28 June 2012

Mr. John Traversy
Secretary General
Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, ON  K1A 0N2

Dear Mr. Traversy:

Re:  Notice of Decommissioning of CBC/Radio-Canada’s Analogue Television Rebroadcasting Transmitters – Reply argument of CBC/Radio-Canada

On April 4, 2012 CBC/Radio-Canada requested the Commission to:

i. revoke the broadcasting licences for the Corporation’s two analogue conventional television programming undertakings and all their related analogue rebroadcasting transmitters identified in Appendix A; and

ii. amend the broadcasting licences of the Corporation’s 27 digital English- and French-language conventional programming undertakings identified in Appendix B to remove the associated analogue rebroadcasting transmitters.

This application constituted the final step in CBC/Radio-Canada’s conversion of its former analogue television broadcasting network to a digital network in accordance with the Commission’s requirements for the transition from analogue to digital television broadcasting.
A total of 327 interventions have been filed by interested persons.

This reply to the interventions is filed by CBC/Radio-Canada in accordance with section 27 of the Commission’s *Rules of Practice and Procedure*.

Yours truly,

(Original signed by )

Bev Kirshenblatt  
Senior Director, Regulatory Affairs  
P.O. Box 3220, Station C  
Ottawa, ON K1Y 1E4

cc: List of Interveners – (See Appendix 2)
A. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1 Over the course of a number of years, and through several public proceedings, the Commission conducted in-depth examination of the issues associated with the transition to digital over-the-air television broadcasting. Based on those reviews, and with input from industry and affected parties, the Commission established a framework for the transition, established August 31, 2011 as the switch-over, and ensured that all parties were well informed of these matters through various publications, speeches and web-site material.

2 Prior to the Commission’s decision to require conversion from analogue to digital over-the-air (OTA) signals in specified markets by August 31, 2011, CBC Radio-Canada operated an analogue network comprised of 25 local stations and approximately 607 rebroadcast transmitters that extended the geographic reach of its OTA signals.

3 In accordance with the Commission’s decisions respecting digital conversion, CBC/Radio-Canada converted all of its analogue originating stations to digital in compliance with the Commission’s decisions respecting mandatory conversion in specified markets.¹

4 On August 16, 2011 the Commission approved an application by CBC/Radio-Canada to continue to operate 22 of its analogue rebroadcasting transmitters in markets where digital conversion was otherwise required until 31 August 2012. These were all transmitters that would otherwise have been required to cease operation on August 31, 2011. In its decision, the Commission noted that:

Approval of CBC’s proposal, and related technical amendments, would provide additional time for affected households that rely on over-the-air service in mandatory markets to find other means to access the CBC’s television services.²

¹ The number of stations increased from 25 to 27 due to the purchase of a station from an affiliate and the re-classification of the Corporation’s Yellowknife operations.

² Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2011-494, Continued operation of analogue broadcasting transmitters in mandatory markets and associated technical changes.
In a subsequent letter from the then Chair of the Commission, dated September 1, 2011, CBC/Radio-Canada was informed that: “Any extension [of the 22 analogue rebroadcasting
As regards the remaining analogue rebroadcasting transmitters, for many years CBC/Radio-Canada has made it clear to the Commission and the public that analogue TV technology has become an outdated mode of broadcasting and that as a result, the Corporation had no intention of continuing to run two networks (one digital and one analogue) beyond August 31, 2012.³

The cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada’s public funding made by the Federal Government in its recent budget have confirmed the financial impossibility of operating both digital and analogue TV networks, and have led to the advancement of the shutdown of the analogue TV network by one month.

As regards the remaining analogue rebroadcast transmitters, CBC/Radio-Canada has neither the financial means nor the support of television equipment manufacturers that is necessary to maintain a duplicate analogue network. Analogue television broadcasting is an antiquated technology that is no longer economically supportable, and is no longer widely used or accepted by Canadians.

In view of the high costs of operating this outdated network, CBC/Radio-Canada had sought an expedited approval of this application. In order to minimise these costs, CBC/Radio-Canada has given notice to its tower and real estate lessors of its intention to vacate leased tower sites that only carry analogue TV transmitters and antennas as of July 31, 2012. CBC/Radio-Canada must vacate those premises immediately after the July 31, 2012 deadline. It has also retained an agent to begin selling its towers on August 1, 2012, that are dedicated to this purpose.

