



Communiqué

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Canadian Third-Language Services are best positioned to serve Canadians

Ottawa, December 16, 2004 – Today the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) issued a revised policy on how it will assess requests to add foreign third-language services to the eligible satellite services list. This revised policy provides a balanced approach to ensuring Canadian viewers have access to a wide range of Canadian and foreign third-language services. The Commission has made it clear that while technology increasingly facilitates greater choice, its policies will continue to put Canada first.

“The Canadian broadcasting system currently offers the most choice, at the best price, of any system in the world,” said Glenn O’Farrell, President and CEO of the CAB. “No other country offers as many domestic third-language services as Canada. We trust that this remarkable accomplishment will be maintained under this revised policy. Only time will tell,” said Glenn O’Farrell, President and CEO of the CAB.

“The CRTC’s new policy recognizes that putting the interests of Canadian business before the interests of foreign business is a fundamental tenet of Canadian public policy,” added O’Farrell.

“The Commission has recognized that only Canadian third-language services provide a Canadian perspective to Canadian multicultural communities. Foreign third-language services coming into the Canadian system, and operating without any of the obligations of domestic third-language broadcasters, should not be allowed to use the margins they achieve in Canada as a means to undermine the availability and/or success of Canadian third-language services. That is why it is so important to ensure fair competition in the market place, and by extension, putting Canada first,” said Shan Chandrasekar, Chair of CAB Ethnic Services Committee.

However, the potential impact of this new policy on third-language private broadcasters’ ability to continue to provide Canadian programming is unknown. New foreign third-language entrants into the Canadian system could result in higher prices for programming purchased from other countries – the profits of which now help to support third-language Canadian programming.

“While Canadian third-language specialty services operate in a highly competitive environment and have never shied away from any competition, this new policy has the potential to significantly change the landscape. The core issue in any discussion of public policy is fairness. We expect the CRTC to step up its vigilance in order to ensure the landscape is conducive to fair business practices for Canadian third-language service providers,” added Glenn O’Farrell.

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) is the national voice of Canada's private broadcasters, representing the vast majority of Canadian programming services, including private radio and television stations, networks, specialty, pay and pay-per-view services.

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