

# CBC Licence Renewal

## Intervention by Ontario Association of Broadcasters



Public Hearing  
Ottawa, Ontario

## **ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS (OAB)**

### **Presenters**

**Doug Bingley** - President of the OAB

Owner and President of Central Ontario Broadcasting, licensee of 3 Ontario radio stations including CKMB, (Kool FM), Barrie CFJB, (Rock 95), Barrie, CIND-FM, Toronto and operator of online news service Barrie 360.com

**Ed Torres**, Chair of the OAB Government Relations Committee

Owner and President of SkyWords Media, licensee of Rebel 101.7 Ottawa, 105.5 HITS FM, Uxbridge, K Country 937, Georgina and Max 103, Valleyfield

**Megan Bingley** - Member of OAB Government Relations Committee

Director, Central Ontario Broadcasting, General Manager CIND-FM, Indie 88, Toronto and the comprehensive Digital Offering, Indie88.com

## **PRESENTATION – INTERVENTION – CBC LICENCE RENEWAL**

**20 JANUARY 2021**

**Doug Bingley:**

Good morning Mister Chair, Members of the Commission and Commission staff. Thank you for hearing our intervention today.

My name is Doug Bingley, I'm the President of the Ontario Association of Broadcasters. I'm also the president and controlling shareholder of Central Ontario Broadcasting, licensee of 3 Ontario radio stations and operator of an online news service Barrie 360.com

Joining me on this call are

**Ed Torres**, Chair of the OAB Government Relations Committee, also the Owner and President of SkyWords Media, licensee of 3 Ontario radio stations, including a station in Ottawa, Rebel 101.7, also one station in Valleyfield, Quebec, 103.1 Max FM

and,

**Megan Bingley**, Megan is a member of the OAB Government Relations Committee. She is also a director of Central Ontario Broadcasting and the general Manager of CIND-FM, Indie 88, Toronto and its integrated Digital offering, Indie88.com

To set the stage, the Ontario Association of Broadcasters is primarily composed of smaller, independent broadcasters. Our panel today is actively involved in the operation of radio stations, so you're going to get a "view from the trenches." Due to the makeup of our membership, our presentation is focused upon radio and the digital products that accompany that service.

As a prelude to our presentation I'd like to emphasize one key point: The OAB supports the CBC. We don't view them as a natural or necessary competitor. The specialized content that CBC radio provides in particular is extremely valuable. It is complementary to the local content provided by the private sector. Combined, we create enormous public benefits.

Our presentation is about maximizing those benefits that both private sector and public sector broadcasters provide to Canadians. I'm going to ask Megan to talk about that.

**Megan Bingley**

The CBC's core strength is built upon its national networks. Those networks are unique. They provide a country-wide perspective on a variety of issues. The CBC is able to devote resources to projects that would be too

costly or too narrow in scope for the private sector to undertake. For example, while private sector broadcasters do provide service to official language minorities, the commercial imperative limits what private sector broadcasters can deliver. The CBC does an admirable job of serving OLM communities across the country.

Due to their parliamentary appropriation, the CBC is also well positioned to provide enhanced services to indigenous communities, racialized communities and persons with disabilities.

In summary, the CBC provides content that for financial reasons cannot be provided by the private sector.

Here are the strengths of private sector radio. Our stations provide service to over 500 towns and cities across Canada. We are a predominant producer of original, spoken word content - over 440,000 hours annually. We employ over 8,200 Canadians and we invest almost half a billion dollars each year into Programming. We're also the primary showcase and outlet for Canadian music

With the loss of so many local daily newspapers, our stations have stepped up to fill the void in local news. This is a logical extension of our

local newsrooms which already have established journalistic standards and a core group of journalists. In addition to providing a public benefit, our extension into online is providing us with a path to the future. And it's important that we recognize that news and information is not just restricted to formal newscasts. Our on-air talent provides valuable content from a local perspective spread across a number of breaks throughout the day.

In summary, Private radio's core strength is our strong engagement with, and service to, local communities.

### **Ed Torres**

Let's talk for a moment about competition. Although in a general sense competition is good, we believe that competition between the public and private sectors is not in the public interest.

From the CBC's perspective, there's only so much money to go around.

A moment ago, Megan reviewed some of the unique things that the CBC and only the CBC can do. But every dollar spent duplicating something that someone else already does is a dollar not available to properly support CBC's primary objectives. It's as simple as that.

Now to the private sector; Due to expansion into the digital realm, publicly funded, local CBC services are increasingly competing with us. This increased competition limits our ability to maintain existing services and to provide new local news services. Competition from the CBC represents a triple threat: Competition for talent; competition for audience; and, they competition for revenue.

The ultimate danger is that the publicly funded broadcaster will crowd-out private sector broadcasters.

What's a better alternative?

The CBC should focus on maximizing service to underserved constituencies and providing underrepresented programming to all Canadians.

Private sector radio should focus on maximizing service to their local communities.

And before proceeding into Digital on an ad-hoc basis, we'd respectfully suggest that the CBC should first consider:

- is someone else already doing this?

- could someone else do this, and, are we liable to disrupt their business model

Finally - Given our financial limits is this where we really want to be expending funds?

### **Doug Bingley**

Here are our specific recommendations:

1. That the CBC maintain the current balance of national and regional programming and specialized content- they should not be entering into any new local markets. Specifically, if they wish to convert a regional rebroadcaster into what is effectively a local station, (through the addition of morning and drive shows and a local news room), then a rigorous public process should be followed in order to review the validity of their plans, as well as to examine the impact upon the ability of other players to adequately serve the market.
2. Before expanding into other areas, regardless of the medium, the CBC must demonstrate that parliamentary appropriations are already providing maximum support for their key constituencies and that a shift of spending into the new areas will not impact current levels of service.



3. Implementation of new CBC digital content should take into consideration the impact upon existing and developing Canadian news sites. This can best be achieved by requiring the CBC to submit to the Commission evidence as to the true need for the service. Additionally, there should be analysis into the impact that a new local service will have upon other local players. Finally, since funds are limited, there should be clear evidence that shifting funds to the new local service will not jeopardize delivery of content to other underserved groups or communities.
  
4. That the CBC cease purely commercial activities such as *Tandem*. Those activities by their very nature promote competition for audience and the inherent duplication flowing from that need. *Tandem* has clearly raised the question of how a market-based approach to revenue impacts the journalistic independence of the CBC. Also, you have seen many interventions by members of the public who truly believe that CBC news coverage is biased. Projects such as *Tandem* only serve to support that belief, thus undermining the credibility of the Corporation.

Finally-

5. Throughout this hearing CBC managers have commented on how they have worked with independent producers and other groups.

Private radio broadcasters are also major producers of content. We urge our colleagues at the CBC to broaden their horizons. Please do not view private sector broadcasters as competitors; view us as potential partners. By working together, we can all become stronger. At the end of the day, it's the Canadian public that will be the winner.

Thank you for your consideration