



February 9, 2007

Noreen Golfman  
Sent by email: [ngolfman@mun.ca](mailto:ngolfman@mun.ca)

*Noreen*  
Dear Ms. Golfman,

I write with regard to Ian Morrison's open letter to potential supporters of Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, a copy of which is attached for your ease of reference. As your name appears on the letterhead as a member of the Steering Committee or the Advisory Committee and you are, thereby, to some extent associated with the letter's sentiments and substance, I thought I should take the time to highlight just some of the factual errors and distortions it contains. I would ask you also to consider whether *ad hominem* attacks of this kind, which demonise individuals rather than engaging constructively, actually advance the cause of public broadcasting in Canada, however effective they may be as a fundraising device.

I personally take exception to almost all the contents of the letter but let me just take the bullet points listed on page two and provide you with another perspective on each.

- X *The performance of CBC president Robert Rabinovitch has deteriorated significantly over recent years – his greatest lapse occurring in 2004 when instead of hiring a new Executive Vice President through an open competition, he opted to employ Richard Stursberg, a former crony from the federal public service.*
- ✓ In fact, there was a full-scale, thorough, open, advertised, national and international, internal and external search for a new Executive Vice-President for CBC Television carried out by a reputable executive search firm. The general public consensus following Richard Stursberg's appointment was not only that he had all the qualifications necessary to do the job but that it was also a bit of a coup that CBC/Radio-Canada was able to recruit him. That doesn't mean that everyone will like him personally or that everyone will approve of his performance. When you are trying to implement significant change there are going to be those who disagree. But, as an organization, Friends should not let the long-standing personal animosity of its spokesperson towards another individual lead to this kind of distortion.

- X *This new management clique made the disastrous decision to pre-empt The National in Ontario and Quebec -- during a time of crisis in the Mideast -- in favour of a simulcast of ABC's The One, a reality program so bad that it lasted just two weeks before being canned south of the border.*
- √ Clearly, *The One* is not a programming experience we are in a hurry to replicate. But as a result of the adjustments made to the CBC Newsworld schedule that made *The National* available at 9 p.m., 10 p.m. and 11 p.m., as well as an intense promotional campaign, that same "management clique" was able to deliver more audience to *The National* that night than either the average of that week or the average of that summer.
  
- X *Management killed three popular drama series Da Vinci's City Hall, The Tournament and This is Wonderland -- without sufficient lead time to develop credible alternatives.*
- √ This might be the most bizarre accusation. For planning purposes, we let our internal teams and our production partners know in February when a show is not going to be renewed. Like most networks, for competitive reasons, we only announce our fall season in June. Between February and June, the public, and FCB, do not know what the replacement shows will be in September. All three production companies involved in the shows in question were already in discussion with CBC Television on new projects, and one of them actually had a new show in the September season. In 2006-2007, we in fact increased the number of hours of Canadian drama programming on CBC Television and we have plans to further increase them in coming seasons. All of this is easily verifiable but apparently not convenient to the FCB argument.
  
- X *The effective in-house publicity capacity of CBC TV has been dismantled. The result? Higher costs and declining audience numbers.*
- √ CBC/Radio-Canada faces tough choices as a result of continuous decline in Government funding. As intended, this reorganization has resulted in a decrease in costs and an increase in earned media exposure for our priority shows. We have maintained our audience share overall, despite fragmentation and increased competition. Our share for the 2005-2006 regular season was 7.3%. In 2004-2005 it was 6.7%; in 2003-2004 it was 7.3%; and in 2002-2003 it was 6.9%.
  
- X *On the Rabinovitch/Stursberg watch, the CBC has lost the 2010 and 2012 Olympics, host Brian Williams, and the Canadian Curling Association contract. Is Hockey Night in Canada next?*
- √ How much criticism would the FCB have levelled at CBC/Radio-Canada had we taken \$62 million (the difference between our bid and Bell Globemedia's) out of News, Current Affairs and Drama programming in order to win the bid? As it is, our bid was 45% higher than what we paid for previous Olympics and on those previous Olympics we broke even. In addition we have added sports properties, like the FIFA World Cups for 2010 & 2014.