Furthermore, the Corporation believes it would be expedient to proceed with this shut-down now, when Shaw is still accepting subscriptions to its free “basic” service. To wait until after the licence renewal hearing would deny those affected the opportunity to get a free alternative for the next five years.

³ The Corporation’s plans to decommission its analogue network have been well-known for years, having been discussed with the Commission on a number of occasions and disclosed to the public on the company’s website as early as August 6, 2010.
Technological Obsolescence

10 The bulk of the analogue TV rebroadcasting network for CBC and Radio-Canada was implemented during the Accelerated Coverage Plan (ACP) between 1977 and 1984. Under the ACP program, the federal government provided CBC/Radio-Canada with one-time capital funds to extend the Corporation’s over-the-air services to communities with a population of 500 or more with English or French mother tongue.

11 As these broadcasting assets reached the end of their useful lives, on several occasions during the last decade, CBC/Radio-Canada has sought government’s views on whether additional funding could be obtained and committed to the digital transition and to upgrades of transmission facilities in these communities. The responses received suggest that government agrees with our view of the situation: it is difficult to justify committing additional resources to this area given the technological trend toward broadband and given that so few Canadians make use of OTA TV technology to receive the Corporation’s service.

12 Given technological trends, a number of analogue TV transmitter manufacturers no longer exist. Acrodyne, DBC, GE, LGT and a number of others closed their doors many years ago. Furthermore, the satellite equipment that CBC/Radio-Canada uses for distribution to the OTA analogue TV transmitters was declared “end of life” by Tandberg, the manufacturer, in 2007. CBC/Radio-Canada bought some spare inventory at the time but Tandberg Alteia and TT-1260s Integrated Receiver Decoders (IRDs) are simply no longer available in the market, as is the case for the associated encoding and multiplexing equipment.

13 The shutdown in the US of analogue TV has resulted in a North American decline in the availability of parts for analogue TV systems. Because volume has dropped so dramatically, pricing on these parts has increased, as an example, tubes and transistors have seen increased prices of 30% to 100%.

14 In addition to the obsolescence of the equipment, and the lack of spare parts, it currently costs CBC/Radio-Canada $10 million per annum to operate and maintain this analogue TV rebroadcasting network, not including satellite capacity, and capital costs. Given current usage levels, this would not be an efficient use of the Corporation’s
financial resources at the best of times – and certainly not now given its very constrained financial resources.

Impact on Canadians

15 As in the case of the Commission’s initial decision requiring OTA TV broadcasters to convert to digital broadcasting technology, there are a relatively small number of Canadians that will no longer have access to the services of CBC/Radio Canada via OTA TV transmission. This is obviously regrettable. However, given the very high penetration of BDUs in Canada, the actual number of households that will no longer have access to the Corporation’s services as a result of this decommissioning is small and is continuing to shrink over time.

16 According to BBM Canada, the organization responsible for the collection of radio and television usage data in Canada, only 6.5 per cent of Canadians continue to use antennas to receive TV signals. Indeed, the Corporation has estimated that only 1.7% of the Canadian population will be impacted by the shut-off of its analogue TV retransmitters. As the chart below indicates the off-air reception of television has been in dramatic decline since the first cable systems were introduced in the 1960’s.

The Unremitting Decline of the Off-Air Reception of Television

0 20 40 60 80 100

Source: BBM Canada
As more and more Canadians have opted to pay to receive television, the profile of those who continue to choose to use antennas to receive television has changed. According to CBC/Radio-Canada’s Fall 2011 Media Technology Monitor, the largest survey of media technologies available in Canada, is the primary reason why a Canadian has chosen not to subscribe to a TV service is because of a lack of interest in TV. This lack of interest in TV is also indicated by the fact that:

- They had fewer TVs compared to the national average;
- They are less likely to own a HDTV set, and
- They watch less TV than the average Canadian.

Those Canadians that do not live within range of DTV broadcasting transmitters will continue to have access to CBC/Radio-Canada’s television services available to them by a variety of alternative means.

