

PBC21: Public Broadcasting for Canada in the 21st Century
DPC21: Diffusion publique au Canada pour le 21^{ième} siècle
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1 mars 2021

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Cher M. Doucet:

Objet: Avis de consultation de radiodiffusion CRTC 2019-379, renouvellement des licences de la Société Radio-Canada

1. Lors de la comparution des représentants de DPC21 le 27 janvier dernier, dans le cadre de l'avis de consultation précité, nous nous sommes engagés à soumettre plus d'information concernant le rétablissement du Fonds de production transculturel de la Société. Vous trouverez ci-joint le document intitulé « Comblent le vide biculturel canadien ».
2. Nous avons révisé les engagements de R.-C./CBC et nous encourageons le Conseil à soustraire les services numériques de la Société à l'Ordonnance d'exemption des médias numériques (OEMN).¹ La réglementation qui s'applique aux services de radio et de télévision de R.-C./CBC pourrait être adaptée également à la supervision de ses services numériques: on pourrait ainsi assurer que, comme dans le cas de ses services traditionnels, toute modification majeure de l'offre, tels de nouveaux ajouts, des fermetures ou des changements substantiels dans les engagements de contenu canadien, entraînerait une révision par le Conseil. De plus, compte tenu du fait que la Société s'appuie sur les mêmes fonds publics pour ses services en ligne comme pour ses services traditionnels, son imputabilité totale pourrait ainsi être transparente.
3. Nous appuyons la demande de la Société que le Conseil devrait lui accorder un crédit "contenu original" pour la première diffusion de toute émission-jeunesse dans laquelle elle

¹ Tel que discuté dans l'engagement DM=3981695

a un investissement de préproduction, que ce soit en français ou en anglais.² Refuser de le faire serait en fait ignorer les réalités de la production internationale et limiter l'accès des enfants francophones à des choix de programmation qui sont devenus la norme internationale.

4. En ce qui concerne Tandem et la pratique insidieuse de présenter des messages commerciaux sous le couvert de contenu éditorial, nous rappelons que DPC21 milite depuis dix ans pour l'abolition de toute forme de commerciaux sur l'ensemble des plateformes de la Société. Nous sommes convaincus qu'un véritable diffuseur public doit être financé autrement et que ses objectifs fondamentaux et la qualité de ses émissions sont gravement affectés par les compromis de programmation et de diffusion imposés par des impératifs commerciaux. Dans la Décision 2016-353, le Conseil ordonnait à la Société de retourner Ici Musique et Radio Two à leur statut antérieur de services non commerciaux. Nous sommes certains que le Conseil jouit de la même autorité pour sauvegarder l'intégrité journalistique de Radio-Canada/CBC et pour déclarer inappropriée la production et la diffusion de contenu payé sur toutes ses plateformes
5. Étant donné le manque de preuve fournie par la Société en appui de sa demande de renouvellement de licences pour une période de cinq ans, nous espérons que le Conseil trouvera acceptable de renouveler ses licences pour une période plus courte – disons **deux ans**. Une telle période serait en accord avec le temps requis pour un amendement de la Loi sur la radiodiffusion qui pourrait changer de manière significative les attentes face au diffuseur public national canadien. Dans l'éventualité où le CRTC choisirait de ne pas interdire Tandem pour le moment, DPC21 appuie la suggestion³ comprise dans l'Engagement 17 que R.-C./CBC soit obligée de publier un rapport public sur quatre aspects de son utilisation du matériel généré pour Tandem sur une quelconque de ses plateformes. De plus, la Société devrait être obligée de fournir un rapport confidentiel sur le revenu généré par cette initiative, de sorte que le Conseil puisse évaluer l'à-propos de continuer une telle pratique durant une période de licence subséquente.
6. Durant les audiences publiques, il était évident que le Conseil était essentiellement préoccupé par les instruments de mesure plutôt que par les aspects fondamentaux du service public. Pourtant, au cours des années qui ont suivi la dernière révision des licences de Radio-Canada/CBC, la Société s'est éloignée beaucoup des principes qui ont présidé à sa création. La Société a été fondée non pas pour "vendre" des spectateurs à des clients commerciaux mais bien pour livrer une programmation audio-visuelle d'intérêt pour l'ensemble des Canadiens. Et le Parlement a confié au Conseil l'autorité morale et légale de s'assurer que les fondements mêmes de l'existence du diffuseur public soient préservés et renouvelés.
7. DPC21 a la conviction profonde que pour que la mission fondamentale du diffuseur public soit atteinte, il est impératif que R.-C./CBC dispose des ressources suffisantes pour pouvoir rendre les services uniques que le Parlement l'a mandatée de livrer. Ses services locaux et régionaux doivent être remis en place de façon que les Canadiens de tous les coins du pays puissent à nouveau avoir confiance de se trouver reflétés à l'échelle

