



**TVO ANSWERS THE CALL OF A DIVERSE ONTARIO**

The Canadian Ethnic Media Association  
OMNI Television  
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(Check against delivery)

Thank you for that warm welcome and for the invitation to speak to you today. I'm very excited to be here and to share TVO's story.

In many ways, we have a lot in common. For the most part, we all represent relatively small media outlets and we produce content with a specific audience in mind.

All of us who are part of the media industry are confronting many of the same challenges. There's increased fragmentation. And consumers have much more control. I predict that at the end of this evening we will see ways to support each other in delivering on our respective mandates.

Let me start by telling you why I'm so proud to lead TVO.

TVO is all about education – it's at the heart of everything we do. And we operate in one of the most diverse provinces and one of the most diverse countries in the world. The fact that we have an ethnic media association such as CEMA is a testament to that reality. As Ontario's public educational broadcaster, we need to reflect the reality of Ontario and the pluralism of ideas that is part of the fabric of Canadian society. Simply put, diversity is part of our DNA.

This evening I'd like to speak with you about the ways that TVO contributes to building the type of society that I believe we all want to live in - one that promotes learning and debate to foster citizenship and community. In a nutshell, TVO is a mission-driven organization and our mission is to use educational media to build engaged citizens.

We play a unique role in helping get our kids ready to succeed in school. We also equip parents with a toolkit they can use to support their kids throughout their education. Part of that toolkit is understanding how to navigate the Ontario school system. This is important for all parents but particularly for those who didn't themselves go to school in Ontario.

There are 200,000 new Canadians arriving in Ontario every year – many come from countries with public school systems that are vastly different from ours. In the Toronto District School Board, for example, just 20 per cent of students have both parents born in Canada. So there's a tremendous opportunity for an organization like TVO to help acclimatize parents to Ontario's education system. That opportunity keeps growing and we have the media tools to make a difference in getting kids off to a good start!

Civic engagement is another way that TVO is helping to build the strong and cohesive communities that we all want to be a part of. We know that people who understand their province, its institutions and the issues we face, will be in a better position to work together, to build cohesive communities. So we're providing the platforms, whether it be TV, online or face-to-face, for these really important debates and discussions to take place.

This year, we're celebrating TVO's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We started out as a single TV station, and today we're a multiplatform media organization with a heavy focus on constant innovation.

A few years ago we decided we needed to pursue an aggressive strategy to position TVO for success in the digital age. It was a bold, but necessary, step in order for us to stay relevant. Today when you hear the name TVO it's not just about linear TV, although that's still a significant part of what we do. TVO also means online communities like TVOKids.com, TVOParents.com, and TVO.org. It also means distribution partnerships with iTunes, Rogers, Yahoo and RIM that expand the reach of our educational content.

We also have content partnerships with organizations like the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo, the ROM and the Ontario Science Centre. We're able to access their resources and experts and in return we provide them with an innovative way to broaden their reach. As part of our strategy you'll continue to see our list of partnerships grow.

We've moved forward in the TVO way, by staying true to our educational mandate. We have a clear test that all our content must pass in order to see the light of day. All of our content must address one, or more, of these criteria:

- helping kids to be successful learners
- Increasing the involvement of parents in their children's education
- Encouraging active citizenship and public engagement.

It's this educational mandate that makes TVO unique in Canada's broadcast landscape. It's what makes us a strong alternative to commercial TV. And it's how we carve out a special niche in a crowded media market.

For TVO, embracing the digital age was crucial to our success. In fact, I often say that digital is the best thing that's ever happened to a small organization like us. Let me share some facts with you to illustrate my point.

In 2009-10, 4 million unique visitors accessed TVO's websites, which served over 4 million video streams. During the same time period we had 5.8 million podcast downloads of TVO-produced programming like *Allan Gregg in Conversation*, *Search Engine* and *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*. We had 425,000 video streams on our YouTube channel.

On iTunes our *Big Ideas* lecture program is the most downloaded podcast in the Higher Education category in Canada. In fact, just a few weeks ago episodes of Big Ideas held 9 of the top 10 spots. *Big Ideas* is consistently at the top in the U.S. iTunes Higher Education chart as well. That's pretty remarkable reach for an organization of our size

and scope. And all of this means new audiences who are impacted by TVO's educational message.

Digital means that we're able to reach people, on their schedule and on their desired platform. To reach these new audiences, and to keep pace with the digital age, we've built a significant online presence in both the kids and parents markets. I'd like to expand on these categories and describe what our impact is for each.