**Availability of Alternatives**

All of the persons affected by the decommissioning will have access to a free basic service provided by Shaw Direct TV as part the Local Television Satellite Solution (LTSS), which includes the signals of CBC/Radio-Canada. All will also have access to Bell’s DTH service, the DTH service of Shaw Direct TV, and the services of various cable television distributors. No one will be left without an alternative means of receiving the Corporation’s service.

The Commission has taken a number of important regulatory initiatives to enable Canadians to adjust to the transition to digital and to maintain access to the programming of local and regional television stations in the areas previously served by over-the-air transmission.

First, the Commission has made regulatory changes to permit cable and satellite companies to offer households that have lost one or more over-the-air signals a package of local regional stations at no charge.\(^4\)

Second, as part of its purchase of the television assets of Canwest Global, Shaw was permitted to allocate $15 million dollars from its tangible benefits package to the

\(^4\) Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2010-840.
provision of free local or regional services and the necessary satellite receiving
equipment and installation services for households that lose access to over-the-air
stations as a result of the DTV transition.

23 This initiative provides an important safety net for Canadians that may lose over-
the-air television services. We note that in support of its October 11, 2011 request to
reallocate a portion of its tangible benefit funds towards an extension of its Local
Television Satellite Solution (LTSS), Shaw cited the possibility of over-the-air viewers
losing access to CBC/Radio-Canada’s over-the-air programming in some markets. The
Commission subsequently approved Shaw’s request in a letter dated, November 29,
2011, and the LTSS has been extended to 30 November 2012 with additional monies
earmarked to implement a marketing campaign in local media in affected markets.

24 CBC/Radio-Canada has also made available twenty-four of its DTV stations on
its leased satellite transponders for reception by BDUs. There are no signal transport
costs to BDUs.

25 If they don’t already have one, BDUs will need to acquire an HD IRD (Integrated
Receiver Decoder), costing approximately $5.6K (CND). Exempt and non-exempt
systems will be able to receive these services the same way.

26 Finally, the Corporation has worked with Telesat to make sure those decoders
are available to all BDUs on an expedited basis.

27 Taken together, these alternatives, along with CBC/Radio-Canada’s
communications campaign discussed below, should minimize any possible disruption to
Canadians.

**Informing the Public about the Changes**

28 CBC/Radio-Canada has been very clear with the Commission and the public
concerning its plans to convert only its 27 television stations to digital in the markets
mandated by the Commission. As early as September 27, 2006, the Corporation
advised the Commission that some Canadians lose access to OTA TV services as a
result of the transition. This was reiterated in a number of proceedings before the
Commission, as well as before the Steering Committee on Canadian Heritage.
On March 18, 2011, the Commission mandated a requirement that television stations must broadcast public service announcements regarding the digital over-the-air television transition from May 1, 2011 until August 31, 2011. As required by the Commission, the Corporation also posted on its website its specific plans for digital transition.

Now, in the context of the shutdown of its remaining analogue TV transmitters, CBC/Radio-Canada is again launching a comprehensive national public awareness campaign.

In order to ensure that those households that are affected will fully understand their service alternatives, a new series of public service announcements are being made to those persons affected by this decision. These announcements commenced on June 25, 2012, and will run through August 3, 2012. Below is a list of the communications tools that will be used to inform audiences of the changes, impacts, and alternative methods of reception.

- **Website** ([www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/analoguety](http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/analoguety) ; [www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/teleanalogueique](http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/teleanalogueique))
  
  Launched on June 25, 2012
  
  Website includes:
  - Information on decision and impact
  - List of affected transmitters
  - Coverage maps
  - Contact information

- **Web banners**
  - Posted on Radio-Canada.ca, CBC.ca and affiliated regional websites
  - Link through to information website
  - Regular rotation starting on June 26, 2012

- **Toll-free information line (1-888-303-5172)**
  - Activated on June 25 - dedicated exclusively to the analogue shutdown.
  - Service in French and in English
  - Extra call centre staff to be hired in July to ensure adequate support

- **Email addresses** ([analoguety@cbc.ca](mailto:analoguety@cbc.ca) ; [téléanalogueique@radio-canada.ca](mailto:téléanalogueique@radio-canada.ca))
- Account activated June 25, 2012

- **Radio PSA**
  - 15-second radio PSAs scheduled at the network level. Will run nationally July and August

- **On-air info**
  - Regular mentions by regional radio and television hosts during local morning and drive-home and supper-hour news shows. (July 23 to August 3)

- **Media relations**
  - Notice distributed via Canadian Community Newspaper Association (week of June 26; reminder during week of July 23)
  - Ongoing media availability

- **Handout**
  - One-pager with info on measure and contact info Available on-site at every station

- **Social media**

  *Corporate Blog – Your CBC/Radio-Canada ([http://cbcrdblog.com](http://cbcrdblog.com)) (June 27, 2012):*
  - States what the change will be, explains the reasons behind this decision and then directs people to what resources are available to get more information and see if they are affected.