² Tel que discuté dans l'engagement DM= 3986662

³ https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/transcripts/2021/tb01_15.htm. Voir la transcription, Volume 5, ligne 5810 ss.

nationale. Les rôles distinctifs de Radio-Canada et de CBC North doivent être soulignés et on doit en assurer la sauvegarde, et la Société doit également se préoccuper de fournir une occasion de collaboration interculturelle à ses équipes de créateurs hors-pair qui se trouvent actuellement dans des silos linguistiques.

8. DPC21 propose à ce sujet deux conditions de licence:

1. Que les droits de rediffusion et de streaming pour *Le Canada: une histoire populaire/ Canada: A People's History*, ainsi que pour plus de 100 heures de documentaires interculturels, soient renouvelés pas la Société Radio-Canada/CBC, de sorte que ces acquis biculturels puissent être mis à la disposition de tous les Canadiens sur *Tout.tv* et sur *GEM*. Depuis leur diffusion originale, des millions de nouveaux arrivants se sont joints à la grande famille canadienne et cette programmation fondatrice doit continuer d'être disponible universellement.

2. Que le Fonds de production transculturell soit immédiatement rétabli par Radio-Canada/CBC de sorte que de nouvelles productions bilingues viennent enrichir les services de télédiffusion; que la collaboration entre les deux divisions soit à nouveau encouragée et que l'on rétablisse un pont culturel significatif entre les deux groupes linguistiques.

9. Lors de la seconde journée de l'audience publique de janvier dernier (2019-379), voici ce qu'à répondu la Présidente Tait à une question de la vice-présidente à la radiodiffusion, Mme Caroline Simard, qui demandait si la qualité des nouvelles à la CBC avait diminué à cause des réductions budgétaires et de la politique des gestionnaires de la Société d'étendre les services numériques⁴ : « Absolument pas La preuve en réside dans l'expérience – dans notre évaluation que nous livrons, en fait que nous livrons plus que jamais dans le domaine des nouvelles. Nous avons réalisé une expansion extraordinaire avec un impact très, très positif. » (Trad. libre). Et la vice-présidente Williams d'ajouter: « Sans compromettre les gens sur le terrain qui font la collecte des nouvelles...nous continuons de produire le nombre d'heures et notre produit a toujours la même grande qualité. » (Trad. libre). Beaucoup d'intervenants issus des auditoires en déclin du National et des bulletins régionaux de la CBC ont peu de chances d'être d'accord avec ces assertions!

10. Vous trouverez ci-après les commentaires de journalistes de la CBC sur les réponses de la Présidente et de la Vice-présidente⁵ Nous les avons fait parvenir directement à la haute direction de la Société durant le déroulement des audiences publiques et nous les reproduisons ici, afin que le dossier public présente une information équilibrée, et parce qu'ils vont directement au cœur des préoccupations exprimées verbalement et par écrit par DPC21 au cours de ce processus. (*N.B. Nous n'avons pas cru utile d'en fournir une traduction qui aurait pu modifier la saveur des propos*).

⁴Voir les lignes 1832et ss. https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/transcripts/2021/tb01_12.htm

⁵ Ces commentaires n'ont été modifiés que pour protéger l'identité de ceux qui les ont faits.

☪ We are now only about quantity. We don't talk about who is the best person to get for an interview or what are the best questions to ask. Instead, we talk about how fast it can be turned around and how many platforms one reporter can fill. We are also all about easy targets such as local businesspeople who now send us press releases about everything they do because they know it guarantees province-wide coverage, instead of talking to another who is a little harder to find.

