



## CITY OF ST. ALBERT ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUNDER

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### TITLE: SHAW COVERAGE

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On May 1, 2017 Councillor Russell provided notice in accordance with Section 23 of Procedure Bylaw 22/2016 that he intended to bring forward the proposed motion below.

*In order for Council to debate the motion, the motion must be formally moved.*

That Administration write letters to the CRTC and the Corus Entertainment and Shaw Communications Group asking for written guarantees that televised proceedings of St. Albert City Council meetings will continue to be provided as part of the conditions governing the provision of cable services within the City of St. Albert.

### BACKGROUND:

#### Timeline

In October of 2013, the CRTC launched *Let's Talk TV*, a public engagement process to help modernize the Canadian television system. In 2014, the CRTC simultaneously conducted a formal review of its television policies as part of the public engagement process. Following public consultation, a new Broadcasting Regulatory Policy was initially released in 2015. The policy currently in place was released in June of 2016.

#### Community Content Rules

Under the Regulations, broadcasters must contribute 5% of their gross broadcasting revenues to support Canadian programming. No changes were made from the old policy to increase the required amount of community content.

The Commission has created some flexibility in how broadcasters may meet their obligations. Broadcasters may be permitted to reallocate funds currently devoted to community programming in one market to another area. Specifically, the CRTC considers it appropriate to provide broadcasters with the flexibility to

- (a) transfer their contribution from one community channel to another or
- (b) use all or part of their obligations to support community content to fund local news programming.

Broadcasters in St. Albert areas will be permitted to direct their funds to community programming in other markets or to designated local television stations for the production of local news.

## **License Renewals**

The CRTC administers the broadcasting license and is responsible for checking that broadcasters meet their obligations. The exact nature of a license is determined by the CRTC, including approval for how broadcasters are choosing to meet their obligations to provide community content.

On August 11, 2016, the City of St. Albert submitted a letter in support of the renewal of Corus Entertainment Inc.'s broadcasting license stating the importance of Shaw Cable Television's broadcast of City Council Meetings.

On May 15, 2017, the CRTC has issued new requirements as part of five-year license renewals for Bell Media, Inc., Corus Entertainment Inc., and Rogers Media Inc. These companies are required to:

- Give 120 days notice of an intended (local station) closure, during which time the regulator will open the proposed shutdown to public hearings. [This could result in the regulator denying permission for closing a station, but there are no guarantees the station would remain open.]
- Air six hours per week for large stations (three hours in smaller markets) of "locally reflective" news programming as part of their overall local programming commitments. CRTC will be monitoring news broadcasts and require annual reports from stations to verify the requirements are being met.

## **Further Details**

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) updated the policy on local and community television following 2015 consultations with the public and other interested stakeholders. As set out in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2009-406, the current definition for local programming reads as follows:

Local programming is defined as programming produced by local stations with local personnel or programming produced by locally-based independent producers that reflects the particular needs and interests of the market's residents.

According to the Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016 – 224, the CRTC has a new policy framework for local and community television. This policy sets out regulatory measures to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to local programming that reflects their needs and interests. Under the Regulations, licensed

broadcasting distribution undertakings (BDUs) must contribute 5% of their gross broadcasting revenues to support Canadian programming.

As stated in the Broadcasting Act (the Act), the Canadian broadcasting system should provide through its programming a public service essential to maintaining and enhancing Canadians' national identity and cultural sovereignty (section 3(1)(b)).

The measures adopted in this policy to ensure continued local reflection include:

- requiring that local television stations maintain historical exhibition and expenditure levels for locally reflective news and information; and
- maintaining the current overall exhibition level for locally relevant programming, which may be taken from any programming category.

The Commission has created some flexibility in how broadcasters may meet their obligations. The CRTC has adopted measures in the Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2016 – 224 to ensure that broadcasters continue to fulfill their responsibility to broadcast locally reflective news and that they have the resources to do so. Specifically, in keeping with its preliminary view in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy [2015-24](#) that there is currently sufficient funding within the system to meet this objective but that the allocation of such funding needs to be re-examined, the Commission is giving BDUs, and in particular BDUs owned by vertically integrated groups, the flexibility to reallocate funds currently devoted to community programming to the production of local news or to community programming in other markets.

Specifically, the CRTC considers it appropriate to provide BDUs with the flexibility to (a) transfer their contribution from one community channel to another or (b) use all or part of their local expression contribution to fund local news programming, as follows:

- All independent local stations will be designated to receive contributions to local news. However, ownership groups operating both BDUs and local television stations will be required to maintain the operation of all of their local stations over the new licence period to benefit from this flexibility. This requirement will be addressed as part of the stations' licence renewals. Additionally, licensees will be required to report annually on their use of funding flexibilities, including providing details regarding local presence.
- Licensed terrestrial BDUs serving metropolitan markets (Montréal, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver) will be permitted to direct their allowable local expression contribution to community programming in other markets and/or to designated local television stations for the production of local news.

**Sources:**

[http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/cancon/c\\_system.htm](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/cancon/c_system.htm)  
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-224.htm>  
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/television/services/local.htm>  
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2015/2015-24.htm>  
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-487.pdf>  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/crtc-local-stations-1.4116282>

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