



DOCUMENTARY
ORGANIZATION OF CANADA
DOCUMENTARISTES
DU CANADA

215 Spadina Avenue
Suite / Bureau 126
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 2C7
416.599.3844
1.877.467.4485
www.docorg.ca

January 27, 2010

Mr. Robert A. Morin
Secretary General,
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
Central Building, Les Terrasses de la Chaudière 1
Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0N2

**Re: Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2009-803,
Applications Nos. 2009-1222-1, 2009-1223-9, 2009-
1224-7 (Zoomer Media purchase of Vision TV, One, and
JoyTV)**

Dear Mr. Morin,

1. The DOCUMENTARY ORGANIZATION OF CANADA | l'association des DOCUMENTARISTES DU CANADA (DOC) is the collective voice of independent documentary filmmakers across Canada. DOC is a national non-profit arts service association representing over 800 directors, producers and craftspeople in the documentary community, from all provinces and regions of our nation. DOC advocates on behalf of its members to foster an environment conducive to documentary production and strives to strengthen the sector within the broader film production industry.

2. DOC's membership has had a long relationship with Vision TV. We do not wish to see this station close. Thus, we are supporting Zoomer Media Limited's application to acquire Vision TV. However, we have some reservations and conditions about the application that we wish to address in this positive intervention. We feel that our point of view is clear in our submission, and consequently, do not wish to attend the hearing.

Vision TV's Mandate

3. Since its inception, Vision TV has been an important and distinct voice in the Canadian broadcasting landscape. According to its mandate expressed in its licence renewal in 1994, Vision TV must provide "balanced programming focused upon the varied religious practices and beliefs of Canadians ... programming related to, inspired by or arising from spirituality including related moral or ethical issues."¹

4. Because of its multi-cultural and multi-faith programming, Vision TV has allowed independent producers to showcase documentaries that otherwise

¹ Decision CRTC 1994-655, pg. 1 & 3

would not find a broadcast window, namely, those of a socio-political, multi-cultural, and religious subject matter. The broad spiritual mandate of Vision TV gave birth to a genre of social-issue documentary that has been under siege in recent years due to an industry pressure towards commercial ratings. As a non-profit channel, Vision TV has not been quite as susceptible to these pressures as other broadcasters have. With a sale to a for-profit company, DOC is concerned that this window for the presentation of issues affecting the broader aspects of our society will be lost in an attempt to cater to the current niche audience of Zoomer Media Limited.

5. Because of its origin as a charity and a non-profit company, Vision TV has often been referred to as Canada's second public television network. Will this attitude continue in the hands of a for-profit company? With the loss of social-issue documentary strands on other networks, documentary filmmakers and consequently the Canadian public will suffer if this trend continues were Vision TV's mandate to change.

6. DOC is supportive of the transaction to give a firm financial ground to Vision TV, but it is imperative that Zoomer Media Limited maintain the mandate of Vision TV in the area of socio-political documentaries and its current conditions of licence.

Dual Status Carriage

7. Vision TV's multi-faith and multi-cultural programming allows it to occupy a niche no other broadcaster can. It is this very niche that legitimizes its dual-status carriage and analog specialty service status. It is our view that any alteration to the nature of its programming would jeopardize its specificity and therefore compromise its dual-status carriage and analog specialty status.

8. If Zoomer Media Limited changes the nature of Vision TV, namely its mandate to provide multicultural and multifaith programming, to suit its targeted market of 54 years old +, or so-called "Zoomers", the station would not be providing programming that merits the dual-carriage status, because it would be more akin to a category 2 digital channel that markets to a specific market rather than to all Canadians.

Zoomer Media Limited's Proposed Benefits Package

9. DOC has also examined the proposed benefits package and has the following analysis to offer:

10. DOC welcomes a commitment to documentary production, but we find that the proposed documentary fund continues a troublesome trend in documentary programming. The proposal includes a lifestyle fund within the documentary fund. In our opinion, this proposal flies in the face of the

Commission's support for under-represented programming across the Canadian broadcasting system. It undermines the integrity of the Commission's definition for category 2b, long form documentary. This aspect of the proposal, in our opinion, requires to be reassessed.

11. Second, the overall value of the documentary production fund, \$665K, is quite modest compared to the creation of other documentary production funds. For instance, when Canwest bought the Alliance Atlantis channels, three documentary funds were created namely the Hot Docs Completion Fund (valued at \$3M), a documentary development fund (valued at \$1M) and the feature independent documentary production fund (valued at \$5). Although the price of the acquisition was higher for that transaction, the substantial commitments to the new funds were a reflection of the value of documentary to the overall cultural audio-visual production. \$665K expended over 7 years does not appear to be a vigorous way of sustaining Canadian documentary.

12. In addition, the proposal for the fund to be self-directed removes the required "checks and balances" to allow for the benefit to accrue to as wide a production community as possible. For example, the Hot Docs Completion Fund invests money in documentary productions that could be commissioned by any broadcaster, not simply Canwest's stations (the creators of the fund).

13. Furthermore, the existing relationships between some of the beneficiaries and the purchaser raise questions about the targeted way funds are being proposed to be dispersed and the overall benefit to the Canadian cultural community.

14. Should the CRTC choose to reassess the value of the benefits package and its intended beneficiaries, DOC respectfully submits that one way of making a strong commitment to the independent documentary production community would be to support the recently announced Allan King Fund. This fund aims to create a "living legacy" in memory of Mr. King by supporting and mentoring documentary filmmakers. The fund is jointly administered by DOC and the King family.

15. In conclusion, DOC is supportive of Zoomer Media Limited's application to purchase Vision TV, One, and the JoyTV channels, but we strongly believe Zoomer must maintain the original mandate of Vision TV and the benefits package must be revisited.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Christou', is written over a horizontal line.

John Christou
Chair