

For Immediate release

Wednesday June 17, 2009 - English-speaking Quebecers today launched a Plea to Save the CBC at a press conference in Montreal attended by a number of community leaders.

English-speaking Quebecers in Montreal, and particularly those in the regions, are concerned about the latest round of cutbacks at CBC and Radio-Canada. They fear that deep cuts to news and programming at our public broadcaster will do irreparable harm to basic news services and programming. They also expressed concerns that the very existence of an institution that is dear to their hearts is threatened and, with that, the vitality of English-speaking communities in Quebec.

“To survive, our communities need to be strong and visible” noted Robert Donnelly, president of the Quebec Community Groups Network. “Coverage by the CBC is one of the factors that helps us maintain vitality in our communities, many of them far flung and with little or no access to private English broadcasters. Many English-speaking Quebecers are also listeners and viewers of Radio Canada, which sometimes talks about our communities and provides strong and effective coverage of the greater society in which we live.”

“We support public broadcasting that has a clear mandate to cover every nook and cranny of our country and our province,” added Robert Donnelly. “We do not want to see cutbacks that will hurt many of our communities. The current cutbacks will mean some of our communities will have less access to news and programming that reflect them. Some won’t have any coverage at all.”

More than 20 years ago when Pierre Juneau was president of the Crown corporation he said, “Amidst the myriad of other available voices, I believe that Canadians, now as when public broadcasting was first created in Canada, want at least one clear strong Canadian voice, from coast to coast, on the air waves of their own country,” noted Communications Consultant Jonathan Goldbloom. “This statement is as true today as it was then, particularly in what is a rapidly changing media landscape.”

“As Pierre Juneau said, in these changing times, we need the CBC and Radio-Canada,” said Goldbloom, president of JGA Strategic Communications. “I urge Quebecers from all backgrounds and milieus to join us in speaking out in favour of sufficient funding for our national broadcaster.”

Hugh Maynard, a former president of the QCGN and president of Qu’Anglo Communications, noted the cuts are especially bad for English-speaking communities in the regions.

“There are no private English radio stations outside of Montreal since the shutdown of CKTS in Sherbrooke two decades ago, noted Hugh Maynard. “The Quebec Community Network of CBC is one of the few places our communities can turn to see themselves reflected in the news.”

Guy Lapointe, who is in charge of the "I Am We Are For a Quality Public Broadcaster" campaign for Greater Montreal, said he was thrilled to see English-speaking and French-speaking Quebecers join hands to fight for quality broadcasting in Quebec.

“We are going through hard times and the support has given me a boost in my efforts to try and convince the powers that be that a strong public broadcasting system is essential to the very fabric of Canada and Quebec,” said the journalist for Radio-Canada. “But even better, I am enjoying the warm feeling of two communities speaking with one heart.”

Also on hand for the press conference was Guy Rodgers, executive-director English-Language Arts Network, who noted the cuts will impact Quebec artists.

The campaign has also received the support of a number of QCGN members including Townshippers’ Association, The Regional Association of West Quebecers, Voice of English-speaking Quebec and Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) in the Gaspé, to name a few. Support for the plea to save the CBC and its French counterpart is growing day by day.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 32 English language community organizations across Quebec for the purposes of supporting and assisting the development of English-speaking minority communities throughout the province.

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For more on the “I Am We Are For a Quality Public Broadcaster” campaign, go to www.lamweare.ca