

May 2009

Concerns

Radio-Canada's budget cuts have caused anxiety amongst CBEF listeners in Southwestern Ontario. Their concerns demonstrate the unique, essential role that the broadcaster has played for so long in French-language minority communities. For the sake of transparency, and out of loyalty to our audiences in the region, we would like to provide everyone with a clear picture of the situation.

Background

Like other broadcasters and businesses worldwide, CBC/Radio-Canada is facing very tough economic times. Furthermore, the Corporation has had no increase to its base funding, in real terms, in 35 years. The current poor economic climate has translated into a significant reduction in advertising spending, which has resulted in a revenue shortfall of \$60 to \$65 million for the year ending March 31, 2009. With scaled-back spending at the Corporation since August 2008, we broke even for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Unfortunately, there is no recovery in sight for 2009-2010, and the Corporation must make up a projected shortfall of \$171 million. That figure is contingent upon our selling \$125 million in assets; without those sales, the shortfall will be even more drastic.

At Radio-Canada

CBC/Radio-Canada's French Services alone has a \$51 million shortfall in 2009-2010, including a \$17 million reduction from the Télévision de Radio-Canada schedule and a \$34 million reduction from all of the other French-language services. Regional services account for 18 per cent of the Radio-Canada budget. We limited the impact on our regional broadcasting by having Radio-Canada's national network absorb 86.3 per cent of the cuts.

Because all our programming and management strategies are integrated, it was impossible to completely spare our regional centres. The decisions we made were not arbitrary. They were based on careful thought and a thorough examination of our resources.

We want to continue to be firmly rooted in the various provinces we serve, using whatever platforms are most effective – television, radio or the Web. In a country as vast as ours, we are keenly aware that our presence helps mitigate the feeling of isolation that small, French-language minority communities in Canada might experience.

In Windsor

Residents of Southwestern Ontario will not lose Radio de Radio-Canada service. They will be able to continue enjoying it as before, since the bulk of the schedule will remain the same. I am confident that listeners will see themselves reflected in Radio de Radio-Canada programming, because Windsor will continue to provide input for the morning, afternoon and weekend radio productions, as well as for the Toronto-produced newscasts. The region's arts, political, business, and human-interest stories will continue to receive their fair share of air time.

Our decision to turn Windsor into a production centre was necessary and we are convinced that area residents will see themselves reflected in the regional programs broadcast in Ontario.

As a result, the weekday morning show that airs from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. in Southern Ontario now breaks away every hour during this peak listening time slot to give Windsor a local window for customary services such as weather, traffic, headlines in the press of the Southwestern region, and at least one interview on current affairs. The mandate for the remainder of the Toronto-produced program is to meet the needs of all listeners, whether they live in the Greater Toronto Area or in Windsor, through tailored weather reports, relevant sports news, etc.

Like all other francophones in the province, Radio-Canada audiences in Southwestern Ontario have access to our provincial Saturday morning show, which features a segment with our Windsor contributor. In addition, Southwestern Ontario news and current affairs are now incorporated into the Toronto regional newscasts, thanks largely to the essential contribution of our Radio-Canada correspondents in Windsor.

[Radio-Canada's Ontario website](#) will become the foremost source for all regional news. We plan to channel more resources into this emerging platform for news and current affairs that affect all aspects of provincial life. And in keeping with our desire to maintain our regional roots, no partnerships with the community will be terminated in Southwestern Ontario.

Our collective future

Per capita funding for CBC/Radio-Canada falls 15th out of the funding measured for public broadcasters in 18 major Western countries (Nordicity Group Ltd., January 2009). In contrast, BBC receives \$124 per person, and France \$65 (soon to be \$77) for operating in one language and one time zone each; while CBC/Radio-Canada has an allocation of only \$34 per citizen for services in two official languages across six time zones.

We would like to thank Windsor residents for voicing their support for Radio de Radio-Canada and asking that potential staff cuts there, announced in the context of overall cuts for the whole Corporation, be reconsidered. It is important for us to hear from our audiences and we particularly appreciate their iteration of the many benefits that Radio de Radio-Canada in Windsor provides to their community. We want to assure them that we will continue to reflect and promote the vitality and cultural richness of Southwestern Ontario's French-speaking community in our programming.

Louis Lalande
Executive Director, Regional Services, Radio-Canada
August 2009