

CRTC Public Hearing 2008-12

Presentation of

**National Campus and Community Radio Association
Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires**



Thursday, January 15, 2009

1. Good morning/afternoon. My name is Freya Zaltz. I'm Vice President of the National Campus and Community Radio Association or NCRA. I've been involved in this sector for 10 years as a manager, volunteer, and board member at 3 stations in B.C. I've been an elected volunteer member of the NCRA board for 6 years. I'm also an articulated law student at the BC Ministry of Attorney General.
2. I'm Kevin Matthews. I am Executive Director of the NCRA; I first became involved in campus and community radio in 1999, and have worked in various roles in independent media, both broadcast and print, over the past 12 years, in Winnipeg and in Ottawa.
3. I'm Melissa Kaestner, Executive Director of the Community Radio Fund of Canada.
4. The NCRA is a not-for-profit organization committed to volunteer-based community and campus radio broadcasting in Canada. We work to advance the role and increase the effectiveness of community access broadcasting. We provide information and networking services to our members, representing the interests of the sector and promoting public awareness and appreciation for community and campus radio.
5. The majority of the NCRA's 58 members are English-language broadcasters in English majority communities that provide some French-language programming to serve local francophone minority populations. There are a few exceptions to this, including an English-language station located in a French majority community, and several stations that operate in bilingual communities and serve both the local French and English-speaking populations.
6. As described in the Campus Radio Policy (CRTC PN 2000-12) and the Community Radio Policy (CRTC PN 2000-13), the role of campus and community radio stations is to reflect the needs of their local communities. Therefore, where English-language stations operate in communities where a French-speaking minority community exists, these stations work to involve community members in producing and broadcasting French language programming. This vital mechanism is one of very few that provides official

language minority populations with access to the Canadian broadcasting system, and with important local news, culture, and locally relevant information provided in their first language. And in order to be fully successful, campus and community radio stations need better financial and technological resources to help them reach out and engage minority language communities, and to support community members to produce high-quality programming.

7. As such, the rest of our comments will focus on five main areas, which are: availability of broadcasting services; programming; translation; technology, and funding. We will make recommendations in each of these areas for ways the CRTC can improve the regulatory environment for campus and community radio stations regarding minority official language services.
8. We begin with availability of broadcasting services. The NCRA believes that all communities in Canada, including linguistic minority communities, should be able to access public, private and community radio services. This is mandated by section 3(1)(b) of the *Broadcasting Act*. The main barriers that exist to ensuring the availability of community radio service in all communities in Canada are first, lack of resources in the not-for-profit broadcasting sector, and second, spectrum scarcity.
9. Spectrum scarcity affects groups that wish to start new stations where none currently exist. It also challenges existing low power and developmental stations who seek suitable frequencies for use at protected power levels. To fulfill the *Broadcasting Act*, we recommend that the Commission create a reservation-and-priority system for allocating FM frequencies. This system would reserve a protected FM frequency in each market for the use of an existing or future community radio station. It would also ensure that existing low power and developmental FM radio stations have priority over new applicants for FM frequencies where communities would otherwise risk losing their local community broadcaster.

10. To ensure availability of broadcasting services, we also recommend that section 22 of the Broadcast Distribution Undertaking Regulations be retained beyond 2011, and that BDUs be required to continue carrying local community radio services even if it requires the BDU to translate an analogue broadcast signal into a digital cable signal. Continued cable carriage for our stations is particularly important in mountainous and rural areas where stations' broadcast parameters may not allow them to reach listeners living outside city centres, particularly those without high speed internet access. It will also allow stations to serve a larger population where spectrum scarcity prevents them from increasing their power levels.

11. Turning now to the challenges inherent in producing quality radio programming, NCRA members have reported difficulty recruiting volunteers from local linguistic minority communities. They believe this is not due to lack of interest, but rather due to stations' limited resources for bilingual outreach. CHUO in Ottawa has tasked a dedicated staff person to carry out francophone recruitment and training, but most of our stations do not have the funds to do this. We have two recommendations: first, stations need more financial resources, which we discuss shortly. Second, we ask the CRTC to encourage commercial and public broadcasters to provide public service announcements notifying listeners of local official minority language broadcasting services and opportunities for community access. We believe the commercial, public, and community services are complimentary rather than competitive, and this support would be valuable to our stations and to minority language communities.

12. Our members also report that they have difficulty accessing French-language music releases due to limited distribution by French-language labels and artists. We therefore recommend that the CRTC support Canadian Content Development proposals that seek to provide wider exposure to French-language artists in English majority communities outside Quebec.

13. With respect to translation, our stations note a lack of bilingual staff and financial resources, for producing written materials in French, including policy and training

documents for French-speaking volunteers. They also note difficulty supporting French-speaking volunteers to produce local French spoken word content. These could be remedied through translation grants from Heritage Canada, as well as CCD contributions to the Community Radio Fund of Canada (CRFC).

14. One solution could be our national news magazine, Groundwire. While it won't replace locally focused spoken word content, bilingual production and weekly distribution of this program could ensure that both English and French-speaking Canadians receive coverage of important national and international issues not covered by mainstream media. Groundwire is currently produced monthly on a volunteer basis and only in English. Additional funding for this program, through the CRFC, would help us fill the void of local minority official language spoken word content.
15. Turning now to barriers in accessing new technologies: Our stations note the importance of high speed internet to acquire and share content for official minority language programming, including both music and spoken word. High speed internet service is not yet available to some remote rural and Northern radio stations. We therefore recommend continued CRTC and government support for developing universal and affordable broadband access.
16. High speed internet is also important to ensure that stations can reach minority official language listeners outside of broadcast range. However, many stations do not have sufficient resources to cover the costs of internet broadcasting and associated copyright tariffs. Access to funding through the CRFC would assist stations in fully using new distribution technologies.
17. Our stations are also concerned about network neutrality and we recommend regulation to prevent traffic shaping and throttling by large ISPs. These practices tend to privilege commercial content and threaten non-commercial, educational, political, and independent content, particularly for French and minority language users. Our stations are also concerned about the potential domination of a few major non-Canadian corporations in

the provision of internet services and content. We therefore recommend the CRTC create incentives to help Canadian content thrive in the new media environment. We will address this topic in more detail at the upcoming hearing on new media.

18. Finally, we turn to the role that the Community Radio Fund of Canada (CRFC) can play in carrying out our recommendations. Canada's community and campus radio broadcasting sector clearly requires additional financial support to ensure its viability. The NCRA has high hopes for the CRFC. Besides contributing to the financial stability of the whole sector, funds contributed to the CRFC can also help improve services to minority language communities.

19. The CRFC has an annual revenue goal of \$18 million, including \$5 million from the private broadcasting sector. ARC du Canada's proposal to divert at least 5% of total annual CCD to the CRFC could serve as a good starting point, as it would provide approximately \$1 to \$1.2 million dollars, based on past CCD amounts, to support the campus and community sector. We hope voluntary contributions will make up the difference between a small mandatory contribution and the total sought by the fund, but they fluctuate and often are tied to specific priorities. Therefore, we're seeking core, stable, unrestricted funds to ensure that the CRFC can begin to fulfill all of its sector funding priorities as approved when the CRTC certified the CRFC as a CCD recipient. A mandatory contribution would also ensure that the CRFC could provide services to stations in both official languages. We understand that the CRFC recently provided the CRTC with a strong annual report, and we look forward to reporting on its current funding programs' impact during the campus and community radio policy review.