

CRTC decision on CBC license renewal good news for English-speaking Quebecers

For Immediate Release

MONTREAL, May 29, 2013 – The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) and the English-Language Arts Network (ELAN) are pleased with the CRTC’s decision regarding the licence renewal of CBC that added some new conditions that will benefit Quebec as a region and Quebec’s English-speaking community as an official language minority.

“This week’s decision demonstrates that the CRTC has been listening and the decision will have positive impacts for English-speaking Quebec and other official language minority communities across Canada,” said QCGN President Dan Lamoureux. “This is excellent news for English-speaking Quebecers.”

Under the new licence conditions, CBC Montreal must produce at least 14 hours of local programming, starting September 1, 2013, explains Guy Rodgers, Executive Director of ELAN. At least one of these hours must be non-news programming, restoring local content that has not existed since 2009. Ten per cent of its English television development budget must now be allocated to independent producers in Quebec. Conditions also force CBC to consult with Official Language Minority Communities, something the public broadcaster has already begun in Quebec.

The English-Language Arts Network has consistently argued that the Official Languages Act should be an important factor in CRTC decisions, rather than the Broadcast Act alone. “We have no problem obtaining content in the English language,” commented ELAN President Peter MacGibbon. “It is, however, increasingly difficult to receive quality information that is close to home. CBC, our national broadcaster, has been restricted, due to shrinking budgets and decisions made in Toronto, from providing regional reflection. This CRTC decision will enable CBC to increase production of quality local programming.

“It is heartening to learn that the CRTC was listening to the message about the importance of CBC for our development and vitality,” adds QCGN’s President Dan Lamoureux, noting that this demonstrates the importance of effective advocacy on behalf of the community.

Lamoureux notes that the CBC has been consulting Quebec’s English-speaking minority community via a series of stakeholders meetings organized through the QCGN. CBC’s Managing Director and Program Managers have met with community groups in Quebec City in February and in Montreal in April to discuss and facilitate the relationship between CBC and English-language groups working in various regions and sectors of Quebec.

The CRTC will review Videotron's licence conditions this summer and ELAN plans to argue that Videotron must restore an English-language community channel using 2 per cent of fees from English-speaking subscribers. "The CBC decision encourages us to expect that CRTC will closely scrutinize Videotron's responsibility toward its English-speaking audience," concludes ELAN's President Peter McGibbon.

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The English Language Arts Network (ELAN) represents the 8,000 artists living and working in Quebec.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 41 English-language community organizations across Quebec, including ELAN. Its mission is to identify, explore and address strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of English-speaking Quebec and to encourage dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

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