  *Twitter (starting June 25, 2012):*
  - Links to info to be circulated regularly via Corporate twitter account (@CBCRadioCanada) and regional twitter accounts. Messages are tailored by region.

  *Facebook:*
  - Corporate and regional Facebook page administrators will post a link to the website. (Between June 25 – July 6)
  - Reminder message in July (Between July 16-July 28)
  - Questions and comments replied to in a timely manner.

  *LinkedIn (June 25, 2012)*
  - The website will be shared with our Corporate LinkedIn Group and Company Followers.

A screen shot of our website content, web banners handout and text of the public service announcements is reproduced in Appendix 1 to this reply.
Process for Decommissioning Analogue Television Network

33 Section 48 of the Broadcasting Act provides CBC/Radio-Canada with the authority to dispose of its real and personal property and to retain and use all of the proceeds obtain through such a disposition. More specifically, the CBC has the statutory authority under subsection 48(1) of the Broadcasting Act "to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of all or any part of any property acquired by it." And, in accordance with subsections 48(2) and (3), "the Corporation may retain and use all of the proceeds of any transaction for the disposition of real or personal property."

34 CBC/Radio-Canada has an obligation under the Broadcasting Act to manage its resources as efficiently and effectively as possible to further its mandate. To this end, the Corporation has given notice of termination effective July 31, 2012, to the owners of approximately 250 towers on which it leases space to support some of its analogue TV transmitters, and has retained a third party agent to handle the sale of 80 towers and other transmission assets that the Corporation owns and that will no longer be required. This process has already commenced and considerable interest has been demonstrated by potential purchasers.

35 Shutting down the analogue TV network will save a minimum of $10 million a year in operating costs, and allow the Corporation to generate revenues through the sale of assets. Both initiatives will help offset the impact of budget cuts on the Corporation’s programming expenditures. These measures will strengthen the CBC’s core business of producing Canadian programming.
B. INTERVENTIONS

36 CBC/Radio-Canada has received a total of 327 interventions in response to its application.

37 It is readily apparent from reviewing these interventions that they raise in aggregate a common set of concerns. For this reason, the Corporation will identify and respond to the principal issues raised, mentioning individual interventions only for the purpose of illustration of the point being made. Failure to respond to any specific intervention should not be taken to signify the Corporation’s agreement with the particular position taken.

Maintenance of Analogue Transmitters

38 A number of interveners have suggested that CBC/Radio-Canada be required to maintain its analogue TV rebroadcasting transmitters. For example, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting state that the $10 million it takes to operate the analogue network amounts to only 1% of CBC/Radio-Canada’s annual Parliamentary allocation.

CBC asserts that cutting off service to these Canadians will save it $10 million annually, about 1% of its parliamentary allocation. This is a small price to pay to satisfy the Broadcasting Act’s requirement that its services “be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose”. 5

39 CACTUS echoes this point at paragraph 33 of its comments:

Resources have already been made available by taxpayers for the purpose of reaching all of us equally over the air. The infrastructure already exists, and its yearly maintenance costs just 1% of the CBC’s overall budget. We are therefore of the view that resources have been made available and are available.

40 Unfortunately, CBC/Radio-Canada has neither the financial nor technical means to do this – nor would it be an efficient use of the Corporation’s resources to do so,

5 At para. 11.
given the obsolescence of the technology. The $10 million required to operate this network has to be found somewhere. The fact that it has been paid in the past, does not mean it can be paid going forward. CBC/Radio-Canada has already gone to great expense to convert some of its stations to digital. It cannot be expected now to maintain its analogue TV network as well on fewer resources.

