



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 149 • NUMBER 54

CANADIAN HERITAGE
CBC/Radio-Canada

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

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Hon. Claudette Tardif: Honourable senators, the effects of the cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada are attracting a lot of attention, and for good reason. Today we learned from Michel Cormier, the news director, that 35 positions would be cut over the next year, including 14 journalist positions and 2 regional positions. Yesterday, Tous amis de Radio-Canada released a white paper to raise public awareness of the situation at CBC/Radio-Canada. Their message is clear. The cuts are a direct attack on what makes our public broadcaster unique, what sets it apart from the competition and what enables it to provide high-quality service to the public.

• (1420)

Furthermore, 17 francophone workers with Radio-Canada's news service sounded the alarm today regarding the very serious impact that these cuts will have on the quality of public services. They said:

After cuts and more cuts, Radio-Canada is dying a slow death. Facts are facts: over the past six years, nearly 20 per cent of the French news budget has been slashed.

How does the government see the future of our French-language public broadcaster?

Hon. Claude Carignan (Leader of the Government): As the honourable senator knows, the government had nothing to do with the decisions announced by CBC/Radio-Canada. It is an independent Crown corporation that is responsible for its own operational decisions. According to its President, Mr. Lacroix, a decline in viewers in certain demographic groups and a decline in advertising revenue are the corporation's main challenges. CBC/Radio-Canada has enough money to fulfill its mandate under the Broadcasting Act, and it is up to that organization to offer Canadians the programming they want, whether in English or French.

As you know, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications is currently examining the situation at CBC/Radio-Canada. I too received the white paper you referred to, and I forwarded it to the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications so it could be taken into account in the committee's study.
