

Online public comment on the Ministry of Canadian Heritage consultation on “Canadian Content in a digital world”.

Respectfully submitted by:

John Grogan, grogan\_email@yahoo.ca 250 566 4337,

880 Hillside Drive, Valemount, B.C. V0E 2Z0

on November 25, 2016, 12:42 p.m. Pacific Time

Dear Mme. Minister Joly and staff,

Thank you sincerely for the opportunity to make public comment in the consultation. BRAVO to your government for identifying the need.

The topic is broad. I hope to offer thoughtful reflections that may not otherwise have been heard. I have given the topic a great deal of thought over the last few weeks, and struggle with priorities of concern, so I will offer my comments in no particular order.

Attached, you will find my comments to the CRTC dated October 28, 2000 on low-power community television undertakings. My concerns today are still very much reflected by that communication offered so many years ago. To compare and contrast analogue to digital is in my mind like making a similar study of oil vs acrylic paints. It will not however necessarily enhance the creative use of either. Marshall McLuhan schooled us on old and new media. Hot media and cold media, and the global village. In Horton Hears a Who, Doctor Seuss taught us the “A voice is a voice, no matter how small”.

Much ink has been spilled exploring the digital divide. I will not add to it at the moment, but there is another dichotomy of service in the reality of the urban/rural divide, that I identify as the other “two solitudes”. It is beyond the scope of this consultation to explore this aspect of Canadian Heritage at this juncture, but it needs to be expressed that it is real, significant and diminishes us all. There are unintentional negative consequences of urban bias throughout our culture; political, economic, social and environmental.

The concentration of for profit ownership of broadcast undertakings is counter indicated to the best interests of community produced media in urban markets and a travesty in rural ones.

There have been great strides made to bring digital technologies to rural Canada, for instance the Community Access Program. There have also been shortcomings as far as the production and distribution of rural Canadian content, at least in the realm of broadcast undertakings generally, and of community access television broadcast undertakings specifically.

There is a vast untapped potential for exploring community and communities of interest in the broadcast and narrowcast undertaking in the digital world that reflects that of the RF/analogue world preceding it. Some could make a lucid argument that Canadian content is no longer a relevant factor in the digital world and is a false dichotomy. I do NOT subscribe to that line of thinking despite the potential amplifications of the 5 million channel universe in the guise of youtube.com.

What unintended consequences have we suffered in the race to innovated use of the digital technologies? I hope to enunciate an example. Valemount Community Television (CHVC-TV) had it's beginnings as a very low power RF broadcast footprint which serves the taxpayers who funded it. It was a non-profit broadcast undertaking that served as a conduit for media literacy in this isolated village in the British Columbia Rocky Mountain Trench. It was embraced by the community generally, and especially as a form of recreation for the younger subset. Elementary school children were making LIVE television in an after school program, 5 days a week. Their audience was primarily their peers, riveted to their televisions, ringing the studio phone off the hook, making music requests. Similar provisions were made for Secondary School aged students on weekend evenings. It was likewise a great success story. Adults to, perhaps to a lesser degree were demonstrating a need to express themselves in this community development effort.

Afterward, the Board of Directors were enthusiastic when the digital world presented the possibility of expanding the broadcast footprint to include Bell and Telus Channel 653 twenty-four hours a day. This technological achievement however changed the nature of the programming. Where previously it was a vehicle for creative self-expression and unfiltered local dialogue it soon became a marketing tool to the outside world. I need to be clear, it is not my intention to detract from the economic development values of the system as it has evolved, but I do lament the loss of the volunteerism and creative commons, lost to the observer effect of the larger audience. This needs to be emphasized.

Rather than a win/lose of one over the other, there may be an opportunity for both an amplifier to the world and a separate channel for the commons only. I would like to see CHVC-TV used as a pilot project as model to be aspired to by a media centre in 1000 communities across the country. It is achievable. The model of the Community Access Program which enabled rural communities to secure internet access is easily transferable to enhanced media literacy venues. In the information age there is a poor signal to noise ratio. In a democracy it is essential that all the voices can be heard above the din of 12 minutes of commercial advertising every hour permitted by law.