☪ We have inadequate editing and editorial support, and few are given the support to do investigative or more in-depth work. Our decisions are often based on gathering for the day as opposed to prioritizing the kind of innovative, digital storytelling we are supposedly committed to. I'm also concerned about a focus on the path of least resistance as opposed to challenging ourselves and having difficult editorial conversations.

☪ Despite the supposed commitment to "digital first" over the past few years, local TV newsrooms are still largely driven by 6 p.m. local newscast needs; story decisions often based on low-hanging fruit, what's visual, increasingly simplistic or PR-type of stories.

☪ Streamlining the assignment process (TV, radio, digital all assigned by one team) has meant story decisions go through a singular set of (largely white, middle-aged) gatekeepers, whereas the separation of platforms should mean a more democratic story decision process. There's merit to cross-platform coordination but this can't be at the expense of diversity in editorial and decision-making.

☪ Decreased staffing on digital in recent years means we're just covering the bare minimum, i.e., those non-negotiables like the leg, COVID, transit, etc. Original and meaningful stories outside of that become afterthoughts because there just isn't the capacity. Money largely going into staffing broadcast instead for what are often much shorter and, by extension, more simplistic treatments.

☪ No clear mandate to the "Enterprise" unit -- mandate should be to dig deeper on issues driving the news and deeper dives on stories from communities that aren't often represented. Instead, they're often are a grab-bag of bad tenant and city hall stories.

☪ Emphasis on short TV news packs means there's virtually never any longform even for stories that are investigative in nature and merit deeper treatment. Then the rest of the newscast is made up of filler. We aren't prioritizing our best coverage. When there are feature interviews, they're often devoid of accountability questions.

☪ We've moved far away from the kind of original, investigative journalism that made the CBC great. And we're doing both ourselves and readers/viewers a disservice by not taking more seriously stories about the audience we claim to serve, which in xxxx is about 51% people of colour.

☪ Lack of depth because journalists are spread across three platforms with no guidance on priority. Weekends have been abandoned meaning we start Monday behind the competition. Errors pervade digital copy; radio news writing is mediocre and there is no training; TV has been bled of dedicated reporters because it isn't a priority; Facebook and social media drive story meetings; we miss major news stories; we allocate resources to 'programming experiments' of

marginal value; the public tells/asks hosts & talent about the decline in CBC news on a regular basis.

☞ The quality has declined significantly. Lack of training means poor writing, lack of research, inadequate vetting, and more errors. Staff cuts mean less investigative work, almost no local documentaries, rushed stories, and more repeated programming. Producing for more platforms leaves reporters and producers spread too thin.

☞ The quality has definitely and noticeably dropped. For our executives to say otherwise is either an outright lie or another indication they are completely out of touch.

☞ News and information programming have gone tremendously downhill, only caring about the amount of clicks. Not covering public interest stories because we give resources to PR that will do well on social. Putting resources from “content diversification” to fluff pieces and freelance food columnists while turning down enterprise pitches on under-reported areas that would require more time. So much phone journalism it’s not even funny. Making reporters chase multiple stories at once and not letting them have time to flesh out important ones. Always saying “we don’t have enough resources for that.” Over reliance on UCG content. Unwilling or unable to send staff out to get visuals. Under-staffed.

Regional/Local News

☞ I'd argue that the quality of journalism in xxxx has generally improved, despite ongoing challenges. It's important to remember that TV was scaled back after xxxx lost a third of its budget and the remaining resources were redirected to digital; local TV news was a Magid-driven concept. So TV news had little depth or context. No story could be more than 1:45 and many were even shorter. Although the supper show was 90 minutes, each half hour contained the same stories, just packaged differently.

☞ In preparation for being knocked down to a 30-minute show, we began to run the same 30 minutes, 3 times. It had no impact on our ratings - in fact, they even bumped up a little. The transition to more digital storytelling created an opportunity to dig much deeper into issues as a complement to radio current affairs. I'd suggest we may have more stories being told and more breadth and depth than we've ever had. Keep in mind that web writers are gathering in addition to the field reporters. Field reporters file for web, web writers file for radio and do TV debriefs. Our television news is more Current Affairs now, so fewer stories and few pictures/video, but more in depth. The supper show often makes news that also contributes to radio and web. A much more cohesive news/current affairs ecosystem.

☞ TV, despite its small audience, has more impact now, as other platforms utilize their content. I wish we had more reporters and more capability to gather video. Our numbers are too small for the size of our market. When xxxx took a big budget cut about 5 years ago, we lost a lot of our news gathering capacity and so we have fewer resources to get into the community. We are also not able to contribute as we once did for our National colleagues which continues to be a challenge. However, we have created several pop-ups – (for) rural, indigenous, and several nearby cities as a way to serve underrepresented communities with MOJOs. More Facebook live townhall type initiatives have also been done. Xxxx is an important market for CBC and for the country and

of course I'd argue that our footprint should reflect that more appropriately and be larger, but I think the quality of our journalism and programming is better than ever.

☪ I've only been in the xxxx shop for a few years, but I've seen us go from a newsroom that prizes original enterprise reporting to one that is only able to cover the absolute must-do stories. Excellent tips just aren't looked into because there is no one to look into them.

☪ We used to have an investigative team; now we have an "Impact Unit" that is expected to produce stories for three platforms every single weekday. There is no place in a unit like this for actual investigative work.

☪ Yes, we're producing some amazing, original work, but at a huge cost to the rest of the team. Reporters are given a few weeks to work on exceptional pieces, while the small remaining reporters are pumping out daily news at an exhausting rate. I have to file radio, tv, online and produce something for current affairs every day. That means we frequently have to go for the low hanging story just to fill the gaps. More needs to be done to acknowledge the workload others have to take on in order to backfill and buy time. In my worst example, one day I filed two voicers, four radio clips, two web stories and did a talk tape. That pace is unsustainable.

☪ The quality has decreased dramatically. There is no longer the ability — or the interest from senior managers — to do the level of accountability journalism the public deserves and expects from us. Legitimate political accountability stories are quashed by managers who refuse to explain why these are somehow not stories. They do not respect our mandate, this kind of journalism, or the journalists who still strive to produce work in the public interest.

☪ Understaffing is so critical and chronic in the broadcast news service; I think Canadians would be shocked to know how our daily story selection depends primarily on whether we actually have a reporter available to cover something important happening in our own country. Canada's public broad- caster does not even have senior/national reporters located in all of the provinces (New Brunswick, PEI), any of the territories, or even in Victoria, the capital of British Columbia.

☪ We no longer have the staff to cover all the stories we should be covering. We cover stories gauged on how many online hits they might get, rather than by their importance to Canadians. We no longer cover city hall. We don't cover local meetings. We rely on local newspapers to do the grunt work. Also, the quality of the material we get from the Toronto national newsroom is much lower -- rife with mistakes and sloppiness.

☪ I've been producing the XXXXX afternoon radio CA program for 10 years now. When I started, I had one more staff person (an AP), more contributions from syndication, and less time to fill. Over the past few years there have been cuts, so I lost one AP, and syndication has had cuts as well. Not only that, but the World this Hour was cut back, which means I had to fill the extra time. The result? I'm constantly being asked to do more with less. It's just NOT POSSIBLE to keep being asked to pivot and produce more, while seeing zero impact on quality. I rely more on "quick books", guests and stories that I can guarantee we'll book quickly to fill time on the show, rather than high-quality pieces that take a few days to produce and put together. My APs never get to go out and gather a story because they're stuck on the phone, just filling airtime with whatever guests they can get. I couldn't live without syndication but also resent how much I have to rely on

what scraps they give us -- the national guests/treatments they provide on stories do not even fit our local mandate. I would give my left arm for another AP to just be able to BREATHE for and take more time to THINK about what we have on the show and what would make the most impact. SO, burned out.

☯ Broadcast quality has plummeted and going into the field is just for a few select people. The great majority of news gathering happens from the desk, through email and phone calls. TV is mostly interviews/hits, not stories. Radio settles for mostly all phone tape as if that's good enough. The number of "people" in our coverage continues to be noticeably reduced for press releases and spokespeople. This is NOT COVID related. We have a five-year gap in field news gathering and that trickles down to national news gathering to try to do stories from start to finish with little and often no material ever gathered on very important stories. It results in many national stories being impossible to do same-day as new developments emerge. We end up doing stories late/dated or not at all. It's not acceptable. To hear senior leadership say quality is high is beyond the pale. It's simply false.