Moreover, as discussed above, the analogue TV network no longer represents “the most appropriate and efficient means” to distribute TV signals: it is out of date and no longer supported by manufacturers. Contrary to section 3(1)(m)(vii) of the Broadcasting Act, there are not sufficient funds to maintain the analogue TV network and that network is not the most efficient means of making the Corporation’s services available to the relatively small number of Canadians watching via analogue OTA.

The answer to providing all Canadians with access to CBC/Radio-Canada lies not in perpetuating an antiquated and expensive analogue TV technology – but rather in ensuring that a low-cost or “skinny basic” service is made available by BDUs. The point was made by PIAC in its intervention at paragraph 5:

PIAC has consistently advocated that broadcasting is an essential service. Broadcasting connects Canadian communities by providing news and entertainment based on Canadian values and culture. According to the CBC, approximately 580,000 Canadians currently depend on analogue OTA to watch television. If broadcasting is recognized as an essential service, then the removal of OTA makes necessary the implementation of a basic broadcasting service to meet the needs of OTA subscribers. As PIAC stated in the proceeding leading to BPN 2008-100, basic service “could prevent potential access problems to what is for many an essential public service.”

It is within the Commission’s power to ensure that such a service is developed and made available to Canadians.

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6 As noted above, the $10M reflects operating costs only. It does not include the costs of satellite capacity and capital.
Conversion of Analogue Transmitters to Digital

Some interveners have suggested that CBC/Radio-Canada replace its analogue TV retransmitters with digital ones.

The estimated cost to replace all of the obsolete analogue antennae and transmitters with comparable digital equipment is at least $213 million in capital expenditures plus annual operating costs. This amount is consistent with an independent consultant firm's report, *Cost Estimate of Digital Television (DTV) Conversion for Canada*, commissioned by the CRTC.\(^7\)

CBC/Radio-Canada simply does not have the financial resources to make this conversion and almost 600 of the TV transmitters in question fall outside the geographic regions where digital conversion has been mandated.

Given the financial situation of CBC/Radio-Canada, the relatively low number of households relying on rebroadcasts for receipt of CBC/Radio-Canada’s service, and the availability of viable alternatives, the public interest is better served by using any cost-savings associated with running this obsolete network, and any proceeds from the disposition of the associated land, equipment, towers, and buildings, to invest in programming services whose budgets are also threatened by the public funding cuts.

Multiplex Digital Signals

“Multiplexing” is a technology that permits the over-the-air broadcasting of two channels using one digital television (“DTV”) signal. In the lead up to the DTV transition of August 31, 2011, it was suggested by various groups that CBC/Radio-Canada should adopt the technology to offer OTA TV service in all locations where it has installed a DTV transmitter, as well as in areas where other broadcasters have digital transmitters. Those calls have been renewed in response to the Corporation’s decision to decommission its analogue TV network on July 31, 2012.

Multiplexing technology continues to evolve and improve. The Corporation is currently looking at the technology in the lab to better understand the opportunities it could present in the future. Thus far, the test results indicate that although a single

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\(^7\) [http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/dtv0903.htm](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/dtv0903.htm)
ATSC channel is capable of broadcasting two HD signals, this cannot be done without signal degradation which is manifested in a less clear picture. CBC/Radio-Canada has not gone to the expense and dislocation of converting its broadcasting network to digital in order to degrade the quality of its HD signal and has no intention of doing so. However, the Corporation will continue to monitor this technology and may reconsider if and when it meets our standards, and, more importantly, funding becomes available.

Therefore, while digital multiplexing may hold promise in the future, it is not a viable option for the CBC to pursue at the present time.

In the meantime, the simplest and most direct approach to addressing the needs of those Canadians who will not have access to an OTA TV signal transmitted by CBC/Radio-Canada is to improve the affordability of the basic service offered by BDUs.

Make Infrastructure Available to Others at No Charge

A large number of interveners have suggested that CBC/Radio-Canada’s analogue TV rebroadcasting network is a public resource that should be given to community-based broadcasters or other service providers free of charge either for the advancement of community programming, the continued rebroadcast of CBC/Radio-Canada or other services such as Internet services.

This approach has been spear-headed by CACTUS, which has encouraged a form letter campaign of interventions advocating that CBC/Radio-Canada give its network equipment and towers away for re-purposing by third parties.

