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Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

FRANCOPHONE BROADCASTING SERVICES

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, nearly a year ago, on March 31, 2009, I shared with you my concerns about the loss of 800 jobs at CBC/Radio-Canada and the elimination of key positions western Canada. The Leader of the Government in the Senate indicated at that time that she would share my concerns with Mr. Moore, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, but I never heard anything about what came out of those discussions.

Could the minister tell us how she followed up last year with Mr. Moore and how she will follow up this time?

[*English*]

Senator LeBreton: I want to make it clear that I do pass on these concerns. Minister Moore, in his capacity as Minister of Heritage, meets regularly with all of the stakeholders in his

department. However, the minister cannot tell CBC where it is to allocate its funds and what programming it is obligated to put on the air waves. Honourable senators, I dare say if the minister ever tried such a thing it would create a crisis. We would be accused of interfering with the public broadcaster and interfering with free speech and it would go on and on.

To answer Senator Tardif's question, when there are such concerns, I pass them on to Minister Moore. The CBC could say, "Yes, Minister Moore, we hear you," and do nothing. Who knows what they said to him.

I pass on legitimate concerns, but when dealing with a Crown corporation like the CBC, the minister is not in any position to give direction or to report back what they said.

I will attempt to get some direction from Minister Moore as to what actually happened when he has had his discussions with the CBC in terms of their obligation to our citizens in both official languages. Perhaps I erred in not following up and asking Minister Moore what the CBC said. I can probably guess, but in any event, I will follow up.
