

NDP MP Jinny Sims protest OMNI ethnic-language newscasts shut down

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Last week, Rogers eliminated 110 jobs and shut down its loss-making ethnic-language newscasts across the country- the Punjabi and Mandarin language newscasts faced the axe. The reason being that in recent years more new **Canadians** are tuning into ethnic channels originating from their home countries and **OMNI** channels have steadily been losing viewers and ad-revenue. But NDP MP Jinny Sims (Newton-North Delta) is outraged. She is going after not Rogers but the Harper government, she wants to know how the government will now ensure new **Canadians** who relied on **OMNI** ethnic-language newscasts stay informed, following last Thursday's announcement by Rogers Media Inc.

Sims said: "Many newcomers are still perfecting their English language skills, and ethnic-language newscasts keep them abreast of current events in their new home. This is how immigrants learn about Canadian traditions, and what life is like here. Without warning, they've taken away a very accessible and important information source."

She added: "**OMNI news** was a key link for many new **Canadians** to each other, their culture, to Canada and to the Canadian way of life. Punjabi speakers in Surrey and across Canada are in shock. News in Punjabi, Cantonese or Mandarin engages new **Canadians** in our democracy. It builds bridges between our diverse cultures. OMNI's role is to foster multiculturalism. These **cuts** undermine the mandate that CRTC has given **OMNI**. How will the government ensure that new **Canadians** who relied on **OMNI** stay connected and informed."

Sims said in a statement that as soon as **cuts** were announced, **Canadians** were in shock and she started receiving calls on the matter at both her constituency office and her office on Parliament Hill. Many would have assumed that if anyone was in shock it should've been those who lost their jobs. If a majority of new **Canadians** were actually watching **OMNI** Punjabi and Mandarin newscasts, it would've translated into high ratings and would've drawn in ad revenue.

NDP MLAs Bruce Ralston, New Democrat multiculturalism spokesperson and MLA for Surrey-Whalley, and Harry Bains, MLA for Surrey-Newton, made the following joint statement on the recently announced **cuts** to Omni TV's Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi language news services.

Ralston said: "In the month that we celebrate Asian Heritage Month, it sad to learn about **cuts** that will severely impact the way Asian and South Asian communities access

news in their own **language**. These **news** broadcasts are a vital link to Punjabi, Mandarin and Cantonese elders who do not speak English as a first **language**. They are also important for young people who are learning the **language**. News is the glue that binds communities and Omni TV's **services** have been an essential and vital service for many years."

He added: "**Canadians** need answers about the cutting of local **news** production, the loss of jobs and a valuable service to all communities. I hope Rogers will reconsider this decision and find a way to restore these services."

He added: "The CRTC originally licensed the Omni TV stations to ensure **Canadians** of linguistic diversity and different cultural backgrounds have full access to programming and **news**. The lack of coverage will have a negative effect on Canada's multicultural communities, particularly as they begin to get cut off from what is happening in local, provincial, and national level news."

Most South Asians in the GTA tend to subscribe to foreign-**language** channels . Many homes with seniors who don't know English and have no intention of learning the **language** either prefer watching Bollywood blockbusters and learn about life in India rather than get their local **news** from **OMNI** newscasts.
