



Canadian Media Guild

La Guilde canadienne des médias

CWA/SCA CANADA

Oral Remarks / Allocution

CRTC Hearing – A review of the policy framework for local and community television programming // Audience du CRTC – Révision du cadre politique relatif à la programmation télévisuelle locale et communautaire

CRTC 2015-421

January 29, 2016

Seating Plan / Plan

Carmel Smyth

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| Carmel Smyth |

1. Good morning, Bonjour Mr. Chair, Commissioners, Staff,
2. First, thank you for giving us the opportunity to appear before you today at this important hearing about local and community television. We appreciate the fact that the Commission is taking the time to consult widely on the serious issues facing local programming including local news. We hope the outcome will be a stronger local media sector in Canada.
3. My name is Carmel Smyth and I am the National President of the Canadian Media Guild (CMG). With me is Jeanne d’Arc Umurungi, CMG’s Communications Director.
4. CMG represents 6,000 media workers. Our members work at CBC/Radio-Canada, TVO, TFO, APTN, Shaw Media, ZoomerMedia, CKOI Radio here in Gatineau, as well as the Canadian Press, Thomson Reuters, AFP and MBS Radio. We also represent media freelancers. These are some of the people who bring you news, and create original Canadian content every day.
5. Because of our front-line view in the media and news business, we’ve been sounding the alarm on the unfolding crisis in local media, and local news specifically – for a number of years.
6. **Let me start with CBC/Radio-Canada:**
7. Across the country, Canadians and our members at CBC/Radio-Canada, have been expressing their concerns about the cuts to provincial and City Hall reporting.
8. Generally, newscasts have been shortened, important stories are left untold, and when they are covered, there are limited resources or time for in-depth investigations – This situation threatens CBC/Radio-Canada’s ability to meet its responsibilities to Canadians in their communities.
9. To illustrate, let me start by reading a couple of comments from CMG members who work in news in three different regions of the country:
10. **1) From Calgary:**
11. *“There will be no more full news stories for television. That means the only TV stories will be voice overs or voice-over clips. One reporter is assigned to the supper news and the rest of the program is made up of interviews and National items. The late night news is a series*



of VOs or VO-Clips with cut down interviews from the 6 o'clock news. I feel that shortchanges anyone looking for full television coverage of what has happened in the city.

“We have too few reporters for a city of 1.5 million people - There is no more City Hall reporter. That is the level of government that affects us most and they are choosing not to cover what is happening there. It appears CBC is leaving coverage of Legislatures and City Halls across the country. If this is the directive, it only stands to reason we could also be leaving Parliament Hill.

My feeling is there will be no more local television presence on the CBC within the next couple of years. It is quickly being destroyed.”

12. 2) From New-Brunswick:

“We have lost offices in Bouctouche, St-John, Grand Falls and Cheticamp, Nova-Scotia (Atlantic French services). We only have one news reporter in Fredericton.

With the new digital TV receiver that replaced the antenna, only Moncton gets Television service for free because there are no transmitters in any other city in the Atlantic provinces. So no free Radio-Canada on TV for most of the French audience”

13. 3) From Newfoundland and Labrador

Programming has been redirected to originate from Halifax, Halifax being the Hub in the new CBC regional Atlantic Model.

TV Late Night news has been cancelled; TV Weekend News and On Point (Political Program) has also been cancelled; supper hour newscast has been reduced to 60 minutes from 90 minutes.

14. We are not just hearing from journalists, Canadians have also weighed in :

15. Here is another example **from a citizen in Saskatchewan** :

“Indeed, there is a budgetary breaking point in any organization -- however efficient and exemplary—when it can simply no longer “do more with less”; when no amount of duct tape, patch work, or employees’ giving “110%” can keep it running as it should, as we remember it, as we desperately need it to be in a healthy democracy.



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*Sadly, we have reached that point in my home province of Saskatchewan. Our province, in the last few months, now has the dubious distinction of having **not one full-time reporter assigned to cover provincial politics** for our entire province; **not one reporter, from either private or public news outlets now covers provincial Legislative politics on a full-time basis.***

“Tweets and press releases simply won’t do in a democracy. In fact, in our hurried, digital world, we need news agencies to shed more light and transparency, not less, on our democratic governance; we need more substance, more context, and more credible political analysis.

Dedicated, full-time reporters are best positioned to research stories, provide in-depth coverage from multiple perspectives, and get as complete a backstory and picture as possible. In fact, transparency, accountability, and participation are the very foundation upon which rests our democracy itself.”

