

TRANSCRIPTION OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Volume 3, 15 May 2014

SUBJECT: To consider the broadcasting applications listed in Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2014-102, 2014-102-1 and 2014-102-2

HELD AT: York Hall, Holiday Inn Toronto Yorkdale, 3450 Dufferin Street, Toronto, Ontario

15 May 2014

Excerpt

3369 THE SECRETARY: I would now ask the National Campus and Community Radio Association to come to the presentation table.

INTERVENTION

3370 MS ROBINSON: So I wrote for nine-ish minutes because we are used to 10, so I have cut some paragraphs.

3371 Okay. Good morning. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Shelley Robinson and I'm the Executive Director of the National Campus and Community Radio Association/ l'Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires, also known as the NCRA/ANREC.

3372 The NCRA is a not-for-profit association committed to volunteer-driven, non-profit community-oriented radio across Canada. We were founded in 1986 and currently have more than 85 members, including CIWS-FM WhiStle Radio. Our goals are to ensure stability and support for individual stations and to promote the long-term growth and effectiveness of the sector.

3373 So I'm here today to affirm the unique role WhiStle Radio plays in their community and describe their commitments to high quality locally reflective community-access programming, regulatory

compliance and implementing best practices for campus and community radio.

3374 Additionally, we at the NCRA believe that the Broadcasting Act, by enshrining all three pillars of the Canadian Broadcasting System, commercial, public, and community, suggests that all three types of broadcasters should have a chance to truly live up to their mandates, to thrive, to occupy a prominent position on the radio dial and to be heard by the majority of their community members, rather than just survive in the margins or be left to wither.

3375 In this case, given the success and preponderance of commercial broadcasters already available in the GTA/Markham/Whitchurch-Stouffville area compared with the paucity of local community broadcasters, we believe that CIWS-FM should be granted their proposed power increase as it will give them frequency protection, increase their listening range and solidify revenue from local advertising and fundraising so they can continue and expand their important work.

3376 Programming -- I'm not going to read that part.

3377 WhiStle Radio, despite their current funding and staff limitations, have developed a wide range of volunteer-produced

programming and are particularly strong in local spoken word programming. This includes -- it's a big long list:

3378 - daily morning and noon news and current affairs shows, Stouffville Morning and Stouffville Daily;

3379 - new weekly broadcasts of town council meetings in their entirety;

3380 - local hockey games, including away games and a weekly hockey talk show;

3381 - a show about the local auto industry;

3382 - a book show hosted by the local librarian;

3383 - a local theatre program;

3384 - community event listings;

3385 - a business show hosted by the head of the local Chamber of Commerce;

3386 - a show about local women making a difference;

3387 - a local science and tech program; and

3388 - a show featuring interviews with the regional fire department, paramedics and police forces.

3389 So I'm a booster for community radio. I deal with stations all the time. Even I was impressed by this list of spoken word

programming. I counted more than 17.5 hours of original local spoken word programming in their last week, not including rebroadcasts or music programs that feature additional spoken word content.

3390 WhiStle Radio is also committed to regulatory compliance. They have participated in internal NCRA listserv discussions about compliance issues, were one of the earliest of our members to file their annual returns this past year and frequently seek NCRA input on how to better meet the regulatory requirements.

3391 We are told that they have appointed two dedicated individuals, the Chair and the Treasurer, to fulfil the task of maintaining compliance while also ensuring that all board staff and volunteer members understand its importance.

3392 For these reasons, we believe WhiStle Radio is exemplifying its mandate as a community radio station and meeting its regulatory responsibilities.

3393 WhiStle Radio has also received three grants from the Community Radio Fund of Canada to develop their services and although this finding is extremely helpful to stations, including WhiStle Radio, a limitation is that CRFC funding explicitly does not cover core administration or technical costs.

3394 We note that WhiStle Radio is the only broadcaster participating in this hearing whose primary market is Whitchurch-Stouffville as opposed to broadcasters who would serve that community as part of a larger urban market. This speaks to the very local nature of campus and community radio.