Unfortunately CACTUS has garnered this support through a misleading Internet campaign suggesting that this is a viable alternative.

First, it is incorrect to suggest, as CACTUS has done, that the analogue TV transmitters can be “repurposed” to provide Internet and other digital services. They cannot be used for those purposes. As mentioned above, it has also become increasingly difficult to maintain this equipment even for its original analogue purposes, even with highly-qualified technical staff, and so suggesting that communities can acquire this equipment for free and assume the operating expenses to continue to provide analogue broadcasting of CBC/Radio-Canada is also incorrect. These groups will simply face the same obstacles as CBC/Radio-Canada has encountered trying to
keep obsolete equipment functioning at a level that can provide viewers with a reasonable and reliable quality of service.

56 CACTUS has also proposed that communities, CBC/Radio-Canada and Industry Canada each fund one-third of the costs of converting analogue TV transmitters to digital for the provision of digital rebroadcast at the community level. Under this proposal, CBC/Radio-Canada would also contribute the towers.

57 This proposal has no basis in reality. CBC/Radio-Canada does not have the funds to pay for one-third of the cost of digital conversion by a third party community group and in any event could not give money away in the manner suggested. Industry Canada is also not part of this proceeding and has not demonstrated any intention to help fund digital conversion. Finally, CBC/Radio-Canada is not proposing to give its tower and building assets away – least of all now, when it is so strapped for cash.

58 As regards the towers which support the rebroadcast transmitters, there are three types:

(i) Those on which space is leased from third parties;

(ii) Those that the Corporation owns that also support other CBC/Radio-Canada services such as radio stations, that will continue to be provided; and

(iii) Those that are owned by the Corporation and currently support only analogue television rebroadcasting stations.

59 Obviously, towers in category (i) cannot be given to anyone since they are not owned by the Corporation. Towers in category (ii) will continue to be required by the Corporation to support other services; and towers in category (iii) are valuable assets that will be put up for sale.

60 Of the 607 transmitters being shut-down and decommissioned, approximately 80 are on towers owned by the Corporation that will no longer be required. Each of these sites will be put up for sale in accordance with the requirements of the Broadcasting Act that govern the disposal of such assets. Revenues will be used to support the creation of new Canadian TV, radio and digital content for all Canadians. The Corporation will be reaching out to all possible buyers, including communities, to gauge interest in acquiring these sites.
It’s been suggested that this infrastructure should be “given back to Canadians because Canadians have already paid for it.” It is true that these assets have in part been paid by taxpayers. However, this does not mean that they can or should be given away. The Corporation has a responsibility to manage those assets effectively, and in accordance with the authority granted to it under the Broadcasting Act. The proceeds from the sale of these assets are needed by CBC/Radio-Canada to maintain program production at existing levels. This is only one of many cuts being made by CBC/Radio-Canada to maintain its core programming services.

**Availability of Alternative Access to CBC/Radio-Canada Services**

In its intervention CACTUS has suggested that fewer than 10 million Canadians will be capable of receiving CBC/Radio-Canada’s signal via OTA following the decommissioning of its analog rebroadcasting network. This is totally incorrect.

The Corporation’s 27 digital transmitters and those of its four affiliates cover approximately 26 million Canadians on an OTA basis – or approximately 78% of the Canadian population.

A number of interveners have argued that they only receive television services via OTA TV transmitters and they do not wish to purchase broadcasting distribution services from BDUs. Others have argued that the brunt of the burden of this decommissioning falls on rural Canadians and the poor.

These issues are not unique to the current application to decommission the Corporation’s analogue TV rebroadcast network. They are issues that the Commission has already addressed in the context of its decision to require digital conversion. This did not inhibit the Commission from proceeding with its digital conversion plan and it ought not to present an impediment to the decommissioning of CBC/Radio-Canada’s remaining analogue TV transmitters.

The fact is that the vast majority of Canadians (95%) already receive their television signals from BDUs. As discussed in Part A of this reply, the percentage of

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8 See for example, intervention #278 from Rodney Juba of Dauphin, Manitoba.
9 See for example the interventions of PIAC, CACTUS and Friends of Canadian Broadcasting.
Canadians viewing television via OTA TV transmitters continues to drop and includes a constituency that is not particularly interested in television.

