



DOCUMENTARY  
ORGANIZATION OF CANADA  
DOCUMENTARISTES  
DU CANADA

215 Spadina Avenue  
Suite / Bureau 126  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5T 2C7  
416.599.3844  
1.877.467.4485  
www.docorg.ca

Sent via E-mail

March 30, 2010

The Honourary Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan  
The Honourary Dustin Duncan, Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport  
The Honourary Rod Gantfoer, Minister of Finance  
Legislative Building, 2405 Legislative Drive  
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Dear Mr. Wall, Mr. Duncan, and Mr. Gantfoer,

The DOCUMENTARY ORGANIZATION OF CANADA | l'association des DOCUMENTARISTES DU CANADA (DOC) is extremely disappointed that the Saskatchewan government has decided to close SCN. We urge you to reconsider this decision, which affects not only Saskatchewan but also the independent production community across the country.

DOC is the collective voice of independent documentary filmmakers across Canada. DOC is a national non-profit arts service association representing over 800 directors, producers and craftspeople in the documentary community, from all provinces and regions of our nation. DOC advocates on behalf of its members to foster an environment conducive to documentary production and strives to strengthen the sector within the broader film production industry.

In an era of multiple channels and large conglomerates, SCN stood out as the only channel actually representing the Saskatchewan public to itself. Its unique regional voice provides Saskatchewan citizens access to their culture and history while bringing Saskatchewan culture to the rest of Canada and to a world audience thereby enriching our national heritage. This intersection of local culture with a larger national one allows citizens to perceive their identities as part of a larger community.

As can be observed over the last 20 years of reductions in local programming on the national networks, the private broadcasters and the public broadcaster will not be able to provide local programming in the same capacity as SCN. This is a terrible blow to the diversity of regional voices in Canada. This shortsighted economic choice erodes Saskatchewan's cultural vitality and local television across Canada.

SCN is one of the few broadcasters that commissions, exhibits and promotes independent documentaries in Saskatchewan (and Canada). SCN often helps finance programs in coordination with other broadcasters (provincial and national); its closure will result in fewer documentaries being commissioned in Saskatchewan and in other provinces. SCN has been a leader in creating innovative, local, and high quality content, and its closure will negatively impact the entire independent Canadian television industry for years to come.

DOC is also concerned at the information the Saskatchewan government used in coming to this decision. DOC questions whether using BBM Nielsen data to gauge a provincial broadcaster's viewership is appropriate given that BBM's primary purpose is to track mass audience ratings for the purpose of ad-sales. Its data gathering tools are meant to capture large urban audiences, not small local ones. A provincial public broadcaster has a different public than CTV or Global. SCN was never intended to be a large commercial broadcaster and nor should it be considered as one. As can be seen by the SCN annual report, and the growing public concern, SCN has a larger audience than suggested by BBM.

Fortunately, SCN has not yet closed its doors and the decision can be rescinded. The people of Saskatchewan are entitled to a broadcaster that reflects their community and tells local stories. They deserve to be consulted on whether they wish SCN to be closed, and this process should be done in a transparent and accountable manner.

DOC urges the government of Saskatchewan to reassess its decision. The decision to shutter SCN for short-term economic efficiency does not save money for the government; it costs Saskatchewan its voice on television and its place in the Canadian broadcasting community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Christou', is written over a horizontal line.

John Christou  
DOC Chair

cc: Mr. Darcy Furber – NDP Critic, Forestry, Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport