian: I would love to do it, but I can't because 10:15 is my next meeting.

The Chair: You can't, okay, so we will just finish this round then.

Mr. Lemire, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Mondou, I'd like to begin by thanking you for joining us.

I'd like to talk a little about sport. The Fédération internationale de football association, or FIFA, is organizing the upcoming World Cup. As I understand it, over 20 departments are involved in the preparations for some 10 soccer games in two different cities.

What is the initial amount that the government, in particular your department, is investing in this event? Also, have you done an estimate of the related expenditures?

According to a recent article, the City of Toronto estimates that costs have risen significantly.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I can tell you that 40 departments are involved in this effort. In addition, we are in the process of doing a cost estimate. We are not doing it alone. The costs to provinces and municipalities must also be factored in, because the government is matching the expenditures incurred by the provinces and municipalities.

We've reached the final stage. We have not yet obtained data for British Columbia, the City of Vancouver, the City of Toronto or the Government of Ontario. We should have data to report between January and June.

However, we're still waiting for some essential information to be provided. FIFA is expected to confirm in December how many matches will take place in Canada. We expect 10 to 14 matches, but FIFA has yet to confirm in which cities they will take place. This will obviously have an impact on costs.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: What mechanisms are in place to monitor the money being spent, which is public money, on such events?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the member for his question. There are a number of things to mention.

Every part of our estimate is cross-checked by an independent auditor. That means we have a firm that checks our calculations, in addition to the finance departments of the provinces involved and the federal finance department.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: This past May 11, as you know, Minister St-Onge held a press conference. She committed to launching a national public inquiry into health and safety in sport.

Were you given a mandate to set up such an inquiry?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Throughout the year, we worked with Minister St-Onge to develop such an inquiry. I'll let Minister Qualtrough explain to you very shortly, at her next appearance, what she intends to do about this inquiry.

We also continued working on the announcements made by Minister St-Onge in May. They consist of governance reforms that this committee and another had called for in terms of codes of conduct and auditing.

In a previous consultation, Mr. Julian raised the issue of the lack of mechanisms to independently verify information. We now have a team in place to ensure that we have information that comes not only from players and organizations, but also from other sources, including stakeholders and athletes.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: What I understand is that you've been given the mandate to organize such an inquiry.

Am I to understand that this mandate is still active?

• (1000)

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: You'd be correct in understanding that we worked very closely with Minister St-Onge on the matter and will continue to work with Minister Qualtrough.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I'm sorry, but I'm not sure I understand the nuances of what you've just said.

I understand what you mean for Ms. St-Onge, but is that mandate still in effect, right now?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Ms. Qualtrough has just received her mandate letter. I'd really like to let her be the first to talk to you about her mandate.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: These items are not clearly set out in the mandate letter. We'll have a chance to question her shortly. She may be coming on December 12. Can you confirm this?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: That was my understanding.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Perfect.

As for what's next, a problematic situation is emerging in sport, linked to the whole issue of the independence of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. How is this situation developing?

As far as the responsibilities of the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity are concerned, some people are making proposals, while others seem to be hiding behind the various bodies. In a way, it's extremely shocking.

Have you helped improve transparency between these bodies so far?

What steps have you taken to improve their accountability to you?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Initially, the two bodies had to focus on setting up their offices. I think that is a significant point. Today, both offices are able to produce regular reports on the progress of their work.

Naturally, you've also started to see the investigations that arise from their work. Transparency will come from these investigations. The May announcement also included a commitment that the offices would set up a public registry of people who have been sanctioned, and they are working on that matter. I believe all those factors will contribute to greater transparency.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: This past November 16, we heard about a situation involving former Olympic kayaker Angus Mortimer. How did you receive that information? What steps have you taken to investigate the situation and, above all, to ensure that such conduct never happens again?

What steps have you taken?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, I'm sorry. You've gone well over time. I think I've been asleep at the switch.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I've only used five minutes and 50 seconds, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: No, you only had two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: We're in the first round of questions.