16. And from a citizen in the *North*

“For years, CBC was a 'lifeline' for remote and isolated First Nations, and despite advances in technology that still holds true today.

While fair and unbiased in their coverage, our local station, through programs such as Voyage North, has given more attention to Aboriginal issues than most other media. I would expect Canada's national broadcaster to promote that as opposed to cutting it.”

17. Mr. Chair, Commissioners, these testimonies are why we said in our submission, that we believe it’s important to take full account of the situation of CBC/Radio-Canada as part of this hearing, in order to get a real picture of the serious problem in local news and to find the most appropriate solutions. The fact is that what we are seeing in the headlines about cuts in news is a widespread and accelerating trend in the industry including at the national public broadcaster.

18. Provincial broadcasters are also facing challenges:

In Ontario, TVO and TFO have undergone major cuts, with important regional programs such as *TVO on the road* having been cancelled.

In general at many news organizations, staff are struggling to maintain journalistic independence while resisting pressure to create content that blurs lines between reporting and advertising.



19. Another unique **voice in Canada's broadcasting system, APTN** – the only Aboriginal network, has had to close bureaus in Toronto and Edmonton for lack of funding.
20. CMG found that over 5 years between 2008 and 2013, 10 000 jobs were lost in the media business. And in the last 2 years 6,000 for a total of 16,000 jobs (these numbers come from media reports of announced job cuts)

And as everyone in this room, the cuts continue.

Now to my colleague Jeanne d'Arc

|Jeanne d'Arc|

21. Bonjour M. Le Président, conseillers, membres du personnel

Avant de passer à nos propositions, permettez-nous de souligner ce qui suit :

22. Nous sommes d'accord avec les observations faites par Monsieur Blais il y a un an à London lors de l'annonce des premières décisions découlant des consultations Parlons Télé :
23. *« ...pour moi, la diminution des fonds accordés aux stations de télévision locale par les principaux radiodiffuseurs est aussi une source de préoccupation. Certes, les magnats de la presse ont le droit de se préoccuper de générer des profits; mais les actionnaires publics et privés des actifs de radiodiffusion ont le devoir de s'assurer que les reportages journalistiques et l'analyse des nouvelles continuent d'être financés adéquatement. Ceci fait en sorte que les Canadiens, en tant que citoyens, comprennent les événements quotidiens qui se déroulent autour d'eux. Une population informée ne peut être l'offrande à sacrifier sur l'autel des bénéfices des entreprises ou de la réduction du déficit. »*
24. Cependant, nous nous posons des questions sur le point de vue du Conseil selon lequel il y aurait à l'heure actuelle suffisamment de fonds dans le système.
25. À notre sens, le système canadien de radiodiffusion a besoin d'une injection de nouveaux fonds tant sous forme d'une petite augmentation du montant contribué par les « EDR traditionnelles », que - à l'avenir, quand cela deviendra possible - sous la forme d'une contribution semblable par les « nouvelles EDR » – nous entendons par là les entreprises dans le système qui tirent des profits du fait que les Canadiens paient de plus en plus pour visionner des vidéos en ligne ,sur leurs téléphones et autres appareils.



26. In our view the crisis in local news and programming compels us to re-examine some fundamental principles:

- *News should be a public service to Canadian citizens in their communities
- *It should be available and provide original coverage of daily local and regional news
- *It should include a local presence (“feet on the street”) with full-time professional staff gathering news for different platforms
- *Diversity – including diversity of voices as well as public, private and community media
- *It should serve **minority language communities**
- *It should serve **Indigenous peoples**
- *It should preserve journalistic independence and journalistic integrity
(Standards; Code of Ethics of the Radio Television Digital News Association of Canada (RTDNA); the CBC journalistic standards and practices)

Je passe maintenant la parole à ma collègue Carmel :

| Carmel Smyth |

27. We would like to incorporate these principles into the Commission’s idea of dedicated local programming Fund. We offer the suggestion of a **Public Service Media Fund**. This fund would be accessible to all public service media to fund their local news and programming. This could include public and education broadcasters, broadcasters representing unique voices or cultural groups, independent broadcasters for local news and programming on all platforms. The fund could be administered by the CMF or a similar mechanism. And it could be reviewed every five years.

28. It would be made of two components:

29. A local programming component – and a local news component, each with specific criteria, based on need.

30. The Public Service Media Fund would be funded from a small percentage of BDU revenue (1.5) %
And because it would fund local content on diverse platforms, “newer BDUs” could also contribute to the Fund when the legislation is changed.

31. We also propose that the Commission study the impact on communities of the loss of local news, information and other programming.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.

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