**Bill C-11 – CRTC hearing Presentation**

**May 24, 2022**

I would like to acknowledge that we (I) am on the un-ceded territories of the Ho-de-no-sau-ne-ga & the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and to provide comment today. Unifor is Canada’s largest private sector union, with more than 310,000 members across Canada working in 20 economic sectors. Our union represents more than 10,000 media workers, including 5,000 members in the broadcast and film industries.

In 2009 Red Deer loses their TV station making them the biggest city in Canada (not beside a metropolitan centre) that doesn’t have a TV station.  Since then employment in “Private conventional television” has decreased by more than 30%[[1]](#footnote-1).

This committee got it right in a 2017 report when you talked about the importance of local news and its role in holding power to account, strengthening democracy and building community.

Community has never been more important. Social media **has proven** to divide us, pitting neighbour against neighbour. We are more polarized than ever, but a strong Canadian Media can build community.

This committee said, “Local media…perform a fundamental civic role by supplying reliable, timely and unbiased information on community affairs. They ensure public and private institutions are held to account.

The media also reflect our country’s diversity…They build bridges between cultures and support the integration of newcomers.”

You also said, “We recognize the challenges the media face and we believe that steps must be taken to help them navigate this tumultuous period. Therefore, the Committee has developed the following statement of principle:

**Given the media’s importance as a reflection of Canada’s diversity and a pillar of our democracy, the Government of Canada must implement the necessary measures to support the existence of a free and independent media and local news reporting.”[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Also, in 2009 the Local Programming Improvement Fund the (LPIF) was created – The problem was obvious --and the CRTC got it right! A fund to support local news. In 2014, however the politics of the CRTC changed and the CRTC said we didn’t need to fund local news anymore because advertising is coming back.[[3]](#footnote-3) They got it wrong!!!

Eight years of decline while we watch our sense of community slip away, and we see what we all feared for many years, **American media dominating our living rooms**, while they pay zero heed to local programing and local news.

This is why we just can’t leave this just to the CRTC. We need an amendment in C-11 to ensure that local news has a dedicated revenue stream.

To this end, Unifor supports the Introduction of Bill C-11 and recommends the following:

Amend section 11.1(1) as follows:

The Commission may make regulations respecting expenditures to be made by persons carrying on broadcasting undertakings for the purposes of

…

**(d)** developing, financing, producing or promoting local news and information programming, including through contributions made by distribution undertakings either to a related programming undertaking or by distribution undertakings or online undertakings to an independent fund. In making regulations for the distribution of these contributions, the Commission shall take into account the local presence and broadcast staffing of the programming undertaking.

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We believe that tying local news funding to actual local staffing levels is the most reliable metric to ensure that industry funds are spent exclusively for the purpose they are intended: that Canadians receive the relevant and timely local news they rely on.

The Broadcasting Act was created to champion Canadian voices in a market that wouldn’t support them otherwise. This still holds true today. C-11 is just an update -- a modernization, if you will. The model for local news has been upended and needs special attention here.

The broadcasting act and the CRTC prevented foreign broadcasters from entering our market for decades, allowing a thriving media industry that heavily supported local news.

This committee got it right again when taking on the Rogers/Shaw merger, when you said that, “it is essential that Canadians have access to local news that reflects their identity and reality. Almost all witnesses in this study said that local news is critical to a strong democracy.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

To sum up – Local news is in crisis, local news is essential to the public good, we know that a local news fund administered by the CRTC can work, because they’ve already done it successfully, C-11 is just a much needed update to the broadcasting act to ensure that Canadians have access to Canadian local programing that couldn’t happen if we let these internet giants control our media.

Let’s not get side tracked by noise, lets get C-11 passed with this small amendment to ensure a sustainable future for local news.

Now, let’s all imagine a world without news, imagine the void, now imagine you can do something about it.

Thank you!

1. (*Source: Statistics Canada. Table 22-10-0004-01. Television broadcasting industry. DOI:* [*https://doi.org/10.25318/2210000401-eng*](https://doi.org/10.25318/2210000401-eng)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Source: Disruption Change and Churning in Canada’s Media Landscape. Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. The Hon. Hedy Fry, Chair. 42nd Parliament, First Session. (June 2017). (<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/CHPC/Reports/RP9045583/chpcrp06/chpcrp06-e.pdf>) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2012-385 <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2012/2012-385.htm>

   Route reference: 2011-788 Ottawa, 18 July 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “The Rogers-Shaw Merger: Bad News for Local News.” Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Hon. Hedy Fry Chair. (May 2022). (https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-1). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)