

May 22, 2015  
Fax 819-994-0218

Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A 0N2  
Attention: Mr. Jean-Pierre Blais, Chair and Chief Executive Officer

Dear Mr. Blais:

Re: Rogers Communications Inc. et al and OMNI TV – an open letter from concerned  
Canadians

Rogers Communications Inc. (Rogers) has abandoned the spirit of OMNI TV's licence by recently eliminating local Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi and Italian local news programming and systematically dismantling OMNI's capability to meaningfully serve multilingual audiences. In doing so Rogers has effectively declared that ethnic Canadians and Canada's multilingual communities are of little or no consequence.

The gravity of Roger's decision to eliminate OMNI TV's local news programming and staff, and its impact on local communities, demands the CRTC's urgent intervention. Although OMNI TV's licence does not expire until 2016, we ask the CRTC to convene an early hearing to review the concerns we have raised about how OMNI TV is being managed and Rogers' breach of the mandate of the Broadcasting Act.

We also ask the CRTC to suspend consideration of all further applications from Rogers unless and until:

- Rogers restores OMNI news broadcasting without diminishing the quality of its programming or service delivery, and reinstate news programming staff;
- Rogers adequately funds OMNI in-house productions i.e. local news broadcasting on par with its other systems / stations; and
- Rogers restores OMNI's dedicated sales/marketing division to its full capacity.

Going forward, it is imperative that the CRTC impose strong safeguards to pre-empt any further attempts by Rogers to dilute or diminish OMNI TV's programming. It would appear that Rogers' focus on sports programming has rendered OMNI TV's licence inconsequential (other than to air Hockey Night in Canada during OMNI TV's prime news time as the English language programming).

Failing the above, we ask the CRTC to consider revoking OMNI's licence on that basis of Rogers' dereliction of duty and failure to meet assurances made to the CRTC and to its viewers, Canada's ethnocultural communities. This would allow the sale of OMNI TV, and buyers could be sought who would not abuse the privilege of a licence, who respect and abide by the letter and spirit of the Act, and who recognize the inherent value of ethnic programming and who are eager to continue growing with the diverse multilingual communities OMNI TV serves.

### **Background to our request to the CRTC**

On the 7th day of May – Asian Heritage Month – 2014, Rogers announced the elimination of all newscasts on its OMNI TV Stations. For over 30 years OMNI TV has played a vital and essential role in reflecting and connecting Canada's culturally diverse and multilingual communities. OMNI TV news programming creates a voice for Canada's ethnocultural communities to challenge social injustices; it provides programming that pertains to their needs; and more importantly it gives these communities information that the mainstream media does not provide.

The world recognizes what Rogers simply refuses to do, that OMNI TV is a world leader in developing ethnic programming. Among its many contributions, OMNI TV established new standards in journalistic integrity and excellence for Canadian ethnic media.

We believe that Rogers is in breach of the mandate of Canada's Broadcasting Act (the Act). Upholding cultural diversity is one of the key goals of the Act. The Act provides that the Canadian broadcasting systems should, create employment opportunities, and serve the interests of ... "the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society".

We also believe that Rogers has, over time, restructured OMNI TV to make it impossible for OMNI TV to remain financially sustainable. Since the passing of Ted Rogers in 2008, Rogers has eliminated OMNI TV's dedicated sales/marketing division, which directly impacted OMNI TV's ability to generate revenue. It has eliminated Portuguese news, South Asian news and Diversity Programming (cut 21 shows affecting 12 languages) (2013); has had its licence reviewed early (April 2014) and then renewed for only 2 years (July 2014); removing the finest leadership capacity in multilingual programming; and in May 2015 Rogers again eliminating Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi and Italian daily newscasts

Further to section 2(3) of the Broadcasting Act, the CRTC has been entrusted by Canadians, through Parliament, to defend the letter, spirit and mandate of the Act. It is critical that the CRTC obtain answers, that are not obfuscated, to questions, which were posed during the hearing. For example, throughout these hearing Rogers decried OMNI TV's financial troubles, yet it failed to respond to the CRTC's key questions on sales and marketing or to provide

comparables of how it allocates expenses to OMNI TV. Rogers President, Keith Pelley, the sports executive who negotiated the \$5.232 billion agreement for Hockey Night in Canada, spoke eloquently of the quality of its news service and the dedication of its staff, all the while knowing that both would be gone in less than a year's time.

In closing, we quote from your March 5, 2015 statement:

"Holding a television licence is a privilege that comes with important obligations that are in the public interest especially in regards to high-quality news coverage and reporting. An informed citizenry cannot be sacrificed for a company's commercial interests. Canadians can only wonder how many times corporate interests may have been placed ahead of fair and balanced news reporting they expect from their broadcasting system. We expect Canada's broadcasters to live up to their responsibilities and adhere to a high standard in their news and information programs".

Although circumstance may differ, this quote is directly applicable to the situation at hand.

We look forward to seeing the CRTC undertake concrete action on this issue of national importance.

Sincerely,



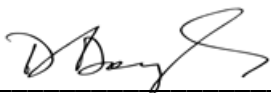
Nigel Barriffe  
President, Urban Alliance on Race Relations



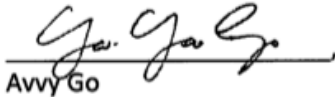
Roberto Calavecchio  
National President, National Congress of Italian Canadians



Domenic Campione  
President, Canadian Ethnocultural Council

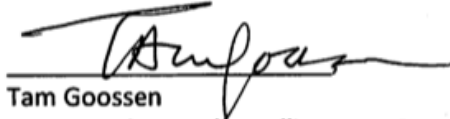


Debbie Douglas,  
Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants



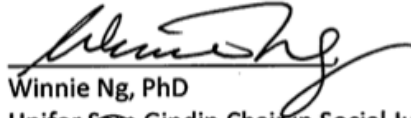
Avvy Go

Executive Director, Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic



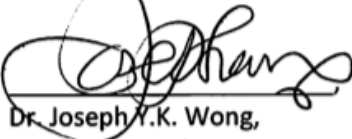
Tam Goossen

Past President, Urban Alliance on Race Relations



Winnie Ng, PhD

Unifor Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice & Democracy, Ryerson University



Dr. Joseph Y.K. Wong,

Founding member, Yee Hong Foundation for Geriatric Care and Chinese Canadian National Council

#### Endorsing Organizations

Canadian Arab Federation  
Chinese Canadian National Council, Toronto Chapter  
Colour of Poverty/Colour of Change  
Council of Agencies Serving South Asians  
Good Jobs for All Coalition  
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario

cc The Rt. Honourable Prime Minister Stephen Harper  
The Hon. Thomas J. Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition, New Democratic Party of Canada  
The Hon. Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
The Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of National Defence and Minister of Multiculturalism  
The Hon. Shelly Glover, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages  
Guy Laurence, President and Chief Executive Officer, Rogers Communications Inc.  
Keith Pelley, President, Rogers Media  
Scott Moore, President, Rogers Media Broadcasting  
Collette Watson, Vice-President, Televisions and Operations Roger Media Broadcasting  
Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto