

ADVERTISEMENT

**Open Letter to the Honourable Shelley Glover,
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages**
Minister Glover,


I am writing this open letter on behalf of the countless Canadians who believe Prime Minister Stephen Harper, your cabinet colleagues and yourself when you say that it is your Conservative government's mission to be tough on criminals and to stand up for the victims of crime.

As president of **Avis de recherche (ADR)** – a French-language public-interest specialty television channel devoted to helping police apprehend suspects, solve crimes, find missing persons and, in some ways, help give crime victims closure, I share your government's law-and-order objectives. Like all sensible Canadians, I believe that crime suspects should be apprehended; they should be tried and, if found guilty, they should be punished. I also believe that as many tools as possible be put at the disposal of police departments and other crime-prevention agencies to help them ensure public safety. And I believe that our public institutions – government and government agencies – should defend and promote these ideals, which are the cornerstone of the society in which we live.

The CRTC, the Canadian regulatory body which grants television stations their licence to operate, recognized the **"exceptional importance"** of ADR in 2008, and granted it mandatory distribution status as a "must-carry" channel in Quebec. Alas, these sentiments are not shared by current CRTC commissioners. In Spring 2013, ADR petitioned the CRTC for renewal of its licence and, more importantly, renewal of its mandatory distribution order.

Despite overwhelming public and institutional support – including glowing testimonials from a broad spectrum of Canadian individuals and institutions at the public hearing – the CRTC rendered a decision which will very likely spell the end of ADR within the next few months. Its English-language counterpart, **All Points Bulletin (APB)** – which would have benefitted the rest of Canada – was also denied CRTC approval and will never see the light of day. Both are the victims of an ill-advised decision by a government agency which, by all accounts, is misinformed, misguided, and perhaps covering to external pressures.

The CRTC decision terminates ADR's mandatory distribution, cutting it off from its only source of operating revenue – a mere \$0.06 (that's six cents!) per digital television subscriber in Quebec. More importantly, it removes the obligation of cable companies to offer the channel to consumers. Without this obligation consumers will not have the possibility to choose it as it will simply not be offered on the menu.

The same CRTC that recently complained that there was insufficient Canadian-made porn broadcast by another television service is now saying that there is too much crime prevention programming in Canada. It concluded in its decision that law enforcement agencies have "other" tools to help them solve crime and find missing persons and that they do not need the assistance of a television channel entirely devoted to public safety. Vice-Chairman Tom Pentefountas went so far as to suggest that ADR should seek financing from the United States Department of Homeland Security and inferred that police and possibly victims should be made to pay for our service.

I can understand that it is the prerogative of government and the CRTC to periodically review how Canadians consume television, and to make adjustments over time as the situation changes. But to render a decision that obliterates a television station which provides a worthy public service is to throw out the proverbial baby with the bath water.

ADR works closely with law enforcement agencies to produce round-the-clock broadcasts of police bulletins on wanted suspects and missing persons. Furthermore, ADR also produces and broadcasts 100 percent original Canadian programming in collaboration with numerous public safety bodies and organizations that aim to educate and inform viewers on all matters pertaining to public safety and prevention. As a public interest service, its programming is guided by the service that it renders to the community.

ADR's licence renewal application received letters of endorsement from almost every police force in Canada, as well as from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and the provincial equivalents in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and New Brunswick. There were also letters from numerous provincial public safety ministers, letters from city mayors from Halifax to Vancouver, missing persons' organizations, the Canadian Crime-Stoppers Association, and Correctional Service of Canada. There were letters from a brigadier-general in the Department of National Defence, victims' organizations, and many other organizations involved in the promotion of safety and crime prevention. There were also favourable testimonials from Canadian consumer advocacy groups demanding renewal of the French service and approval of the English language equivalent.

It was truly a united call by many of those to whom we entrust the safety and well-being of all Canadians. (See < <http://adr.tv/a-propos-adr-lettre-appui.php> > for a listing of over 300 letters of support.)

Many interventions provided evidence of ADR's value in bringing criminals to justice and in reuniting families. The RCMP in Quebec indicated that the resolution of at least 34 percent of its "unlawfully at large" cases is directly attributable to ADR. Organizations outside Quebec demanded that a similar English-language channel be made available so that all Canadians could benefit.