In preparation for writing these comments I referenced the CRTC website to refresh my memory of the backgrounds of the Commissioners. There seems to me that there is a distorted representation of the communications industry and no apparent representation of consumer interests. Nor is there an apparent rural representation. There is no background of interest in community media, one of the pillars of broadcasting in Canada. This in my opinion represents a fundamental failure of the CRTC in achieving it's mandate. It is my hope that alterations in policy and legislation are forthcoming to ensure that the incubator for creative expression, democratic participation and celebration of inclusiveness will be given it's due.

In closing, I would like to voice concern for public health due to the microwave fog associated with Wifi. We have become a culture of addiction to connectivity beginning at a very young age. So called smart meters, wireless baby monitors, smart phones too close to the body; all contribute to the mounting scientific evidence for concern.

Thank you again for this unique opportunity to engage in this discussion. Good luck in your findings.

Encourage and be encouraged...

John Grogan

END

(see attachment below)

P.O. Box 342

Valemount, B.C. V0E 2Z0

October 28, 2000

CRTC

Central Building

Les Terrasses de la Chaudiere

1 Promenade du Portage, Room G-5

Hull, Quebec K1A 0N2

VIA Electronic Mail (email) to "procedure@crtc.gc.ca"

Dear sir or madam,

Please consider this as a response to your "Public Notice CRTC 2000-127, Ottawa, 1 September 2000" calling for comments on a licensing framework for low-power community television undertakings in urban areas, and in other markets not covered by existing policy.

I would have liked to have given more time and thoughtful consideration to this submission, but I just became aware of the invitation and the deadline, and as a candidate in the upcoming federal general election I have other equally important priorities to address. I am encouraged that this subject is being addressed by the Commission, and hope to participate more fully in subsequent stages of the process.

I hope to preface my comments by suggesting careful examination of the history of community television in Canada and to compare and contrast with other models globally. I point out that community television has been marginalized over time in Canada, by accident and by design. Special interest lobby (principally cable companies) have been successful over time in the removal of the statutory obligations to provide a public space in exchange for use of public space. I expect I will be in error on some points, but ask the commission to recognize that I live in a rural location and may not always have ready access to information to support my position.

I do not intend to answer all the questions offered by the commission, and may give a very short answer to others. I was raised in a large city with VHF/UHF reception. I have never been a subscriber of cable television. I have lived in a village of 1200 souls for the past 23 years. There is no cable provider in my community. I was the founding Station Manager of CHVC-TV, reportedly the only community access television station in Canada NOT associated with a cable company (Electronic Times Report). CHVC-TV is owned and operated by a non-profit society and is funded in large measure through property taxes provided by referendum. I am no longer associated with CHVC-TV, but provide you with my background to indicate my narrow expertise and to identify potential for my personal bias.

I liken community television to an electronic public space. A park if you will, a refuge from the hustle of the commercial onslaught of twelve (12) minutes per hour of mindnumbing (maddening?) advertisements. A "commons" with a variety of recreational activities for all ages, but also a place for the exchange of ideas (speakers corner), and a place to build communities and communities of interest.

I intend to make further comment within the context of your printed invitation. I hope this is acceptable to you. Also, comments I make here are mine and do not necessarily reflect those of organizations or individuals with whom I associate. Those organizations are listed to give you some idea where I am coming from.

Encourage and be encouraged...

John Grogan

My other email address really is "universal@access.ca"

Founding Station Manager of CHVC-TV (retired)

Founding President of Valemount Internet Society (resigned)

Director, Canada's Coalition for Public Information

Communications Chair, Green Party of Canada

5.

Although the Commission's policy does not preclude profit-oriented ownership arrangements, it states that remote stations should be owned by organizations whose membership is primarily made up of representatives of the community at large.

I ask the commission to make a detailed study of CHVC-TV as a model for sustainability and for its involvement in the community, and the communities involvement in CHVC-TV. Everyone in the community by virtue of the funding formula is a member of the society. What better model could exist? I propose a Canada with 1000 such broadcast undertakings in both rural and urban communities.

6.\*

In its policy, the Commission identified a number of further criteria that it would use in considering an application proposing a new low-power television undertaking. Among other things, the Commission stated that the undertaking should serve a community that has no competing local or regional television service currently providing television programming to it and selling television advertisements in the community on a regular basis. The Commission added that the area to be served should have no local community cable channel operating on a regular basis at the time of application. Although the policy made provision for the use of higher power transmitters in exceptional circumstances, it stipulated that remote stations should generally deliver their services using low-power transmitters.

