

July 16, 2009

Mr. Douglas Arnott
Clerk of the Committee
Standing Committee on Government Agencies
Whitney Block, Room 1405
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto ON M7A1A2

Re: Responses to Committee recommendations 2(a) and 2(b), “Report on Agencies, Boards and Commissions: The Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO)”

Dear Mr. Arnott,



tvo.org

Thank you for the copies of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies’ *Report on Agencies, Boards and Commissions: The Ontario Educational Communications Authority*. As requested by the Committee, I am responding to recommendations 2(a) and 2(b) from the Report and it is my pleasure to do so.

TVO is proud of its reputation as a thoughtful alternative to commercial media. It is an easily accessible resource for all Ontarians, providing in-depth debate and analysis of important political matters originating from the Provincial Legislature. And as a forward-thinking, multi-platform public educational media service, TVO is equally proud of its commitment to continually look for new ways of improving and expanding its role as a unique source of civic engagement.

Response to Recommendation 2(a):

The Committee recommends that TVO explore the feasibility of producing a weekly Ontario specific program on parliamentary and political events and report back to the Committee within 90 days of the tabling of this report with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

I am happy to report that this fall TVO will be introducing a new program of highlights from each week’s Ontario Parliament Question Periods. Presented in a half-hour, weekly package on Sunday afternoons, this new broadcast will be in addition to TVO’s current online video stream of the full daily Question Period, available at tvo.org. The effectiveness of the latter as an educational reference tool has been enhanced by the addition of a Web link to each day’s Hansard Transcript, along with controls for users to pause, fast-forward and rewind the video content.

Additionally, as discussed with officials from the Speaker's office this past spring, TVO will begin offering Question Period as an audio podcast in fall 2009.

Response to Recommendation 2(b):

(The Committee recommends that TVO) explore the feasibility of broadcasting the Ontario Parliament's Question Period in a more viewer-friendly time slot and report back to the Committee within 90 days of the tabling of this report with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

One of the key features that makes TVO a trusted partner with Ontario parents is our uninterrupted block of commercial-free children's educational programming from 6am-7pm Monday – Friday. These programs, developed with educators and based on the Ontario school curriculum, help prepare kids for what they will be learning in the province's classrooms. TVO strongly believes in keeping this programming block intact in order not to compromise the service we provide to the children and parents of Ontario - a service that is fully aligned with and integral to the province's education priority of contributing to school readiness and helping kids to be successful learners.

TVO also supports additional education priorities of the Ministry of Education: increasing the involvement of parents in their children's education, and encouraging active citizenship and public engagement. And all of these priorities must be addressed through a single broadcast channel.

To make the most effective use of broadcast time, TVO is increasingly turning to popular, interactive platforms that can accommodate a wide-range of engaging content. An area of significant audience growth for TVO has been in the form of digital program downloads – specifically, audio and video podcasts of in-house produced content. From having no downloadable programs online just a few years ago, TVO is now seeing impressive numbers: for example, there were 4.7 million downloads of TVO current affairs content in fiscal year 2008-09.

This positive development reflects an overall trend in how media is being consumed in the age of portable media players and anytime/anywhere internet access. And that is why TVO is:

a) streaming Question Period at tvo.org.

b) offering an audio podcast of Question Period when the Legislature reconvenes in the Fall. Podcasts, along with video streams, provide the viewer with more flexibility, since both can be played when and where the viewer chooses.

c) increasing the political literacy of Ontarians with the recently launched *Civics 101*, a suite of user-friendly online tools and media that help explain and demystify the way government works in Ontario.

With features like *Civics Explained*, a glossary of legislative terms, video interviews with politicians, policy makers and political observers, the interactive *Ask an MPP* (featuring video clips of MPPs answering questions about what they do and how they do it) and collected Question Period videos going back to March of this year, *Civics 101* offers an engaging way to learn about the workings of Ontario's provincial government and how it impacts people's everyday lives.

Mr. Arnott, I hope these responses have conveyed the importance TVO places on its ongoing role of engaging the province's citizens in Ontario political and governmental matters. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Yours truly,



Peter O'Brian
Chair of the TVO Board of Directors

cc: Lisa de Wilde, TVO Chief Executive Officer
Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education