I'm sorry.

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order.

When we have new witnesses, which is the case, we start over with the first round, which lasts six minutes each.

[*English*]

The Chair: Not really, but go ahead then. Go ahead. Finish your five minutes. Given that we're not going to stay until the end, go ahead. Finish your five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I had mostly asked my question.

Ms. Mondou, what steps has your department taken to address the situation?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: In fact, as was the case with Ms. Shaw, the department of sport has no investigative powers. That's why an independent mechanism was created. It's precisely to conduct these investigations.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

You're generous, and I appreciate that.

[*English*]

I want to—

The Chair: I just want to get the work done. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

I want to come back to the issue of Laith Marouf. I appreciate the four steps I heard about. First, I want to know whether any money has been recovered so far. Second, in terms of the Canada Revenue Agency, what does that mean? What are the sources of funds that the Canada Revenue Agency would simply garnish, obviously, coming into the country?

Third, what are the the court procedures that are currently in place—in which court and what has been filed officially?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Let me start by saying that I will never apologize enough for the events that happened around the distribution of that contract. As a department, we are committed to combating any form of violation of human rights, so this has been something that has been extremely damaging to our reputation and, frankly, to our employees, who are committed to doing that work. Therefore, I want to apologize on my behalf and on behalf of all the employees of the department.

With regard to the measures that were taken, there has been an agreement made with the Canada Revenue Agency—as we do in other circumstances—that if this organization, which is incorporated, has any money due to the Canada Revenue Agency, we are the first creditor and we can benefit from recovering that money.

I won't be able to give you more detail than that because, frankly, the Canada Revenue Agency is not telling me how it will happen. However, it knows that if it gets any money from the organization, we will recoup that money. That's point number one.

On point number two.... I feel that you have a question.

• (1005)

Mr. Peter Julian: No money has been recovered, not a cent yet.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: No money has been recovered so far.

The second element is that we have filed, in court, a procedure called an *annulation de contrat*.

I think a “cancellation of contract” would be the proper term in English. That's what we have filed in court to be able to recuperate that money.

Mr. Peter Julian: That is filed in which court?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I should know the answer, but I will get back to you. I don't remember if it's the federal or superior court. My colleague has it here. It's the Superior Court, civil division, Province of Quebec.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: We can leave a copy of the procedure with you.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you. I think the committee would appreciate getting that.

Part of the mandate letter for the minister talks about honouring residential school survivors and the children who are victims of residential schools, working “with Indigenous leadership, Survivors, families, communities and experts on the planning, design and construction of a national monument in Ottawa.”

Where are we at in terms of that important recognition of the cultural genocide that was the residential schools?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Thank you for the question.

The last step that was public was the location of the monument. Last June, in mid-June I believe, a ceremony was held by the advisory committee, which is made up of residential school survivors. It announced that there will be a location for the monument very close to here, on the Hill. The location has been selected. We are working now with both Speakers to ensure that, obviously, we respect proper parliamentary procedure, and we are working closely with the public service.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Will the monument be located on Parliament Hill?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Yes, it will be.

[*English*]

I can send you the exact location with the map of where the monument will be, if the committee is interested. The committee is now working on its vision for the monument and how it wants to proceed to get what we normally call the RFP, which is a call for proposals. They want to do it in a way that's very much driven by the survivors. They are meeting regularly to discuss that. That's the next step. They have to decide how they want to proceed with basically the launch of the contract for the monument.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Lastly, I'd like to ask you two more questions. The first concerns Google and the benefits the company receives.

Have you done the math to find out whether we're giving Google more than we're getting under the agreement? Is there a tax advantage when you take into account the indirect subsidies we give them through the advertising tax credit?

My second question concerns online harms. Is there a draft bill already circulating that the department is aware of or commenting on?