TVOKids helps children become successful learners – which in turn helps them be successful in life. All TVO produced children's content is built from the ground up with a learning outcome from the Ontario school curriculum – this is what makes our resources different from any other children's content.

We stake our reputation on being a well-respected and trusted education partner with kids, parents and educators. This confidence comes from knowing that all of our content goes through a rigorous process with involvement from teachers. In fact, we have an on-staff educator who helps guide the content development process. The content is also classroom tested with kids, and reviewed by teachers, parents and early-years education experts. It's a rigorous process that ensures a high quality educational product.

Our online resource, TVOKids.com, is geared towards kids ages 2 to 11 with content that supports early learning and virtually all aspects of the Ontario curriculum up to grade 5. It houses over 160 interactive online educational games and activities. And true to the TVO brand they are trusted, smart and fun.

TVOKids.com is also recognized by the 65,000-member American Public Library Association on its list of Exceptional Websites for Children. We're proud of the fact that we have more than 300,000 unique visitors a month and over 5 million page views.

TVOParents helps parents become their child's best first teacher – which in turn helps kids get ready for school. In 2007 we launched TVOParents.com which is Canada's only website dedicated to parents and their children's education. It is focused specifically on the Ontario curriculum. And we're about to re-launch the site with enhanced resources for new Canadian families. We're in beta testing now and you'll be able to see the refreshed site in the new year.

TVOParents.com is more than a general parenting site. It's home to a collection of articles, videos, podcasts and blogs that help parents help their kids in school and in life. It also gives parents access to experts in education and related subjects like nutrition, child development, health and special needs. Most importantly, it provides a space to have a broader conversation about education issues that are important to parents using discussion boards and blogs.

It's also an excellent example of how "digital" has been such a remarkable tool for TVO. It allows us to inform parents using our educational content and then pass the discussion over to them. This is something that's truly powerful – it's one illustration of citizen engagement.

We're also leveraging partnerships with organizations like HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters) to produce creative and innovative content. With HIPPY, we've produced a how-to video podcast series that will be featured on the redesigned website. The 10-episode series captures the experiences of several newcomer families enrolled in the HIPPY program and helps new Canadian parents prepare their early learners for school.

This truly is something that you would only find through TVO. This podcast series will be provided in 9 languages, including 2 aboriginal languages – Cayuga and Mohawk.

TVOParents.com also attends education related events like Building Blocks for Education and People for Education's annual conference. We contextualize the content from these events for parents to show how these ideas are relevant to them.

We're also extending our traditional reach with programs like Family Literacy Camps. In partnership with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto we've taken some of our most effective early learning content and developed a program to help new Canadians get their kids ready for school.

Our aim is to make the learning experience more immersive and engaging by introducing media. Last summer I visited the pilot program at Lancaster Public School in Peel Region. The program provides resources and experiences that improve early literacy skills and better prepare children in JK/SK for Grade One.

I was struck by the commitment of parents to find whatever tools they could to help with their kid's education. So many people immigrate to Canada to give their kids a better life and I saw their motivation first-hand. We know from research, that OISE and others have done, that parent engagement is a key ingredient in a child's success at school. Kids are inspired to learn when their parents are strong role models for education. This is the foundation on which our Family Literacy Camps were developed.

We believe so strongly in the impact our content can make we are putting it to the test...literally. As part of the project, the research team at OISE is evaluating the effectiveness of TVO's multi-media resources used at the camp. Preliminary results from the study are very encouraging. We're giving parents skills to support their children's literacy development. And we know from the research that I've just mentioned that this is absolutely key to a child's success.

The results show improvement in children's early reading and writing skills. We're also pleased to see that boys have embraced using TVOKids.com. This is significant because literacy skills for boys is an issue that we know needs to be tackled. If we can provide boys with an engaging multi-media learning experience that helps them achieve, then we will have accomplished something really significant.

While much of our focus in the past few years has been on building our digital presence, it's been a way of extending our commitment to offer insightful and engaging TV. TV that speaks to people as citizens – informing and involving everybody in the big issues that are shaping our world.

Our flagship program, *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, is considered the gold standard for current affairs analysis on Canadian TV and is now in its fifth season. As Steve says "we take the time and we go deep." There really isn't another program out there that offers the same depth of analysis and debate. And when I say there isn't another program like that out there, that's true for Ontario as well as Canada.