- X *Canadian prime-time programming on English television has been replaced by Hollywood movies for several hours each week.*
- √ Our prime-time Canadian programming remains above 80% of the total (compared to about 29% for the private conventional broadcasters). The only times when American movies temporarily took up more of our schedule were the NHL lock-out, when we needed to do whatever we could to protect our revenues to avoid laying off staff, and our own labour troubles.
  
- X *Management cancelled the second broadcast and withdrew DVD sales of the drama *Prairie Giant: The Tommy Douglas Story* without consulting the production's creators -- displaying a disregard for freedom of expression as well as contempt for due process and for the CBC's quality control system.*
- √ After we aired *Prairie Giant*, the issue of historical accuracy was raised, and our internal "due process" took hold. The producer, with whom the CBC had contracted, was consulted (almost daily and for weeks). The director, who worked for the producer, was also consulted on a number of occasions. Ultimately, accountability for what airs on CBC Television rests with the programming office of the CBC, not with the writer and director. All three (producer, writer and director) are currently working on new projects with the network. It is only FCB that has not moved on.
  
- X *According to *The Toronto Star*, when Mr. Rabinovitch and Mr. Stursberg appeared before the House of Commons' Heritage Committee to explain last year's disastrous eight-week lockout of 5,500 employees -- initiated apparently without approval of the CBC's Board of Directors -- neither of them could name any CBC programs.*
- √ As with every CBC/Radio-Canada collective agreement negotiation, the mandate for the CMG negotiation was approved by the Human Resources committee of the Board and confirmed by the Board itself before the negotiations commenced. The Board and the HR committee were then briefed at every subsequent Board meeting through the negotiations. Repeating patently ridiculous falsehoods suggesting that neither the President nor the Executive Vice-President of CBC Television could "name any CBC programs" may comfort the sense of superiority of the writer, but is it credible?
  
- X *And as for radio, it's repeats, repeats, repeats, and a desperate search for a mythical younger audience, whatever that is.*
- √ You should know that CBC Radio had its best audience results in its history (13%) in the last BBM ratings book. Share for CBC Radio has climbed gradually over the last three years. Our research indicates that listener satisfaction with CBC Radio sets the standard for the industry. The advent of Radio's summer schedule in the last few years has resulted in the significant reduction in the number of repeats on CBC Radio. Plans are in place to reduce them further this year and down the road -- not that they were ever particularly frequent. Where do these misconceptions come from and why are they repeated blithely as fact? They are easy enough to verify. Of course, you are welcome to your own opinion of CBC Radio's programming.

Were you to carry out an audit of the development process of this open letter, I would also recommend that you review the confidential survey that is attached as the final page. It is self-fulfilling and slanted to such a degree that pretending the results of the "research" had any legitimacy would, from a methodological point of view, be dishonest.

Having said all that, I recognise that Friends of Canadian Broadcasting needs to raise money to keep going. FCB rightly holds CBC/Radio-Canada to a high standard. But surely, it should be willing to measure itself by that same standard.

Were we to strip away the personal animus, I am sure that we would agree on the basic purpose of public broadcasting and on its importance, now more than ever, to the country: In order to enrich the democratic and cultural lives of Canadians, we need to guarantee a space for Canadian voices in our media landscape; we need to address the crisis in television drama by producing more high-quality drama that Canadians will watch; we need to improve our service to Canada's regions; we need to promote our creators and our artists; we need to build social cohesion in this culturally diverse and geographically dispersed country.

We will not always agree about how to achieve those ends. The management of CBC/Radio-Canada, charged with achieving those objectives with the funds available, is not always going to take the advice of either advocates or critics. Sometimes we may even find that advice gratuitous or misguided, but that comes with the territory. In our attempt to find creative new ways to fulfill our mandate, we may occasionally seem to be off track and may not listen as well as we should. Try as we might, we do not always succeed. But if we who agree on the grand purpose can't keep our debate civil, we do the work of those whose purpose is not grand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

W. B. Chambers  
Vice-President, Communications  
CBC/Radio-Canada