

The Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel
c/o Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
235 Queen Street, 1st Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

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Dear Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel,

Thank you for this important opportunity to enshrine the existence, governance, and future of Community Media.

I am Chair/Executive Director of the fledgling soon-to-be non profit media organization, Toronto Community Media Network (TCMN). We are a group of Torontonians including students, broadcasters, filmmakers, journalists, and ordinary citizens, that have been meeting for several months to develop a network of community multimedia production hubs in the Greater Toronto Area. The purpose is to enable ordinary citizens to access media literacy training, equipment and distribution platforms to broadcast video and online content that reflects the pulse of the city and concerns of Torontonians. As part of the plan, we intend to apply for an over-the-air community TV broadcasting licence as a means of making homegrown television programming available to Torontonians free of charge, and to use the visibility of an over-the-air licence to drive residents to other platforms, in addition to triggering carriage on the cable network in the GTA.

TCMN is a member of the national advocacy group, the Canadian Association of Cable Television Users and Stations (CACTUS). Without this association, the notion of TCMN could not be realized. The challenges of founding a television station notwithstanding, the regulatory and practical knowledge CACTUS brings to bear is invaluable to organizations, such as TCMN, that are committed to providing a communication platform for ordinary citizens.

I first became involved with CACTUS in 2014. The collective goal was to start a community cable channel for the citizens of Toronto. Collectively, we were naïve as to the regulatory requirements, however, we forged ahead confident we would learn as we went on, because one thing we were sure of, there was federal funding available for our venture. One hundred and twenty million dollars.

The funding we were depending on was available, only in theory. Yet, 2% of telecom subscribers' bill payments continue to be collected to fund community media, yet it is not allocated to community media. Instead, this money is available to for-profit BDUs to bolster their businesses, an interest-free loan from the Canadian taxpayer.

I supplied testimony in the *Review of Local and Community (CRTC 2015-421)*. I would like to include an exchange between CRTC Chairperson and Collette Watson, Vice-President, Broadcast and Television Operations, Rogers:

5150 MR. DAVID WATT We provided a model that would allow companies operating both local television stations and community channels to reallocate resources from major markets to smaller, underserved and underfunded centers.

5160 MS. WATSON: The third element of our proposal would require community channels to make minimum commitments to local news and information programming in markets that are not served by a private local television station. In exchange for these commitments, a distributor's community channels could pool their contributions to local expression and reduce their access programming obligations.

5626 THE CHAIRPERSON: A little lower down you talk about reducing under that model, again, the access -- reducing the community programming, access programming, from 50 to 30 percent. Why?

5627 MS. WATSON: The spending requirement that goes with it.

5628 THE CHAIRPERSON: Right. Why?

The business model presented by Ms. Watson and Rogers does not fit with a true community model. A true community model is not dictated by "allowing", "reallocating resources from major markets to smaller underserved, underfunded centres" nor "reducing the community programming, access programming from 50 to 30 percent". "Spending requirements", business models and budget considerations for community television were forwarded by the working group of the 2015 Community Media Convergence.

My point for this reference is to underscore the need for permanent funding and a firm definition of "Community Media" to be enshrined in the Act. There is also a need at the federal level, for a community media-centric, non-profit organization, such as CACTUS, to define, represent and facilitate regulatory and funding allocations to existing and future community media organizations. CACTUS and its members have forwarded copious amounts of valid data illustrating operating, set-up and execution of community channels across the country. Toronto in particular, has been challenged by the CRTC to justify why a media saturated city needs a community channel.

The rebuttal is simple.

Broadcasting Policy for Canada

Declaration

3 (1) It is hereby declared as the broadcasting policy for Canada that:

- **(a) the Canadian broadcasting system shall be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians;**
- **(b) the Canadian broadcasting system, operating primarily in the English and French languages and comprising public, private and community elements, makes use of radio**

frequencies that are public property and provides, through its programming, a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty;

Currently, this requirement is not being carried out in Toronto. Rogers, the sole community channel operator, has shut down its community operations. The public has no platform to make use of their radio waves to enhance their national identity and cultural sovereignty. This is something Torontonians pay for. The Broadcast Participation Fund is meant to fund public platforms of expression, not corporate bailouts.

As per the Act:

- **(i) serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada,**
- **(ii) encourage the development of Canadian expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity, by displaying Canadian talent in entertainment programming and by offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view,**
- **(iii) through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society, and**
- **(iv) be readily adaptable to scientific and technological change**

In order to be in adherence with the Act, Toronto, in particular, must cease to be punished for being “media saturated” and not be excluded from exercising the people’s rights. In my travels to realize TCMN, I have come across objections, such as: Television ownership is on the decline and there is You Tube and cell phone cameras. As per <https://www.statista.com/statistics/744011/number-people-watch-tv-canada/>, the number of television viewers in Canada from 2014-2018 is 28 million. People are still watching television. And yes, currently, local programming is available to them. What is not available to Torontonians is hyper-local programming, by them, for them.

You Tube, cell phones and other digital platforms do provide the public the opportunity for self-expression and the chance to become “citizen journalists”. What is missing, and an essential component for community media is media literacy. In order to tell and craft a story for the masses, one has to be taught. Media literacy is the bedrock component for community media/television. It is key to give Torontonians, including access to their political representatives, such as Councilor Anthony Perruzza, Jane-Finch, a TCMN advocate, and MP Julie Dabrusin, Toronto-Danforth, and sub-communities represented by Leesa Levinson, founder of Lights, Camera Access - media organization for the disabled, a democratic platform that is their right within the Act.