

numerous neighbours to the South, thereby facilitating the exchange of cultural values and identities between them. This exchange is made easier through the physical proximity of the two countries, and the ready availability of radio and television signals serving both nations.

In many areas of our cultural life, the predominant flow of cultural products and entertainment from south to north is a threat to the continued existence of the cultural values and identities of English-speaking Canadians. Some surveys have shown that Canadians and Americans still hold considerably different values, but in the view of many Canadians, the American influence constitutes a threat to our cultural sovereignty.

The challenge therefore is to invest our resources wisely and well in the development of Canadian talent, the production of Canadian programs, and the distribution of cultural products to as many Canadians as possible. If there was one point of unanimity among the witnesses appearing before us, it was that our priority must be to pursue *Canadian programming excellence*, and not to attempt to shield ourselves from American cultural intrusion, even if that were technologically possible.

While not so diverse in their origins, French-speaking Canadians date back to the settlements in Acadia and Quebec in 1604 and 1608 respectively. The cultural legacy of a four-hundred-year history and of settlements which reached as far south as Louisiana was held strongly together by one purpose: *to survive*. From its widely separated locations, *the will* of the French-speaking community in North America to survive has evolved by necessity into a cultural awakening primarily concentrated in Quebec, the only province where the *majority* of citizens continue to speak French. It is generally perceived that, with the passage of the *Quebec Act* by Britain in 1774, the distinct society was recognized in Quebec because that legislation did three important things: (i) it permitted the use of the French language, (ii) it guaranteed religious and cultural freedom and, (iii) it provided for the civil code of law. It could be said that the modern reality of Canada's two founding linguistic communities actually had its birth at that time.

Without doubt, a distinguishing feature of the Canadian reality is the strong and vibrant French-language culture within it. Not enough Canadians, in our view, yet recognize or appreciate the deeply enriching perspective which this culture adds to our national identity. Unquestionably, when considered as a whole, Canada is a distinct society as compared to the United States, partly because of its distinct French-language culture. In the view of the Committee and certainly in the cultural context, there should be no question or concern about the distinct society in Quebec; it is there. We should all share and take pride in it.

While it is true that Canada's French-language culture is centered in Quebec, it is not limited to that province, and this fact merits very important consideration. Its presence extends to all corners of Canada, from the Acadian community of New Brunswick to communities in all the other provinces, and includes more than one million French-speaking citizens living across the country. From the perspective of its culture alone, our French-speaking society needs and deserves specific recognition and appreciation for its unique and distinctive contribution to the Canadian scene — concentrated in Quebec, certainly, but extended all across the nation.