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Presentation to the CRTC  
Fairmont Hotel, Vancouver  
March 2004

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Freya Zaltz and I'm President of the National Campus and Community Radio Association. Vice President Robert Schmidt submitted our intervention letter but he's in Winnipeg, so I'm here in his place.

The National Campus and Community Radio Association, or the NCRA, is a not-for-profit organization committed to volunteer-based community and campus radio broadcasting in Canada. The NCRA works to advance the role and increase the effectiveness of community access broadcasting in Canada. It provides information and networking services to its members, representing the interests of the sector and promoting public awareness and appreciation for community and campus radio.

The NCRA filed a letter on February 2, 2005 to the CRTC concerning the application of Evanov Radio Group Incorporated. Although we are not opposed to this applicant receiving a broadcasting license in the Kamloops area, we do have serious concerns with their choice of frequency and the impact it will have on CFBX, a low power community-based campus radio station in Kamloops.

CFBX is a member station of the NCRA. The station is a success story when it comes to current community radio regulations. Starting with a successful student referendum at the University College of the Cariboo in 1997 showing nearly 90% support, CFBX began broadcasting at 92.5FM in early 2001 thanks to the new category of 'Developmental Licence' established by the CRTC. This route was taken because it provided a very fast, low cost option for a community to establish a radio station. CFBX was the first campus developmental licence granted in Canada, the third developmental licence of any sort in the country, and the first campus FM licence in the BC Interior. Since their developmental phase ended they have graduated to a full broadcasting license, though at the time of application they could not afford to increase their power beyond their current 4.9 watts.

As one of the first licencees in this category, CFBX set an example for communities across the country and offered a blueprint of how a community could create a viable radio station under the new streamlined process. Despite having few resources, they have accomplished an enormous amount since 2001 in terms of structural development, building a loyal audience, and raising community awareness of and substantial support for the service they provide. The station has been planning to apply for a class A protected frequency for some time, but setting aside funds for this project is extremely difficult for a volunteer-driven not-for-profit organization such as CFBX. Due to the considerable research and expenses required by such a project, it can take a long time for a community station to realize this goal. CFBX has spent the last several years raising funds and conducting research for this purpose, and it was their goal to complete fundraising and receive a power upgrade before the expiry date of their current broadcasting license in 2010, and they were optimistic that they would not be displaced from their frequency before achieving their goal.

While CFBX is broadcasting at an unprotected frequency, I would like to correct the statement made by Evanov President Bill Evanov that "[t]he frequencies, or place on the dial, for the

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l'Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires



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community and college stations are considered temporary assignments and are limited to 50 watts or less.” First, community and college stations are not limited to 50 watts or less; rather only those with Development low-power licenses are limited to 50 watts or less. A substantial number of campus and community stations across Canada broadcast at levels above 50 watts and therefore have protected frequencies. Some of these stations applied for their broadcasting licenses prior to the establishment of the Developmental license category; others have successfully applied for power upgrades after first receiving a Development license. All of these stations required years of development work and fundraising by dedicated volunteers in order to apply for and receive any license, low or high power, and these stations continue to struggle no matter what sort of license they hold.

Second, while low-power frequencies may be unprotected, I suggest that for those stations with these frequencies, the long-term goal is to become successful and permanent fixtures in their local communities, and to eventually apply for a power increase when finances permit. CFBX would have done so long ago if their financial situation had allowed it. I doubt there is a single low power community access station in Canada that intends to exist only temporarily. Stations whose volunteers and staff go to the extraordinary lengths required to build a station with minimal resources deserve recognition and support for their efforts, and assistance so that they can continue to serve their communities and realise their goal to acquire a protected frequency.

The NCRA feels that community-based radio stations such as CFBX should be regarded as a legitimate and essential contribution to Canadian broadcasting and supported accordingly. CFBX may be small, but they are not temporary or insignificant by any means, and it is important to recognize what would be lost by the community if they could not continue to exist. Station Manager Brant Zwicker will speak after me, and he will provide more detail about the background and history of CFBX, their programming content and local artist development initiatives, and the station’s relationship to the Kamloops community.

This issue here is not whether Evanov Radio Group can legally apply for the frequency currently occupied by CFBX, because they certainly can. We are aware that with a low-power license CFBX cannot expect a protected frequency. The issues are whether this is the best frequency for Evanov Radio Group’s proposed new station considering the multitude of additional open frequencies in the Kamloops area, and whether the hardship that will no doubt be incurred by CFBX if they are granted the use of 92.5 could be avoided. If, due to geographical and technical considerations, 92.5 is the best frequency for Evanov’s new station, an additional issue is whether the CRTC supports community-access radio to the extent that it will take measures to ensure that the displaced station can continue to exist.

Evanov Radio Group has said that “[t]he 4.9 watts CFBX-FM is currently occupying on 92.5 may not be the best use of the frequency” and that “a low power operation could be easily accommodated on a frequency such as 107.9 and others that may not be suitable for commercial undertakings due to NavCom issues.” These statements may be correct, and we are allowing for that possibility. Our main concern is Evanov Radio Group’s statement that “[t]hese issues would not affect CFBX-FM in any material way.” In fact, these issues would affect CFBX in substantial material ways, and I will outline those here.