But the greatest endorsement of all for ADR came in September 2012, when I was awarded the Silver Jubilee Medal for the work I do with ADR, during a ceremony in Ottawa. Among those present were Conservative senators Jean-Guy Dagenais (a former police officer) and Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu (a victims' rights advocate whose daughter was murdered by a suspect who was unlawfully at large); the ceremony was presided by your cabinet colleague Rob Nicholson, Minister of National Defence!

Following the CRTC decision, several cabinet ministers, senators and members of parliament, many from your very own party, have urged you to correct the monumental blunder caused by a clueless government agency. Blaine Calkins, Member of Parliament for the riding of Wetaskiwin and Chair of the Alberta Caucus, also urged you to intervene. Yet, for reasons unknown, Minister, you refuse to act, preferring to respond that you do not have the authority to intervene.

Documents we obtained from your office, following an access to information request, in fact, indicate that you have been advised that you do indeed have the authority to intervene.

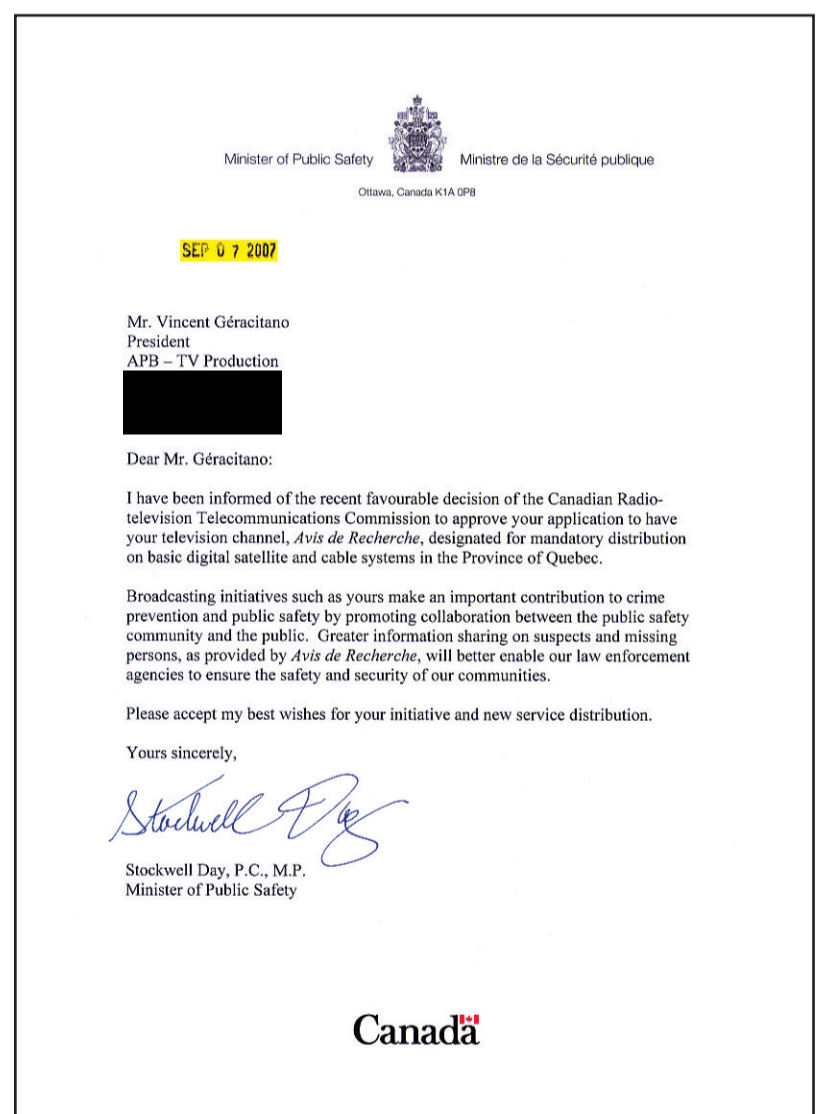
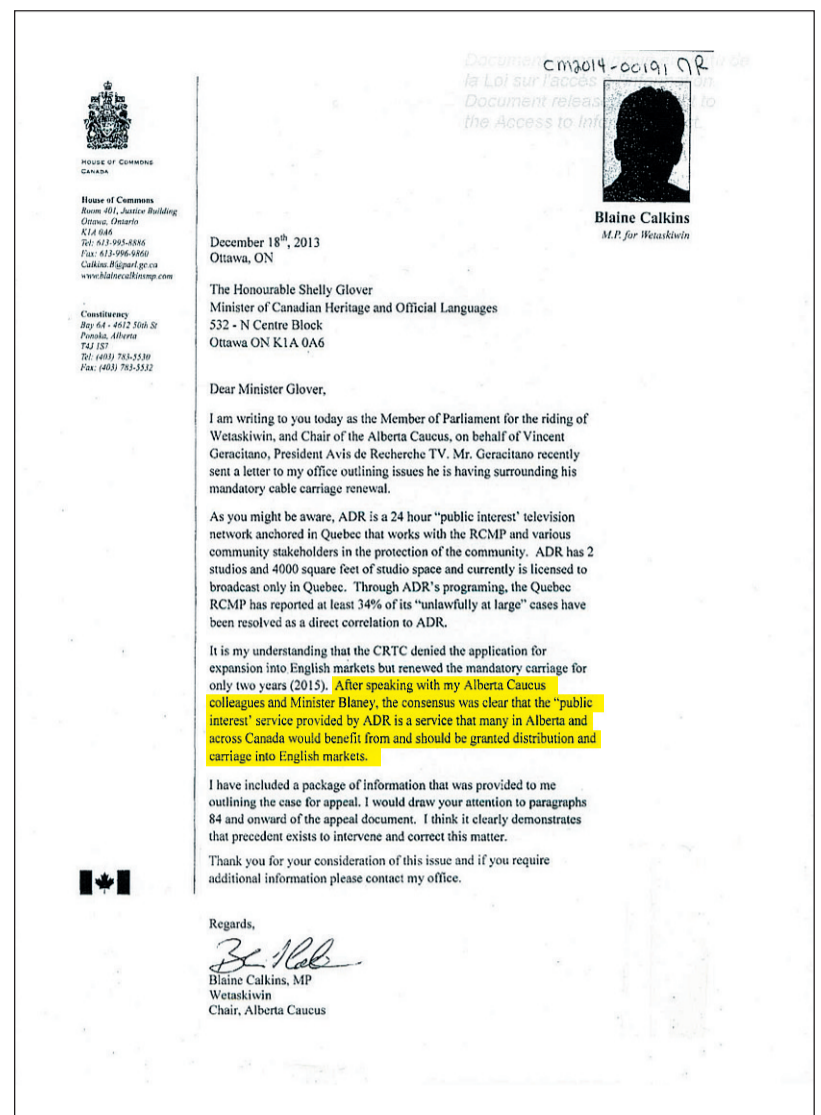
This begs the question, why do you, a former police officer and senior minister in a government that champions law and order and victims' rights, refuse to act and save a service that is praised almost unanimously by the Canadian law-enforcement establishment and sister agencies?

