

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE**ARTS**NETWORK

March 30, 2009

Hubert T. Lacroix
President and CEO
CBC/Radio-Canada
P.O. Box 6000
Montréal (QC)
H3C 3A8

Dear Mr. Lacroix,

The English Language Arts Network is writing in support of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, (CBC) our national broadcaster, who was forced to announce major cuts on March 26, 2009. More importantly, we are writing to underline the importance that the CBC not be required to impose any further financial cutbacks as it struggles to maintain a non-deficit position, required of it by the Federal Government. It is to be further noted that the budget of the CBC has been frozen over several years now, in spite of the realities of running an organization in the face of today's economic climate and the challenges maintaining Canadian content in the face of influences from other markets.

Our community here in Quebec is one that is marginalized as a minority within a minority within a majority; a community that has seen its share of hard times, including in the last 40 years an exodus, a brain drain, youth failing schools or dropping out, the economy in turmoil and our numbers scattered across a huge province. What binds the fabric of our unique population that exists in a tenuous reality is the CBC - our national broadcaster. Of the various English Quebec communities throughout the province, most, save that of Montreal, have an English radio station of any kind. CBC is faithfully listened to in even the most far flung communities across the province and provides a life-line of information and community and local news to many of these communities.

We deplore the chronic underfunding of the CBC (which in itself, cannot go to banks or investors like the private broadcasters can, having but one shareholder, and that being held in trust for the country at large). We understand that there is a move being put forward to encourage advertising on the CBC as one of the options being considered to decide how to deal with this shortfall, - a move which we equally deplore, as a national broadcasting entity should never have to reduce its standing to this level. The CBC is not a privately-owned institution and to envisage advertising accompanying news broadcasts, the opera, concerts (what's left of them), contemporary music programs or other discussion or opinion programming would belittle and undermine the value of what CBC has become over the many years of its existence.

The program quality of CBC (both radio and TV) will decline because of these cuts which seem somewhat shortsighted under the circumstances (culture being one of the most cost-effective items a government can spend on as evidenced by the Canadian Conference Report of May 2008 where the direct impact on the GDP on an annual basis is \$84.6B or 7.4% of the revenues generated from the Arts and Culture sector). We are at a loss to explain why our own particular community here in Quebec, as well as the communities of our Francophone colleagues across the country should be further torn apart. The loss of community information and news will be devastating to our outlying communities who rely on this information to disseminate events and happenings to other communities.

The Department of Canadian Heritage funds many organizations in minority communities across the country as part of its Official Language Minorities programs, and to allow one major link for all of these communities to be obliterated by such draconian cuts as have been announced, is to further erode the capacity of these communities to become vital components of our national fabric. Within Quebec, the English Speaking Minority community is a very vibrant and energetic one, and one that deserves to be supported and nurtured so that it will take its rightful place as a collaborator and partner with the Francophone majority we find ourselves a part of here. We feel strongly, that by threatening and indeed removing one major method of communication and interaction through elimination of financial support of the CBC in its regional programming and staff in order to operate under the restrictions of a \$171M projected shortfall is short-sighted in the extreme. We note further that the CBC has lived under the same budget for the past 11 years or more, in spite of the demands it must face to increase Canadian content, produce Canadian drama and increase coverage of sports and other events across the country.

We understand that government is reportedly considering bailouts for the private companies CTV and CanWest, while forcing the CBC and Radio Canada to drastically cut 800 staff and programming. We implore the Department of Canadian Heritage to recognize the importance of the CBC to national unity and the Canadian reflection of quality and integrity and to allow the bridge financing being requested to be put in place. The shortfall amounts to just \$6 per Canadian. Do not destroy any further the one capacity Canada has to demonstrate its cultural value and talent to Canadians and the international markets as it currently can and does.

Sincerely,

Guy Rodgers,
President