

29 August 2015

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Dear Mr. Chairman,

Re: Application 2015-0576-0

This past Thursday the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada made an important policy announcement that could affect new Canadians' ability to find work. Unfortunately, the very people most affected by this policy may not learn about it from five of the six over-the-air ethnic television stations now licensed to operate in Canada.

On May 7, 2015 – sixteen weeks ago – Rogers cancelled newscasts on all five of its OMNI TV stations. Until then the OMNI stations broadcast news free of charge in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver, and its broadcasts were distributed by cable and satellite to other ethnic communities across Canada.

Permitting Rogers to cancel news on the OMNI TV stations strikes at the core of this broadcaster's duty to those it was licensed to serve.

This is why Unifor 723M asked the CRTC on June 10, 2015 – eleven weeks ago – to call Rogers to a public hearing about these decisions, and to expedite this hearing because of the October 19, 2015 general election. (The CRTC frequently expedites hearings when so asked by broadcasters, including Rogers itself.) This is also probably why the Urban Alliance on Race Relations made a similar request on June 5, 2015.

Thanks to Rogers' decision and the absence of any decision by the CRTC about our application, ethnic communities across Canada have been denied access to free television news about the election in their languages since the election was called three weeks ago, on Sunday, August 2, 2015.

Regrettably, Mr. Chairman, dust seems to be settling on these requests for regulatory action.

Yet time is crucial when it comes to protecting constitutional rights: if Rogers restores news after the election, that will not remedy the current infringement of ethnic Canadian voters' right to news about the election. The harm to voters' rights is why we asked for an expedited hearing. To date, the CRTC has remained silent on our request.

We are gravely concerned that the CRTC's silence lends a troubling patina of authority to Rogers' decision, and that some broadcasters may interpret this silence as tacit consent to even more cuts to over-the-air broadcast news.

I am writing to you today, Mr. Chairman, to ask how much more time the CRTC will require to decide whether to hold Rogers to account for its decisions.

I look forward to the Commission's reply, at its earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,



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