

January 18, 2010

Honourable Konrad von Finckenstein, Q.C.  
Chair  
Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Committee  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière  
Central Building  
1 Promenade du Portage  
Gatineau, Quebec  
J8X 4B1

Mr. Chair,

In light of the ongoing dispute between Canadian cable providers and Canadian television networks, we would like to offer our perspective and input.

Our Chamber recently invited representatives from both sides to present their case to us. In each instance, the same arguments that Canadians have heard for the last 9 months were delivered. These included statements that:

- Cable and satellite providers use network signals for free and then charge customers;
- Cable and satellite providers bundle channels that are not included in basic packages and then charge extra for each bundle;
- Networks want to negotiate fairly with cable/satellite providers for their signals;
- It is costly to run local stations;
- Fee for carriage will simply be passed along or incorporated into the cable bill.

These arguments are understandable given their respective positions. In the case of the cable and satellite providers, why would they agree to pay for something that is currently free? Conversely, with dwindling advertising revenues and skyrocketing programming costs, how can networks continue to operate local stations across the country?

While these issues certainly require examination and resolution, they should be considered an opportunity for more substantial discussion on the role of the CRTC as it relates to the constantly evolving and increasingly integrating spheres of television and internet.

Our Chamber believes the time has come for the CRTC to take its cue from this issue and re-examine its structure and mandate – particularly in light of the increasing influence of the internet. As we know, significant changes have occurred in the broadcast medium over the last 40 years and the progression and development of technology has repeatedly demonstrated the redundancy of current CRTC policy to effectively regulate existing and emerging competitors. If this is not dealt with immediately, it will undoubtedly generate more frequent and intense conflicts.

It is time that the CRTC view this current debate through the larger prism of opportunity; an opportunity to engage in serious discussions with Canadians and the industry on what its role is, should be, and where it needs to go moving forward.

Sincerely,



Steve Irwin  
CHAIR OF THE BOARD



Debbi M Nicholson  
PRESIDENT & CEO

Cc: Canadian Chamber of Commerce / Ontario Chamber of Commerce  
Persona Communications Inc.  
CTV Inc.  
Glenn Thibeault MP Sudbury  
Claude Gravelle MP Nickel Belt