☯ Less video quality, less time to focus on visual storytelling; every year we're told to simplify our product so it takes less staff to do it, so we tell fewer stories and repeat visuals ad nauseam.

☯ It's not possible to maintain quality when reporters must file to three/four different platforms on one story in a short amount of time. I now file to online, radio, radio current affairs and TV for almost every story I produce. Reporters are stretched very thin, work long hours to meet tight, unrealistic deadlines that too often don't allow us to produce the same depth of journalism we would have in the past, especially at the local level. Too often I've seen reporters forced to produce stories on such tight deadlines to multiple platforms only to make serious errors -- mistakes that frankly no one has time to correct or sometimes even notice. It's very disheartening.

☯ Quality has gone down, especially at the local level. Reporters lost producers years ago and it puts a HUGE amount of stress on them. They now have to file for radio, tv, sometimes digital. It's outrageous. As an editor in tv news, I'm handed a script, MIGHT have a discussion with the reporter and access to them while I cut alone, often with less than an hour! I become a video producer, but don't get paid any kind of upgrade. I hate cutting corners (no pun intended), but recently I've had to put less production work into the poor-quality video we're getting in; this is mostly because of COVID due to virtual interviews, but it COULD be improved---just that nobody CARES!

☯ It's not just local. Recently an editor had to cut an item for The National with ONLY the reporter, no producer. That is not normal or usual. The item ended up having to be moved to the end of the show because it couldn't make its slot. No surprise there. This speaks to an issue with staffing. Cut after cut with NO care for the output, no care for the fewer and fewer people doing more and more work; and, often, doing work they're not really supposed to do.

☯ Then there is the mere acceptance of poor-quality work on all levels. I am a stickler for grammar and am forever hearing bad grammar on radio and tv and reading it online. I once complained to Esther Enkin (so this goes way back) and she excused "live tv" and reporters ad-libbing. I'm sorry, if I was in a room socializing with a bunch of people, I might not care too much about poor language use, but I'd note it. I'm shocked that we allow people to be the voice of the CBC without

making sure they can speak off the cuff intelligently, using correct language. The main reason is that people are moving up through the "ranks" too quickly and don't have enough experience. AND vetters are either not catching things or are doing so much that stuff airs before it's had a chance to be vetted.

☯ Recently I worked with a producer whom I recognized (from her photo as this was all over Gchat) as an EA. I could be wrong. She had no really good grasp of what her job was other than to be constantly on my case about making my slot. Fairly unhelpful. A reporter told me she told her she could produce the piece herself. Why are we putting people into jobs without proper training? How to look for viz, how to read time code, how to indicate instructions clearly on a script.

☯ There is no accountability. Anything goes. It's only television, after all. Tomorrow's another day. I'm not perfect, I have my bad days, but some mistakes just don't need to be repeated.

☯ The CBC news shows have incrementally lost viewers and listeners because management is chasing after what advertisers (Tait's argument for Tandem) and a sector of the market (younger is their target) supposedly want, forgetting that baby boomers are going to live for a long time. My baby boomer friends are in disbelief of what the CBC has turned into and have stopped watching nightly newscasts, for instance, and I can no longer listen to the radio all afternoon.

☯ Our turn towards including digital should be commended — but we need enough journalists to actually manage all these platforms. In-depth stories that would have been reported and produced thoroughly by three or more people (journalist, researcher, fact checker, engineer, etc.) are now often done by ONE person, who is also responsible for a multi-platform digital iteration (or at least overseeing one). Things are falling through the cracks.

☯ Service is decidedly worse and less in all categories - parliamentary - domestically - locally - and internationally. investigative hit hard. Documentary production has almost disappeared. Resources are slim or none. Many shows that used to have production and research are now just talk shows.

☯ Fewer reporters filing reports that provide context and information. Instead, it's rants from reporters based on web stories. Many times, I look at CTV and Global and think they're doing a better job than CBC on the TV side and wonder why we're still doing it.

