

By Fax: (819) 994-0218

March 23, 2006

Ms. Diane Rhéaume
Secretary General
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

Dear Ms. Rhéaume:

**Re: Application by Saskatchewan Telecommunications to Offer a
Community Channel - Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2006-18
Application Nos. 2005-1239-4 and 2005-1237-8**

1. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) is requesting that the Commission deny the above applications made by SaskTel.
2. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is an advocacy organization dedicated to lower taxes, less waste, and accountable government.
3. It is our understanding that the CRTC denied SaskTel's application to operate a community channel when they were issued their first license. This decision was taken due to concerns regarding its lack of programming independence. Nothing has changed since that time. Those concerns are still legitimate.
4. SaskTel remains an agent of the government of Saskatchewan which has direct control over its board of directors and its corporate policies including the proposed programming committee. In December, 2004, the Government of Saskatchewan issued energy rebate payments to all Saskatchewan residents through SaskTel phone bills. This is further evidence that SaskTel is influenced by elected officials to fulfill policies that are not related to SaskTel's core business.
6. SaskTel's private sector competitors have developed business plans and strategies on the basis of the CRTC's original decision. Any changes to that decision should, in fairness to those private sector competitors, be dealt with during SaskTel's license renewal. SaskTel's Video On Demand license is not up for renewal until 2010.
7. In addition, the CTF has grave concerns about the absence of public policy justification with SaskTel's use of resources to distribute community programming in markets that are currently well-served by existing community channels. The government of Saskatchewan already operates the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN) which is underwritten by taxpayer funding to offer programming to all communities in Saskatchewan.

The CTF believes that additional outlets for community programming are not only unnecessary, but an inappropriate use of resources for this Crown Corporation.

8. In summary, the CTF recommends that the CRTC deny SaskTel's application to amend its licences or at the very least, defer consideration of the applications until the conclusion of SaskTel's current license to allow for more public consultation on this matter.

Sincerely yours,



David MacLean
CTF Saskatchewan Director

c.c. SaskTel
(306)565-6216