*The Agenda* takes issues like multiculturalism, local and global politics and the dynamics of the Middle East and demystifies them. We unpack these topics to show what they mean for our society from all vantage points – be it social, geographic, political, economic or cultural. We do so by showing perspectives from all sides of the issue. And we don't shy away from complex topics. We take on global issues and we analyze them from a uniquely Ontario perspective.

Steve Paikin likes to tell a story of how he was sitting on a park bench and a mother pushing her daughter in a carriage came up to him and told him that she watches the *Agenda* every night with her family. Steve asked her why and she said her family watches because it helps them to be better Canadians. I think that really illustrates what we're trying to accomplish with a program like *The Agenda*.

Beyond the TV screen we're again reaching out to new audiences in new ways with *The Agenda*. The program is offered as a podcast on iTunes. The previous night's broadcast is ready for you on your commute the next morning. It's also available as a live stream on Facebook every Thursday.

But we don't stop there.

We take *The Agenda* to all corners of the province through our *Agenda on the Road* series which mixes social media, face-to-face idea exchange and live TV to connect thousands of Ontarians. As part of the lead up to the next provincial election we'll be continuing this series next spring and going on the road and examining the critical issues facing voters.

We're also known for our other programming that focuses on building a more engaged citizenry. Things like documentaries that illuminate important societal issues and Saturday Night at the Movies which offers a "curated" experience for movie buffs by placing each film in context and providing behind-the-scenes insights, through our exclusive interviews.

We're also increasing political literacy for Ontarians through our online resource Civics 101. Here we demystify how Ontario's political process works. It's the perfect place for a newcomer, or anyone for that matter, to learn about how the budget gets made, how a bill becomes a law or the difference between a majority and a minority government. We take these topics and we make them fun and interesting.

TVO also operates the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) which provides distance education and GED, or high school equivalency, testing. The ILC offers Ontario credit courses in English and French for Grades 9 to 12, as well as the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and the high school equivalency exam.

Clearly TVO is not sitting still, we're evolving with the times. We're out in the community like never before. We're connecting with more people in new and exciting ways. We're engaging people in critical discussions about the issues that are most important to them, and we're giving them new ways to interact with each other around these topics. What amazes me most about all of this is that it was unimaginable just a few years ago. This begs an important question...what does the future look like for an organization like TVO?

We know that to do more of the work we want to do we need to change our financial model. We have a total budget of \$60 million and 70 per cent of our funding comes from the provincial government by way of the Ministry of Education. That means that we have to make up 30 per cent of our funding through self-generated revenue. Things like sponsorships and other revenue streams, but most importantly through donations.

We're not chasing advertising revenues like most traditional media organizations, so we rely heavily on philanthropy. Many Ontarians are not aware that TVO is a not-for-profit that relies on financial support from individual donors. We know that we have more work to do to educate people in this regard. We're a registered charity so a donation to TVO is tax deductible.

Like universities and hospitals, we can't count on government alone to fund our operational needs, and fund our innovation as well. That's why, last winter, we launched our "Go Public" campaign. We know that there are thousands of people out there who are inspired by TVO's content.

Our Go Public campaign is about turning that inspiration into action. When people believe in something, when they are energized by something they tell their family, their

friends and their networks of contacts...they go public. Our goal is to raise \$10 million each year as part of this campaign. We need those dollars to take TVO to the next level of excellence.

You're probably wondering what the next level of excellence would look like for TVO. It's visiting more communities and engaging them in the democratic process through the Agenda On the Road series. It's more multilingual resources to help newcomers better assist their children in learning. It's more Family Literacy Camps so that kids can get a head start at school and beyond.

TVO is one of those rare jewels, a real made-in-Ontario success story that we should all be proud to get behind. We're trusted, we're smart and we're insightful. So I would ask you to help us take the next step.

Think of new ways for us to collaborate. Help us tell our story – we have a lot of programming and resources to offer your audiences. Consider volunteering as a TVO regional councilor – an ambassador out in the community who is able to build bridges and make connections to new audiences. And sign up for the TVO newsletter to stay informed. Consider making a donation at [GoPublic.org](http://GoPublic.org).

To close, I would like to invite you to tune in and log on to TVO. We're a lean organization, but we sure are doing big, bold and exciting things. If you spend a few minutes with TVO you'll know more about the world you live in. And we promise that we'll make you think!

Thank you.