

## **Ontario Liberal MPP Laura Albanese spoke in the Legislature on May 11th.**

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

I rise today with a heavy heart because OMNI News, the little engine that could, has been derailed.

Let me explain...

Last Thursday, Rogers Media announced that OMNI's three remaining language Newscasts and all diversity programs were being immediately and permanently cancelled.

Viewers were not informed.

Ted Rogers, a Canadian media pioneer, whom I had the privilege of working with at Omni, would be "shocked and appalled", to hear that his little engine that could, that's what he nicknamed Omni because of its success, was being effectively dismantled.

In 1986, he had the foresight to buy CFMT, from its founder, Dan Iannuzzi. Ted knew that Canada's increasing multicultural population, in order to integrate, grow and contribute to Canada, would need to access information in their own language.

Under Ted's tutelage and funding, OMNI thrived and grew to broadcast in 32 languages and produce 5 language local daily Newscasts.

The working model which he championed and nourished - notwithstanding the naysayers - became a content-driven, profitable media operation. Ted died in 2008. Since then, Omni programs and budgets were dramatically cut in 2012, again in 2013 and now Thursday's final blow.

People are incensed and are asking me, what they can do.

Mr speaker, I invite all communities to come together and in one voice reject the dismantling of Omni.

Ted would agree that Omni's local language newscasts and diversity programs are as important to new immigrants today as they ever were to those who helped build this great country.

The little engine that could cannot be relegated to the scrap heap, because access to information through daily languages newscasts and diversity programs remains a fundamental right and an essential element of our multicultural democracy.