3395 We also note that WhiStle Radio has made sure to address the Commission's previous concerns about reaching beyond their primary community by proposing a more modest power increase.

3396 Unfortunately, given its current unprotected status, the station is at risk, either now or in the future, of losing its frequency.

3397 And even if that doesn't happen, the station might not survive financially as it is almost impossible to consistently raise enough money to support a station when the signal reaches less than a quarter of the community.

3398 And that doesn't even account for the anticipated municipal growth that could leave them even further out of reach of the citizens they work so hard to reflect and engage.

3399 Without the Commission's help, Whitchurch-Stouffville could therefore lose its only local broadcaster.

3400 The station does do its best to offer online access to its programming but we note that online broadcasting is not as robust and reliable a mechanism for attracting local listeners as people suggest when offering it often to C&C stations as an alternate to a protected FM frequency. If it was, then presumably there would be less commercial pressure for the remaining terrestrial FM signals.

3401 Based on our research regarding the online listenership of C&C stations, we can verify that only a tiny number of listeners access stations' online content compared to the number of terrestrial listeners.

3402 As I have mentioned, we appreciate the diversity of the Canadian broadcasting system as enshrined in the Act. That said, we believe that C&C radio stations are at a disadvantage since they are largely volunteer-driven and tend to operate with shoestring budgets. This means that growth takes more time and spectrum opportunities are often seized by better-funded commercial stations in the meantime.

3403 We therefore believe the Commission must play an active role in protecting all three pillars of the Canadian broadcasting system, including now. This is a case where community could lose its sole local community broadcaster in favour of adding to the number or reach of regional commercial stations.

3404 Another important element of WhiStle Radio's application is the anticipated growth in local advertising revenue that will result from expanding their signal, which they have investigated with a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The 2013 CRTC annual Communications Monitoring Report reflects that advertising accounts for 49.1 percent of community stations' total revenue.

3405 THE SECRETARY: I'm sorry, you have to conclude.

3406 MS ROBINSON: Okay.

3407 Because of their diverse programming and other services that they offer their community, their commitment to regulatory compliance, their modest power increase proposal and their efforts to sustain themselves financially without negatively impacting other broadcasters in the market, we encourage the Commission to approve WhiStle Radio's application to change their authorized

contours, increase the effective height of their antenna and relocate their transmitter.

3408 Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.

3409 COMMISSIONER SIMPSON: Good morning, Ms Robinson.

3410 With respect to your statement 19 regarding WhiStle's investigation of potentially expanding their signal, do you have any knowledge of what the outcome of that investigation was?

3411 MS ROBINSON: Well, I do know what they are projecting to make this year and what they are hoping based on some of that. I believe the grant is still in progress but what they are projecting if they are successful in the increase, yes.

3412 So they are currently projecting for this year 20,000 and they are projecting 40 to 50 in the next few years, and then there are similar stations that after a number of years have gotten into the early hundreds.

3413 COMMISSIONER SIMPSON: Oh, thank you.

3414 MS ROBINSON: Yes.

3415 THE CHAIRPERSON: What's the extent of the support that your organization provides for community stations?

3416 MS ROBINSON: It depends on the kind of support. So we provide a lot of regulatory support.

3417 THE CHAIRPERSON: Do you provide things like -- you know, do you provide any administrative assistance sometimes if stations were going through a period of transition or anything like that?

3418 MS ROBINSON: So we are basically a one staff person plus project staff --

3419 THE CHAIRPERSON: Right, but --

3420 MS ROBINSON: -- so no, we tend not to. We provide assistance in terms of like submitting applications and that kind of support.

3421 THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay. Okay. That's what I --

3422 MS ROBINSON: But with 85 members and bridging people, no, we don't.

3423 THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes. Yes. I was just trying to remember and I was thinking sometimes you connect people to each other and that sort of stuff.

3424 MS ROBINSON: We can do that for sure. Yes.

3425 THE CHAIRPERSON: Okay, that's all I wanted to know.

3426 MS ROBINSON: Okay.

3427 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thanks very much for your presentation.