Indeed, the Corporation has estimated that only 1.7 per cent of the Canadian population will be impacted by the shut-off of its analogue TV retransmitters. Off-air viewers can be found across Canada from coast-to-coast, in large metropolis, small towns and rural areas. In fact, our analysis of BBM’s Fall 2011 survey indicates that two-thirds of the off-air viewers in Canada lived in cities, with only one-third living in rural areas. As indicated earlier, it is a lack of interest in TV, not geography that is a key determinant in how one receives TV. All of the households affected by CBC/Radio-Canada’s decommissioning of its analogue network have the ability to access the Corporation’s television stations from at least two BDU’s services. Historically, rural Canadians were early adopters of satellite services precisely because of the lack of availability of cable television services. They wanted access to the same variety of television services as urban Canadians.

Finally, for those that wish to simply maintain their ability to receive the services of CBC/Radio-Canada without charge, the service offered by Shaw’s DTH service includes both French and English language signals for free for the next five years.

It is incorrect to state that rural and less wealthy Canadians are being left without access to the Corporation’s services. All Canadians have access to more ubiquitous satellite-based services that provide a significantly more efficient means of delivering the signals of CBC/Radio-Canada when compared to the Corporation’s antiquated analogue rebroadcast network.

Prior Notice

Some interveners have suggested that they have been taken by surprise by the decommissioning plan, while others have indicated that CBC/Radio-Canada ought to hold consultations with them.

As indicated above, CBC/Radio-Canada has made its plans known for many years and has been totally candid about the impact on Canadians and the alternatives available to consumers.
It is patently wrong to suggest, as Friends of Canadian Broadcasting has done, that CBC/Radio-Canada has failed to inform viewers of this impending decommissioning of their service. As noted by English-Language Arts Network in its intervention, “We were all informed last year about CBC’s plans to shut down all remaining 623 analogue TV transmitters and thereby cease its free over-the-air…analogue broadcasts…”

The suggestion by CACTUS that CBC/Radio-Canada is shutting down this system “at short notice” is also not credible. In September 10, 2010, CACTUS, CMG and PIAC issued a news release which stated that:

"Over-the-air viewers outside the centres slated for digital upgrades will need to find other options to continue watching television after analogue transmitters are shut down. The number of transmitters operating in Canada is slated to drop from nearly 1,000 to about 150."


The news release also contains links to find out which communities have free TV now and which are slated for free digital TV after the transition, and how to maintain access to over-the-air TV after the digital transition if the community is not on the upgrade list.

CBC/Radio-Canada’s plans to decommission its analogue TV rebroadcasting network and its implications for OTA viewers has been well-known for at least two years and the issues surrounding digital conversion have been debated in numerous public proceedings over the past six years. CACTUS is simply recycling its initial and self-serving views on the digital transition process.

As regards the suggestion that CBC/Radio-Canada has a duty to consult with affected communities regarding its decommissioning plans, there is in fact no such duty, as there was no duty for the Corporation and other broadcasters to consult with communities when they implemented the Commission’s mandated conversion of analogue to digital. What was required and what was well organised by the Commission and the Department of Canadian Heritage, was a public awareness campaign similar to the one that CBC/Radio-Canada is implementing in this case, as described fully in Part A of this reply. Furthermore, for those communities that are
interested in purchasing towers, buildings or transmitters, the Corporation’s agent has initiated a process and will consider all offers.

77 CACTUS and Friends of Canadian Broadcasting have suggested that CBC/Radio-Canada should have acted more like TVO in reaching out to affected communities allowing them to acquire their equipment if appropriate. In response, CBC/Radio-Canada would point out that TVO’s circumstances are quite different in that it had placed low-power antennas and transmitters on public buildings, already owned by the community, rather than on towers in some of the communities it services. It is our understanding that where TVO’s higher-power transmitters are located on towers, TVO has taken the same position as the Corporation.

78 As described in Part A of this Reply, the Corporation has notified all affected parties of the upcoming changes and has commenced a detailed public awareness campaign designed to fully apprise Canadians of the circumstances and their options for continuing to receive the Corporation’s programming services.

C. CONCLUSION

79 For all of these reasons, CBC/Radio-Canada respectfully requests the Commission to approve its application.

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