

June 5, 2009

Graham Fraser  
Commissioner of Official Languages  
344 Slater Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0T8

Dear Mr. Fraser,

I would like to acknowledge receipt of your undated letter regarding complaints against our Windsor station, which came to my attention on June 4, 2009.

CBC/Radio-Canada is well aware of its obligations towards linguistic communities, and produces an annual report on its performance for Parliament and the CRTC, to which it is ultimately answerable. The Corporation is currently making every effort to comply with its mandate under the *Broadcasting Act*, considering the severe financial constraints it is facing. Let me add that the concerns expressed by Windsor's French-speaking community have not gone unheard.

Given its financial situation, CBC/Radio-Canada must make – and has already made – tough decisions affecting all of its services. We understand that these decisions, when examined outside of the overall context, may appear inconsistent with our mandate. The financial crisis we are currently experiencing is major and unprecedented, however. CBC/Radio-Canada has proposed various measures to the Government, such as stable, multi-year funding or temporary access to lines of credit. Such measures could have minimised the impact of the crisis, or even averted it altogether, if taken in time. Unfortunately, our requests were turned down.

CBC/Radio-Canada is therefore left to its own devices to deal with the current economic situation. At this point, it is impossible to fully gauge the effects that this will have on the public broadcasting system.

French Services alone will have a \$34 million shortfall in 2009-2010. To address this situation, 86.3 per cent of the budget cuts have been assumed by the network and 13.7 per cent by the various regional stations. Because all of 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, and were duly reviewed and unanimously approved by our Board of Directors. One of our corporate priorities is to remain firmly rooted in the regions, which is why the cuts to our regional services are less substantial than those affecting the rest of the Corporation. We are confident that Windsor-area francophones will see themselves reflected in the regional programs broadcast in Ontario.

It is the responsibility of CBC/Radio-Canada's management team and Board of Directors to make decisions based on the information available to them. We believe that it would be inappropriate for the Commissioner of Official Languages to interfere in the Corporation's administrative affairs.

For these reasons, we cannot accede to your request that we suspend our decision, as the resulting financial impact would further compromise the Corporation's interests and its ability to fulfil its mandate.

Sincerely,

Hubert T. Lacroix  
President and CEO