

# Canadian Punjabi Advocacy Committee

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May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Mr. Guy Laurence  
CEO, Rogers, Toronto, Ontario

Dear Mr. Laurence,

## **Re: OMNI TV Punjabi News and other Programs.**

It is most disheartening to note that the management of Omni TV Vancouver, BC has cancelled its OMNI Punjabi TV News Program with effect from May 7, 2015. The community feels very disappointed upon losing the one hour Punjabi TV News Program. In order to deal with this matter, a meeting of the community members was held on Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> at the Grand Taj Banquet Hall in Surrey, BC. This meeting was attended by a large number of community members. After some discussion, a five-member committee was formed to deal with this important issue deeply affecting the community.

It goes without saying that the one hour OMNI Punjabi TV News was regularly watched throughout Canada by youngsters, parents and grandparents sitting together. The elimination of this valuable program has deprived the community of an integrated multicultural and multi-linguistic asset. The unilateral decision to cut short Punjabi News bulletin on Omni TV is autocratic, discriminatory and against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Since the license to broadcast these programs was in fact obtained from the CRTC with the support of the people from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, this decision is not acceptable to the community. The unilateral decision to cut short this program by Rogers and Omni TV management and laying off the staff has negative impact on the South Asian community in general and the Punjabi speaking community in particular.

Canada stands for multiculturalism where minorities are respected equally. It is the most diverse country in the world. Therefore diversity is an asset and not a liability for Canadians. It should be pointed out here that the Punjabi speaking community has already been struggling for provision of more timing on Radio and TV channels in Punjabi since 17th October 2001 when our community participated in the hearing process before CRTC in Vancouver to support the program under discussion.

Rogers, through its channel, OMNI TV (Vancouver) have done a great job in providing this service through their popular one hour Punjabi News Program. Omni TV has been a window to the South Asian Community through which the pulse of the community could be felt each day. OMNI Punjabi TV News connected Punjabis of all ages from B.C., the Interior, Vancouver Island, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and other parts of Canada. This was the only locally

produced Punjabi TV News Program in Canada. This one hour program was very comprehensive. It not only covered the South Asian community here in Canada but also brought to us major highlights from around the world including India. In a sense, this one hour program connected our community with not only what was happening here in Canada but also some major highlights from around the world including India.

For your information we may add that more than 800,000 Punjabis were eagerly awaiting 8 PM OMNI Punjabi TV News every day of the week. There may be more millions who were watching it online. Furthermore, you may be aware of the fact that in the 2011 Statistics Canada survey, Punjabi came out as the third most spoken language in Canada. In cities like Surrey, Abbotsford, Mississauga and Brampton it is the second most spoken language after English. Punjabi is now being taught in a large number of public and private schools and post-secondary institutions. Our Punjabi teachers use it as a teaching tool for students. The replacement for OMNI Punjabi TV News (Punjabi Program) is no substitute for the one hour Omni Punjabi TV News. It falls short of our expectations and is not acceptable to the community.

Therefore the Punjabi speaking community strongly feels that the one hour OMNI Punjabi TV News Program must be restored to its original format as it was broadcast up to May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

We strongly feel that since the OMNI Punjabi TV News Program was awarded by the CRTC with the consultation and support of the community, the community should also have an opportunity to reasonably dialogue with CRTC, Rogers and the OMNI TV management to amicably resolve the most important issue deeply affecting the Punjabi community.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sgd/-

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