As Heritage Minister, you have the authority to undo a wrong before it's too late. Is the safety of a child, the security of our communities, and the bringing of criminals to justice not worth the six cents it costs to maintain our service? Police departments, victims' organizations, civil protection agencies and consumer groups, among others, all say yes. **What do you say, Minister?**

Vincent Gericitano,
Founder and President
Avis de Recherche TV
All Points Bulletin TV
www.adr.tv



« Is the safety of a child, the security of our communities, and the bringing of criminals to justice not worth the six cents it costs to maintain our service? »


Comments made by CRTC Vice-Chair Tom Pentefountas at the public hearing:

11540 COMMISSIONER PENTEFOUNTAS: Okay, Homeland Security wasn't willing to contribute towards your budgets in helping them?

11542 COMMISSIONER PENTEFOUNTAS: All I want to know is, is there a possibility for you to find independent revenue streams to help you in your financing through these interconnections with American authorities?

Janet Lo, speaking at the public hearing on behalf of four Canadian consumer advocacy groups

- « Avis de recherche provides a unique service that includes educational and community programs that promote public safety »
- « a fairly important public interest role, just from the public safety perspective of missing persons, as well as crime prevention ».
- « an important service in terms of public safety and safeguarding the social nature of the broadcasting system »

Documents obtained from Canadian Heritage following access to information request:

- Section 26 of the Broadcast Act sets out specific matters upon which the GiC is authorized to issue directions to the CRTC. Paragraph 26(1)(b) in particular provides that the GiC may, by order, issue directions to the CRTC "respecting the reservation of channels or frequencies" for the use of CBC/Radio-Canada "or for any special purpose designated in the order."
- Unlike section 28, section 26 makes no mention of petitions or a time line and as such, the request by anyone to use this power does not trigger any process. There is no onus to act on this request or for you or the GiC to respond to it. A direction under paragraph 26(1)(b) would be issued only on your recommendation as the Minister responsible for making such recommendations to the GiC.