First, if displaced from their frequency, CFBX would have to submit a new application to obtain a new frequency. This, as we know, takes time, many staff and volunteer hours, and money.

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If the new Evanov Radio Group station receives approval and begins broadcasting as soon as its license takes effect, CFBX may not be able to complete, submit, and receive approval for a new application by that time, which could lead to a period in which CFBX would not be broadcasting at all. Not only would they now have to deal with the requirements of a new license application, they would also have to deal with a possible loss of revenue and listenership during this time, and an extensive public relations advertising campaign to re-establish their listenership at their new frequency. Since CFBX has already been preparing to submit an application for increased power, it would not be sensible for them to go through the application process twice – once to move to a new low power unprotected frequency leaving them vulnerable to being displaced again, and then again to increase the power and gain frequency protection. So, if Evanov Radio Group's application is approved at 92.5 and CFBX has to move frequencies, it would make the most sense for them to pursue both a new and protected frequency at the same time. And as I've explained, this process will require substantial time, resources, and money with which I hope they will receive assistance.

In fact, the potential costs are staggering to a station in CFBX's position, and while they have been preparing, they are not in a position to cover any of the necessary costs immediately, and would be disappointed and further disadvantaged if they were forced to go off the air while dealing with this new unexpected hurdle. Aside from the costs of an engineering brief, a new higher power antenna and transmitter, and the installation of this new equipment, which could be as much as \$40,000, the station will also incur costs associated with producing all new promotional materials and signage to reflect their new frequency so that their audience will be able to find them on the radio dial. These costs may seem fairly insignificant to a commercial radio group, but they are potentially crippling to not-for-profit volunteer-driven organizations that often struggle just to cover their basic operating costs.

The NCRA believes that the three-pillared broadcasting policy for Canada, as described in the Broadcasting Act, is in part enacted and fulfilled by the efforts of campus and community broadcasters. These small stations epitomize many of the defining aspects of the Act in both mandate and legislation. We feel strongly that not-for-profit community access radio stations at all power levels are providing an essential community service not provided by commercial stations – including providing airtime to multicultural, francophone, and aboriginal groups, promoting Canadian and local talent, and offering highly diverse programs not heard elsewhere on the radio dial. CFBX is the only not-for-profit, public access, volunteer-driven radio station in or near Kamloops that is providing these services. Jeopardizing the continued existence of stations like CFBX in effect jeopardizes the legislated mandate for the Canadian broadcasting spectrum. It is necessary to address the role of community and campus stations such as CFBX in the spectrum, and the need to support these stations.

The Evanov Radio Group has stated that they are willing to “commit to devote our resources and expertise both financial, technical to help the campus station relocate on the dial without any undue hardship or loss of service to its listeners. It is our intention and commitment to support CFBX in whatever situation should arise.” They also promised that “[i]f 92.5 FM is eventually selected as the appropriate frequency by the regulators, we will underwrite the technical costs and provide technical assistance to CFBX-FM in relocating it to another available frequency. This is a commitment we have already given directly to CFBX-FM and to the CRTC itself and which we are happy to repeat.” The NCRA does not have any problem



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with Evanov Radio Group broadcasting in Kamloops. But if they are granted a licence to broadcast at 92.5FM, we would ask that their commitment be upheld to ensure that CFBX is able to cover all costs required to move to a new protected frequency, including those required to notify the community of this change. We also ask that adequate time be given for this to occur prior to Evanov Radio Group commencing their broadcast at 92.5FM so that CFBX is not forced to endure service interruptions.

The CRTC has indicated in the past that it recognizes the importance of independent community-based and student-oriented radio stations. Now the CRTC needs to protect them. There must be a mechanism in place to prevent unprotected secondary stations from the effects of large commercial applicants who could leave unprotected low power community stations without a frequency at all or, as we have seen in other locations, whose high power signals could interfere with low power community stations located nearby on the FM dial. This protection could be accomplished by a one-time donation to be made by a commercial station on acquiring a licence or amending a licence to increase power in any market. This donation should be made to any not-for-profit community access station whose signal is displaced by a new commercial broadcaster or affected by a commercial broadcaster's power increase.

The NCRA would also like to remind the CRTC of our continued desire to see the creation and implementation of a CRTC-mandated commercial radio fee that supports small, non-profit stations. And we would like to stress the importance of developing a constructive relationship between for profit and not-for-profit radio stations, which requires that for-profit stations understand and recognize the important role of campus and community radio stations in providing diversity in the Canadian broadcasting system.

In closing, I ask the Commission to consider CFBX's request for support in the interests of their community listenership and irreplaceable service. I also ask the Commission to consider the creation of mechanisms to protect not-for-profit community access stations from the adverse effects of commercial stations' growth and development in the interest of a diverse, multicultural and strong Canadian broadcasting system.

Thank you.