[*English*]

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I will answer the second question. The work is very advanced on the bill, which was designed based on the consultation, the advisory committee and all the work that Minister Rodriguez led across the country on the consultation. I think the committee will be sad if I don't turn at least once to Owen for a question on Bill C-18, so I will do that.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: Thank you, MP Julian, for the question.

If I understand correctly, it's about section 19 of the Income Tax Act. The starting point for that provision is that businesses should be able to deduct expenses accrued in the regular course of their business. Those would include advertising. That applies to small and medium-sized enterprises that frequently use these platforms to advertise.

Mr. Peter Julian: I do understand. What I'm asking is whether there has been an evaluation of whether Google still gets more from the federal government in direct subsidies with this deal or whether Google gives back a little bit of what they receive.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: Thank you for the question.

I wouldn't characterize it as a subsidy, because the default rule for businesses is that you are able to deduct your expenses incurred in the course of business.

The Chair: I think we're not getting translation.

The French is coming in instead of the English.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Geneviève Desjardins): Is that on the English channel?

• (1010)

The Chair: Yes. Mr. Shields is finding the same thing.

It has been corrected, but, Peter, you're well over time.

Mr. Peter Julian: You're very generous, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I know I am. I'm just trying to get people.... I know you have to leave, and I'm trying to get everybody to have an opportunity to question the officials. Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Madam Chair.

You asked a question that I had asked earlier, and I think it's really a critical piece to understanding the agreement.

I have this from The Globe and Mail: that under the deal, Google will be able to factor in the value of "training". We have a legacy journalist who's made a mistake. Is that what you're saying? We shouldn't believe everything that's in the media...?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: No, I mean, it's still not.... The information is available because it's in the regulations. I think people are probably trying to make some deductions from what they heard yesterday. What I will say is that the \$100 million cash is \$100 million cash. Everything else that Google negotiates with the platforms is on top of the \$100 million amount of cash. It's on top of it.

Mr. Martin Shields: I think it's good to clarify that, and I think you should make sure you clarify that with the media, because that could be a very large number in the sense of what they say they're supplying out of that \$100 million.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Absolutely. That's a very good point, and we'll make sure we take that on board—absolutely.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The other one that is concerning me is that the media is reporting that there are about 15,000 journalists in Canada, and they break this down to about \$6,000 per journalist, in the sense that it could be derived from that. I'm thinking that if one-third of that goes to the CBC—because it was mentioned by the minister this morning that one-third of the journalists are at CBC in this country—that's about \$30 million for the CBC, which will be part of this collective.

Go ahead.

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I think what the minister is saying is exactly what you say—one-third of journalists are at the CBC—but what she also said is that she has heard the comments about the fact that there are concerns about CBC taking that amount. She has heard concerns from everybody and she is going to take that into account in the regulations.

Mr. Martin Shields: That means the government is looking at a ratio by which.... I have 13 weekly papers in my riding and they may have one journalist—the owner-journalist—or whatever else you want under the criteria that we've argued about for what seems like years. Does that mean the government is going to determine a ratio to set up a formula?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I don't want to get too much ahead of the regulations, but what was announced yesterday is that the definition will be per journalist. It will be based on the number of journalists. As for more details, I'm not able to tell you more at the moment, but it will be in the regulations that will be published before the act comes into force.

Mr. Martin Shields: You understand how concerning that is to me. I represent my constituents, and I believe what I say, because I spend over \$40,000 a year in my weekly newspapers for advertising. I spend and I believe that's what I should do to support them.

Do you understand why I'm very leery about whether they're going to get anything?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I don't think you should be worried, because one of the requirements under the act is that local newspapers be included in the collective. As such, all the newspapers that have journalists will be able to raise their hands and be part of the collective, if they meet the definition in the act.

