

CRTC must oblige Vidéotron to restore English-language community television station

Attention News Directors, Television and Arts Reporters

For Immediate Release

MONTREAL, June 18, 2013 – The English Language Arts Network (ELAN), with support from the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), is building an alliance to intervene at the impending CRTC public hearings concerning Vidéotron's Montreal licence renewal. The licence affects the 600,000 English-speaking Quebecers living in the Greater Montreal region.

Last night ELAN held a public meeting to begin creating an alliance of community groups, educators, artists and TV producers to request that CRTC make an English-language community TV channel a requirement for Vidéotron's licence renewal.

“The CRTC, which will review Videotron’s licence conditions this summer, will scrutinize the cable company’s responsibility toward its English-speaking audience,” said ELAN President Peter MacGibbon. Quebec's English-speaking community was absent the last time Vidéotron's licence was renewed seven years ago and the result has been a complete absence of community TV production in English, he said.

“We have no shortage of television content available to us, but we rarely see our own stories on TV,” added MacGibbon. “When it comes to television, members of Quebec’s English-speaking community are like vampires. When we stare at the screen, we do not see ourselves reflected.”

This past weekend QCGN members from across the province approved a resolution supporting the establishment of an English-language community TV channel in the Montreal area which is complementary to Vidéotron’s French-language community TV channel MATv, noted QCGN President Dan Lamoureux.

“A new English-language channel would not take any funding or resources away from MATv,” commented ELAN Board Member Fortner Anderson at Monday night’s meeting. The former manager of the Directors’ Guild of Canada - Quebec Council, told the meeting that under current CRTC broadcasting policy, Vidéotron can offer the minority-language community channel out of funding it is already required to contribute to Canadian production.

ELAN is also working with Cathy Edwards from the Canadian Association of Community Television User Groups and Stations (CACTUS) to identify ways in which communities across Canada are using TV to increase access to local news, arts and culture, and events that are of community interest.

“Community TV has evolved in a multitude of ways since the 1970s,” says Edwards. “Cameras are portable and can be taken out of the studio to the heart of the action. You can broadcast live from multiple locations, stream to the Internet live or after the fact, and integrate interaction from viewers from mobile devices. Today’s community TV station is a multimedia, multiplatform production and distribution hub.”

A major role for community TV is in the realm of education. Quebec does not have an education station like Ontario’s TFO and there are many ways in which TV content can stimulate learning.

“Community TV can create exciting content for use in schools,” added QCGN President Dan Lamoureux, who is also a school commissioner. “It can involve students in the creation of content and telling their own stories.”

Quebec’s television production community sees many benefits in a community TV station which can provide a new generation of talented filmmakers with training and employment, which will help keep them in Quebec at the beginning of their career, said Guy Rodgers, Executive Director of ELAN.

ELAN and QCGN are providing community groups and interested members of the public with information about the potential benefits of community TV and how to intervene in the CRTC’s Vidéotron hearings. Anyone interested in learning more, or supporting an English-language community channel, should contact ELAN or visit the facebook page at www.facebook.com/MtlCommunityTV

The English Language Arts Network (www.quebec-elan.org) 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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