It is my belief that the removal of statutory obligations of cable distribution undertakings has effectively killed community access to a means to communication. I recommend restoring previous requirements to provide access to production and distribution facilities for purposes of self expression and community access. The concentration of corporate media has exemplified the need for balance due to fewer and fewer voices available to the collective unconscious. In animal husbandry there may be an advantage to playing the same music to all the turkeys, but members of a healthy and vibrant population needs an opportunity to march to their own tunes. The introduction of commercial advertising deadens and distracts from the creative objective.

7.

The Commission considers that it is now appropriate to develop a policy framework for low-power community stations that would operate alongside existing over-the-air television stations in urban areas or in other markets not covered by the policy for remote stations. It considers that such stations have the potential to make a contribution to the goals set out in the Broadcasting Act, especially with respect to the provision of local community-based programming. It notes

further that the deployment of digital distribution technology by cable distributors over the next few years may well make it possible for such services to be distributed by cable systems in a more targeted manner.

First we need to have a clear idea of what "community" is. Is it merely a geographic place, or is it also a state of mind? I was a willing participant in Industry Canada's "Community Access Program" in my community. A lot of money was provided to provide internet, but to my way of thinking it did not serve to enhance communication within the community. To some degree it did permit the world to look in, and the residents to look out, but it missed the mark in providing an opportunity for discussion and debate; leading to understanding [nee community].

I suspect that we need to identify all of our goals, and be flexible to accommodate goals we recognize in the future. One of my goals is to be able to go to a commercial free zone. Community has in my mind been destroyed by the globalization of entertainment, News presentation, political opinion available and by the eye candy provided to the short attention span. I expect academic literature will suggest the media's commercial influence has had a detrimental effect on human psychological, physiological and emotional health. Further, the health of a nation could be seen as being in the balance. The "bicycling" of community produced programming regionally (and nationally) might well serve to identify common problems and solutions, and celebrate our common ground. [nee National Unity]

8.

Accordingly, the Commission seeks public comment on a number of specific issues relating to the formulation of an overall policy framework that could govern low-power community television undertakings serving those markets not covered by the existing policy for remote stations. Interested parties are also welcome to comment on other issues that they consider relevant to this proceeding.

Issues Questions\*

Community ownership and control

9.

In its community radio policy set out in Public Notice CRTC 2000-13, the Commission has defined a community radio station as being owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organization, the structure of which provides for membership, management, operation and programming by members of the community at large.

This might well serve "the public good" on community access television.

10.

With regard to low-power community television undertakings in urban markets or in other markets not covered by the policy for remote stations, the Commission seeks comment on the following questions:

\* Should such undertakings be owned and controlled by an organization whose membership is primarily made up of representatives of the community at large?

I would like to see an even more direct model for governance, where all citizens (residents) are shareholders and consequently stakeholders. A model with universal mail-in ballots with run-offs until a minimum of 50% plus one can be achieved. A co-operative model, built on a goal of consensus whenever possible.

\* Should ownership of such undertakings always reside in the community that the undertaking serves?

I cannot foresee any exceptions.

\* Should profit-oriented ownership arrangements be accepted, or should such undertakings be not-for-profit only?

My personal bias suggests not-for-profit only. The medium should serve but one master. In this case by definition "community" [read not-for-profit]. Profit is to self what not-for-profit is to community.

Participation by the community

11.

The Commission's community radio policy expects licensees to facilitate community access to their programming, and to promote the availability of training opportunities for those who wish to participate in programming. The Commission seeks comment on the following:

\* Should low-power community television licensees in urban areas, or in other markets not covered by the policy for remote stations be required to make use of volunteers and/or provide for ongoing training of community participants?

Absolutely! Further they should be required to make every effort to actively \*encourage\* and expect to show documentation (report) to support their resolve to train and otherwise make appropriate use of community producers and other volunteers. There may come a time when society rewards volunteers with some sort of stipend to encourage dedicated service to the community. I hope to address that in the section concerning sustainability. The government and/or this commission might well consider awarding community television producers (and other volunteers in the sector) with medals for working against all odds to continue to provide "community access" to the means of communication with little or no support. It is truly heroic!

\* Should such undertakings facilitate community access to

programming? If so, how should this be done?

The meaning of this question is not immediately clear to me.

Community cable channel