Mr. Martin Shields: One of the things we've heard is that, when I bring up the amount of money that is spent on big tech.... Could you provide us with the number your department spends with the social media platforms, the big techs like Google and Facebook?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I can provide you with the number, but I can tell you that Canadian Heritage is almost not advertising at all. We do most of the things on all social media. I can provide you the number, but it's normally a very small number, because we don't do a lot of advertising. We do a bit for Winterlude and Canada Day, and that's about it.

• (1015)

Mr. Martin Shields: Could I have that number for print media as well?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: Absolutely. It would be my pleasure.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to go to Ms. Hepfner.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all of you for being here. I think I've mentioned that already.

One thing I've heard since the announcement about the Google agreement yesterday is that people on social media are saying that this is the government supporting and paying money for journalism, but in fact, what I understand is that it's a direct deal between the news organizations and the Internet service.

Can you clarify that for people? Really, the government is not involved other than to set up the framework. Is that right?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: That's correct. The \$100 million indexed in cash is going to come directly from Google to the media, and they will negotiate with the collective. The government has nothing to do with that. In fact, it's going to be way more transparent than what's happening today, because what's happening today is that Google has deals with newspapers and none of us knows which newspapers or for how much.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you for mentioning that as well, because we keep hearing that our framework is more transparent than the Australian version. Can you describe more for us why that is the case?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I want to first commend Australia, because they were the first mover, and kudos to them for doing that. Obviously we are all learning from each other, so what you have created here in this committee and in Parliament is a bill that provides more transparency.

How does it do that? You know already the amount that is going to be on the table and the criteria with respect to which newspapers will be included, because you adopted those criteria. That's not something that was happening in Australia, because most of the deal happened without engaging the act, so that's the big difference.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: I'll pass the rest of my time over to my colleague Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you to my colleague.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to go back to a conversation about the value of these deals, because obviously, as Mr. Shields has pointed out, it's very important for us to clarify that it's 100 million in cash. I look forward to Mr. Shields' also helping to ensure that people understand that it's \$100 million in cash.

If you were the Germans, how would you be looking at this deal right now? How did the German deal with Google work out for them? I understand they ended up getting under \$5 million, because they didn't have the structure that we do in this deal.

Can you talk about the unfortunate circumstance of that deal and why this deal is so much better in terms of setting a standard not just for Canada but also for others?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: I will turn to my colleague.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: Thank you for the question.

What we see in the world is that there have been two general approaches to this problem. You have seen Europe pursue an approach based on giving news publishers a form of copyright for their content when it gets shared. The outcome in Germany that you are referencing would be under that kind of copyright royalty framework.

The other model was—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm sorry, but how much approximately annually are the Germans seeing out of the deal?

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: I believe the media reports the minister referred to—I don't have the precise currency figure—mentioned that it was five million, but I can't remember if it was dollars or euros. It was in that range.

The other model is the Australian model. That was a bargaining framework, which is what Canada has pursued here, in part because it provides the ability to have these commercial agreements and to not get involved in setting a copyright royalty rate for this kind of activity on platforms.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you.

In my riding in Vancouver there are a number of smaller online publications and others that are really trying to make a go of it. A number of them have reached out to say they are quite happy with this. A couple have said they like where they think this is going.

What assurance can you as officials give them that indeed this is a deal that will support ethnic media and support small local media and others, not unlike the ones that all of us have in our communities?

Ms. Isabelle Mondou: The answer is really in the act and the results of your work. In the act, the criteria are already baked in. There is not going to be any exemption and, therefore, no deals by Google will be accepted unless they deal with media from all the groups you mentioned. The criteria in the act are very specific, so no deal will be accepted unless it meets the criteria in the act.

That's another difference. It's more transparent but it's also ensuring, contrary to the case in Australia, that the smaller media, the ethnic media, the indigenous media and the local media will be part of these deals.

• (1020)

The Chair: I think that's the end of our question-and-answer session.

With it being 25 after, if someone would move to adjourn the meeting....

An hon. member: I so move.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: It's 10:20 a.m., Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is anyone objecting?

The meeting is adjourned.

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