



CRTC Chairman's Speech at Banff World Media Festival

June 15, 2011 by Bob Tarantino

Konrad von Finckenstein, Chairman of the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) delivered a speech on Monday at the Banff World Media Festival, the full text of which is available here. The content of the speech is notable for a number of reasons, not least the broad-ranging assessment (prediction?) of how Canada's media regulatory regime should (will?) be modified:

We are in a new digital world now, a world in which consumers are in control. They have access to a wide range of digital platforms and applications. These new media bypass the traditional pathways of regulated broadcasting: over-the-air, cable and satellite. Therefore the Commission's ability to regulate through control of access is very much reduced.

I believe we need a conceptual rethink of the whole regulatory system. The results of that rethink should preferably be embodied in a single comprehensive Act to govern all communications.

The aim of the new legislation would be to create a structure for optimal regulation of the transportation of bits, whether by wireline or wireless technology, and whether they are carrying voice, video or data. This structure would support the development of a flexible, competitive and innovative system providing access for all Canadians to their choice of fast and efficient digital resources.

Here are some of the key points that might be included:

- A statement of objectives for the system—economic, social and cultural.
- A clear distinction between the broad policy choices to be made by the government and the powers to be assigned to an independent regulator in all areas of communication, including broadcasting, telecom and spectrum management.
- Specific provisions on timelines and on regulatory tools, such as AMPs (Administrative Monetary Penalties), mandatory adoption of codes, and the power to impose arbitration.
- A coherent scheme for the support of Canadian content. This could include subsidies, or incentives in the form of regulatory exemptions and exceptions, or a mix of all of these methods.
- The responsibilities and governance of the public broadcaster, defining its special role in reflecting Canada's unique culture and values.

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