

1. Protecting Canada's cultural sovereignty

Foreign companies are already permitted to own up to 47% of Canadian broadcasters and some of our broadcasters want to sell out completely to American interests.

Do you believe it is important to maintain Canadian majority ownership of our media and communications sectors?

Canada must continue to maintain majority Canadian ownership of our own media and communications sector. Few countries face comparable challenges in maintaining national ownership and culturally relevant content, due to the tremendous power of the giant media conglomerates of the United States. I have always been a firm supporter of legislation to protect the Canadian media industry, and will continue to ensure legislative protection for Canadian-owned media. In the debate on the Free Trade Agreement, I stressed this aspect of our national interest. It is the only way to promote Canadian programming in the face of pressures from our neighbour.

2. More Canadian drama programs on television

Since the CRTC relaxed Canadian programming regulations in 1999, private broadcasters have fed Canadian audiences a steady diet of cheap American programs while the quality and quantity of Canadian drama have declined.

Do you think it is important to increase the quantity and quality of Canadian drama television programs on TV? How would you ensure Canada's broadcasters air more and better Canadian drama programs?

Arlene and I are avid fans of the CBC, both TV and radio, and watching and listening to CBC programs has been an integral part of life with our three daughters. We have been shaped and stirred by the wonderful dramas and documentaries that bring to life the achievements and personalities of significant people who are part of our history. It is the specifically Canadian outlook of our own drama programs which makes them so important for promoting and sharing the Canadian experience. Canadian broadcasters, particularly the CBC, need to air even more high-quality drama programming. One solution would be to promote many more pilot dramas, in order to test what Canadians would like to see. This could also provide opportunities for more young talent to break in. I would also hope to promote strong and responsible management of the CBC to maintain and improve the quality and quantity of CBC-produced drama programs.

3. Re-building CBC's grassroots capacity

CBC's connection to Canadians and the communities in which they live has weakened in recent years. Grassroots programs and CBC's presence across the country have been slashed in the face of severe budget cuts. Today's centrally produced programs make CBC look more like the Toronto Broadcasting Corporation than the national public broadcaster it should be.

Do you believe the federal government should ensure that CBC has the resources and commitment to serve Canadians in their communities wherever they live? If so, how would you accomplish this goal?

Canada is a country of regions, each with very distinct issues, cultures, and needs. We also have a national perspective and shared values that deserve celebration and

affirmation. This must be reflected in the programming offered by our public broadcaster. As my friend Noreen Golfman has pointed out, this isn't a nicety -- it's the law. The Broadcasting Act clearly states that the CBC must reflect all parts of Canada and recognize the special needs of regions. I would make it a priority to strengthen regional programming to the CBC, and would make the resources available for the CBC to do so. The cuts to the CBC regional offices went too far, in my view. I would strengthen the CBC's regional offices. I believe that this will allow the CBC to much better serve the needs of Canadians, from cities to farms, Nunavut to Nova Scotia. I also believe that regional offices would enhance innovation within the broadcaster, by creating programming and opportunities for young and established talent throughout the country rather than always in Toronto.

4. End patronage appointments to CBC's Board

Positions on CBC's Board, including its President, are currently Prime Ministerial patronage appointments. The Commons Heritage Committee unanimously recommended reforming this practice so that CBC's Board is appointed at arms-length from patronage to include the best and brightest Canadians, and that this Board, not the Prime Minister, should have the power to hire CBC's President. Friends believes that implementation of this reform would likely have prevented the recent lockout of CBC employees. *Should the practice of political patronage appointments to CBC's Board be ended and should the Board be given responsibility to hire and fire CBC's President?*

It is important that there remains some direct oversight in the management of the CBC from the elected Government of Canada – due both to its cultural mandate and its taxpayer subsidy. This is only natural, and in line with procedures at crown corporations throughout Canada and indeed the world. I would be very careful that an arms-length procedure would not remove the management of CBC from its responsibility to the Parliament of Canada. Similarly, I would not empower the Board of CBC in the hiring and firing of management to such a degree that the Corporation becomes divorced from its relationship to the Government of Canada. I believe in appointments based on experience and merit, conducted transparently and fairly.

I share with FCB a deep concern that the lockout at CBC last year was due in part to a polarized culture within the CBC, a culture which had developed from weak, often politically-motivated appointments and an antagonistic relationship between CBC management and employees. I also share with FCB a desire to promote the best and brightest Canadians to management positions at the CBC. I have always followed this logic in my own appointments, choosing people from all backgrounds if I thought that they were best for the job.

Improving the appointment procedure can best be achieved through the introduction of a fair and transparent process, ending in an appointment on behalf of the elected government of Canada. This is the best way to encourage appointments based upon merit rather than patronage and would go a long way towards restoring the confidence of CBC employees in their management, and of Canadians towards their public broadcaster.

I am asking for your support in seeking the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. Canada needs a party that embraces change, is open to all Canadians and understands that politics is about serving people. I believe that leadership is about vision; persuasive ability; commitment and relevant experience, but most of all it is about teamwork. To join me in this effort, please go to my website at www.bobrae.ca.