



10 July 2015

Via GC Key

John Traversy
Secretary General
CRTC
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N2

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Re: Part 1 Application 2015-0576-0 by Unifor 723M with respect to the OMNI TV stations

- 1 The Forum on Research and Policy in Communications (FRPC) is writing in support of applications from Unifor Local 723M (2015-0576-0), and the Urban Alliance on Race Relations (2015-0560-4), for an expedited public hearing into the recent cancellation by Rogers Media of multilingual newscasts on its OMNI television stations.
- 2 FRPC is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that studies issues related to broadcasting, telecommunications and other media. We use our research to make submissions to the CRTC, Industry Canada, Parliament and other organizations, and also organize conferences and workshops about Canada's communications systems. Our last appearance before the Commission was at the *Let's Talk TV* hearings.
- 3 FRPC believes that local programming, especially local news programming, is at the heart of any licensed over-the-air television undertaking. In exchange for use of the publicly-owned airwaves, a public trust is assumed by the licensee, and with that trust comes a responsibility to serve the community.
- 4 This responsibility is reflected in the Broadcasting Act wherein the Canadian broadcast system is expected to meet the obligation of *"Offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view."*
- 5 In addition, Section 3(1)(i) states that the programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should
 - (i) be varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for men, women and children of all ages, interests and tastes,
 - (ii) be drawn from local, regional, national and international sources,
 - (iii) include educational and community programs,

- (iv) provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to be exposed to the expression of differing views on matters of public concern, and
- (v) include a significant contribution from the Canadian independent production sector;
- 6 It is the view of FRPC that any reduction in local news service is an erosion of this mandate to serve the public, especially clause (iv), and thus should be reviewed and assessed by the Commission. For that reason, we support the applications referred to above.
- 7 Furthermore, given the upcoming federal election, FRPC believes that it is vital that the communities served by the OMNI stations be provided with locally-produced multi-lingual news coverage of the national campaign, local candidates and the issues raised therein, in order that community members can make an informed choice when they cast their ballots.
- 8 The Commission should take note that in addition to the parties who have filed these applications, the decision to drop multi-lingual newscasts and replace them with current affairs programs was the focus of a June 17, 2015 (Evidence 52) session of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Representatives of Rogers appeared to explain to Members of Parliament why these changes were made. It was very clear from the questions and comments from the Committee members that their constituents were very upset with the loss of these multi-lingual local newscasts.
- 9 In closing, FRPC notes that the Commission has mentioned in its three year plan that it will undertake a review of local and community television service sometime in the near future. It is the view of our organization that an assessment of the provision of high quality local news service by local OTA licensees be one of the essential elements of that review.

Sincerely yours,

[original signed by]

Al MacKay,
on behalf of the Board of Directors of the
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