

# *A Primer on Ottawa's response to the Lincoln Report*

March 31, 2005

The sweeping review of the Canadian broadcasting system conducted by the Heritage Committee will be back in the spot light when the government tables its response on Monday, April 4th. This will be the first time the government of Canada has provided a glimpse of its approach to Canadian broadcasting since the election last year.

Weighing in at almost 1000 pages and 97 recommendations, the report - *Our Cultural Sovereignty – the Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting* - offers the federal government and Heritage Minister Liza Frulla a detailed blue print for ensuring a healthy and vibrant Canadian broadcasting system.

The government's approach to protecting and growing Canadian cultural sovereignty can be measured according to its response to these key recommendations from the report:

## **Restore local and regional broadcasting on CBC**

The Heritage Committee recommended that CBC develop and cost a plan to get back into the business of local and regional broadcasting. The CBC has complied, handing off a three year plan to Minister Frulla just prior to the federal budget. Will the government announce funding of the \$82 million/year plan?

## **Maintain Canadian control of the communications system**

The Heritage Committee recommended that existing foreign ownership limits which ensure Canadian ownership and control of our broadcasting and telecommunications companies be maintained at current limits. Will the government concur with this recommendation even though it may be at odds with a commitment announced in the recent budget to review telecommunications policy?

## **End patronage appointments to CBC and the CRTC**

The Heritage Committee recommended an end to priministerial patronage appointments to the CBC Board and CRTC. Instead, the Committee recommended that the best and the brightest candidates be appointed from a variety of sources and that the CBC Board be given the power to hire and fire its own President.

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## Media concentration and cross-ownership

The Heritage Committee expressed grave concerns about the impact of media concentration and cross-ownership on democracy, editorial independence and the diversity of opinion in the media. The Heritage Committee called for a moratorium on future transactions that would further concentrate ownership of the media until the government of Canada had developed a policy concerning cross-media ownership. The Committee also urged the CRTC to keep a close eye on companies that own both broadcast and other media properties.

## Fix the crisis in English language television drama production

The Heritage Committee recommended the government ask the CRTC to overhaul its 1999 Television Policy which many believe caused the bottom to fall out of the Canadian television drama production industry. After much hand wringing and a lot of talk, English language drama production has still not recovered. Will Heritage Minister Frulla adopt the committee's recommendation and direct the CRTC to take another look at its policy?

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