

DATE: January 19-2021

TO: CRTC

RE: CBC Licence Renewal Hearing

Remarks to the Commission for Wednesday, January 20, 2021

FR: Irene Berkowitz, PhD, iberkowi@ryerson.ca, 416-433-8758

INTRODUCTION:

Thank you: Chairperson Scott, Vice-Chairperson Simard, Commissioners. I am so honoured to have been invited here.

My views are my own and do not represent Ryerson University.

Over the last week, as I watched and listened when I could, the conversations filled me with pride in all involved in this complex service. Count me in the 81% who believe in CBC. I'm here to suggest CBC could be a stand-out, go-to global media brand. To do that, it must get bold and be distinct.

If your first discussions were from "40,000 feet," mine, like my submission, are from "80,000." I see big picture thinking in documents like "Your Stories, Taken to Heart;" CEO Tait's "The world needs more Canada" and applaud her for founding the Global Task Force for Public Media.

CBC agrees the media market is global, to quote: "there is no such thing as a domestic market." On the entertainment side: Britbox to Netflix and many more. On the info side: we've all witnessed the catastrophic political and public health consequences of what is aptly called the infocalypse. I believe CBC has much to offer the world in information and entertainment.

Perhaps because I'm an outsider, it feels like CBC is aligning with the online era, but not leading. This explains my subtitle: "Any organization designed for the 20th century is doomed to fail in the 21.st" There's much talk of outcomes. But these aren't the same as goals because outcomes

measure previous goals. An Elon Musk story illustrates the difference. He's said to figure out where things will be in a decade and set a goal to intersect that curve in 5-10 years.

Being well into the biggest shift in media in 600 years calls for all new vision, not incremental. The fact is the global market vanished the reason for our 20th century approach to media policy, namely the mantra that Canada's small domestic market limits audience and revenue to our media. This no longer applies. Wow. A potential audience of 5B implies an all-in shift to 3 key words in media: audience, audience, audience.

Here's another wow: Our marvellously diverse audience. A very quick Google search found that in addition to 7M Francophones, 6M Asians, and 2M Indigenous Canadians, overall we're 22% visible minorities including South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab and West Asian, and many more groups parsed by gender, age, ethnicity, religion, politics, etc.

The rest of my remarks will address 4 arenas: Goal, Global Reach, Must-see Content, Funding.

GOAL:

In my upcoming book, I make the case for a goal I call GLOBALITY, a combo of two words: *Global + popularity = globality*. On the ground: GLOBAL REACH and MUST-SEE CONTENT.

How does this relate to CBC? The mission to inform, enlighten, and entertain is an elegant, enduring statement of what audiences need. What seems missing is an audacious aspirational update to an MTP, Massive Transformational Purpose. Something like -- *not* saying this is it -- "to be the world's most popular public broadcaster via content by Canadians that informs, enlightens and entertains."

The UK set a globality sub goal to increase exports 50% by 2030. If CBC audiences really are priority -- *not* expenditures or exhibitions -- could CBC aim to double theirs by 2030?

While I'm no expert in CBC stats, some seem notable. Canadians visit Facebook 14M times a *day* but CBC digital 18M a *month*. CBC News on YouTube has more than 1B views, but on legacy TV, CBC has 1.7% of the audience. Might top-down metrics use cross-platform data to increase funding to platforms where audiences are growing and decrease it to where they're shrinking?

Super-wide on globality: A study [Toronto Region Board of Trade] finds only 5% of export viable Canadian companies *do* export. Another [World Economic Forum] looked at 138 countries and 16 factors that inhibit business and found Canada's #1 challenge is our *capacity to innovate*. We're shy to capture world attention.

Reticence may be our cultural instinct to protect ourselves. It has served us well, especially in the aberrant post-truth of the last years. But some theorists find that being outward facing *strengthens* local clusters. That *competition*, not protection, builds strength.

So far, for CBC, globality seems a "nice to have" not a "must have." For high-budget scripted content, I created an instrument, called G-Score, to incentivize globality -- perhaps adaptable.

The superpower of an audacious goal, like globality, is to act like a north star that enables every decision to be assessed against it: Does this get us closer? Does that? What would?

GLOBAL REACH:

GLOBAL REACH is #1 of 2 globality components.

GEM is a start, free-ish to Canadians. I don't know if a follow-on is in the works, but I suggest CBC become a paid subscription service to the rest of the world. With media demand leaping, now seems a moment to test the global market for the CBC brand. Britbox costs about 9\$/per month. It's not difficult to envision the potential upside of economic and soft power.

It takes time. I hope not as long as South Korea. Their mission to become a leading media exporter launched in 1948 -- decades before K-Pop or *Parasite*. Today they support global reach by *requiring* foreign financing to qualify for public funds.

I'll conclude on reach by recognizing hurdles to global distribution, such as entertainment rights. But I believe there are win/win/win ways to solve this for CBC, producers, Canada.

MUST-SEE CONTENT:

Part 2 of globality is MUST-SEE CONTENT. Popularity is, and always has been, *the* media business model. I've said before: Content is not king: Hit content is king. Whether entertainment or news thought-leadership – or tragically, big lies.

Our *Broadcasting Act* focuses on supply -- not demand – I do think this was accidental. Our system evolved to be supply driven. Brilliant policy delivered strength in broadcasting and production, but not much to incentivize popularity. Here's great news: policy issues are fixable. One of my sources said: "If we made the rules, we can change them."

I want to be super clear we do NOT have a creative problem. Canada is teeming with talented writers and producers and just lacks a policy structure to financially incentivize market success.

Popularity is most linked to great writing. In Israel, they call it "radical locality" that begets "radical universality." Mr. Fecan mentioned this re *Kim's Convenience*. I agree, *Schitt's Creek*, is a hilarious take on our values.

Perhaps more key is *after* the *Schitt's Creek* Emmy "schweep," it became the top trending show on Netflix Canada.

Another thing I want to be super clear on: Global and domestic popularity are the *same*. They reinforce each other. Audiences are more similar than different. With our diversity, we should

know if Canadians are moved to laughter, tears, horror or concern -- global popularity follows. Denmark, with 5.8M people, uses domestic popularity of 50% to predict export potential.

Language no longer limits popularity. Denmark's *Borgen* and Korea's *Parasite* both claim credit for breaking the subtitle barrier. Global hits in many languages means upside for our French-language content on the world stage.

FUNDING:

Its funding model suggests CBC's real audience is NOT Canadians, but the government of the hour. Aiming to please shifting political priorities doesn't seem the best way to finance media. Here are two ideas that could lighten the Parliamentary load -- not saying either would be easy:

- Could we do a screen device tax of a few dollars to CBC? I would go so far as to suggest audience-based funding could engender a mutual spirit of obligation and pride between CBC and Canadians.
- Secondly, many have suggested a commercial free, all Canadian CBC, a goal I applaud. Could CBC distinguish itself as a global, commercial free service powered by two crowd-driven revenue streams, domestic screen tax and international subscription?

IN CLOSING:

CBC should *be* Canada on the world stage, and lead with our diversity, inclusion, tolerance, gun control, health care, maternity leave, secure banking and more. Such values are implicit in our information and entertainment -- and our gracious civility in discussing matters of importance, like this one, which brings me to the end. To all involved: Thank you for inviting me.