☯ We no longer cover city council on a weekly basis but there are TONS of single-source stories. Major reliance on press release journalism and on the same sources repeatedly. Little to no coverage of news from sources that lack a profile or PR presence even though their stories might have greater news value. Stories that are of genuine service to our audience are constantly competing with the need to get the "low hanging fruit" to fill newscasts and shows before deadlines. Poor representation of marginalized groups, not because we don't want to do better but because we have so little time to prepare programs and stories that we go to the same, easy-to-get sources over and over and use the same well-worn angles without taking the time to question our POV. Over-reliance on cop/fire stories. No time to provide important context for stories if it's going to require some digging.

☯ The country has never been more in need of a robust national broadcaster to closely monitor our leaders' actions and hold them to account. Instead, we're doing endless stories about how

everyone and their dog - business, teachers, parents, you name it - are being impacted by COVID-19 restrictions (because I guess it's not obvious enough?).

☯ Local current affairs and arts programs indeed have minimal resources. For example, there is one producer responsible for putting together 6 hours of radio on the weekend in xxxx. I can't speak to the quality because I haven't worked in a region for 5 years.

The National and CBC-NN

☯ At CBCNN, many writers now CUT on Media Central which is a useless bit of technology. Writers cut and often ask editors to "look it over" or finesse it. I often recut. They're not editors! And cutting takes time away from writing. And it's taking work away from editors... so you know where that's going to end up! A lose-lose proposition laid off workers (some recent retirements have NOT been replaced), and writers working double hard without appropriate remuneration.

☯ As to the quality of the content.... CBCNN: talking heads, endless repetition. Why are we not using more stories from around the country, local stories so one coast knows what's happening on the other side of the country, etc.?

☯ At The (new) National: with the disastrous revamp, a bunch of people with NO previous experience on the show came on board. Whereas Stephanie Jenzer or Jennifer Harwood would sit in an edit suite to cut a vo and we'd get it JUST right back in "the old days", now writers only call you and give you an overview of what they want, leaving the rest up to the instructions they put in the script. This wastes time with back and forth when things don't look just as they want. And timing is a crapshoot. In the old days, writers knew the rhythm of the anchor (now it's one of 3) and we always got everything spot on.

☯ As for my fellow editors, there are so many new, young editors doing shifts with hardly any experience. When I started 25 years ago, you worked your way up. You didn't cut a piece for the National until you'd been around for a while. Now, they're being called upon to cut what goes into our "flagship" nightly newscast (that hardly anyone watches any more). I'm not saying their work is bad, just that there is a benefit to the feedback you can give to a producer and a reporter when you've been around longer. I think it shows because stuff just gets slapped together.

☯ There are so many ways...but the key is there are too few people actually "on the ground" chasing stories compared to the past few years. That has led to programs like W6 and The National sounding eerily similar to each other.

☯ Often our reporters here in Canada cannot even go out to cover events in our backyard because they have to file for both the World at Six as well as The National. So they sit at their desks and write to material brought in by producers or from local reporters. One National reporter got so fed up with it she left.

☯ Less travel has meant less vital international, and even national, reporting. So much comes through the lens of Toronto or Montreal. National reporters and producers need more freedom and support to travel to report on Canada as a unit, and internationally to report on Canada in the context of the world rather than as a silo. We've become increasingly insular and backwatered.

🌀 Sometimes we now cover the world from our desks instead of actually going out to where the news happens. I often hear/see CBC reporters file stories covering Africa or Latin America from their desks in Toronto. This is not the reporters' fault. How can we cover stories if we are not actually there to witness the events? Instead we just lift video and clips from Reuters and file reports from here. I know because I have had to do it too.

🌀 The National... what is there to say? Flash and sets over quality and interesting stories. It's hard to judge at this time, because of COVID. Nonetheless, all day and all night U.S. election... we've got money for that! But we don't have money for other more important things like paying for the people we need to do professional jobs.

Le tout soumis respectueusement au nom de DPC21 comme intervention finale dans le processus de l'Avis de consultation de radiodiffusion CRTC 2019-379.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kealy Wilkinson". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Kealy Wilkinson

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