

Leadership through public service: It's all about "community"

BY GLENN O'FARRELL

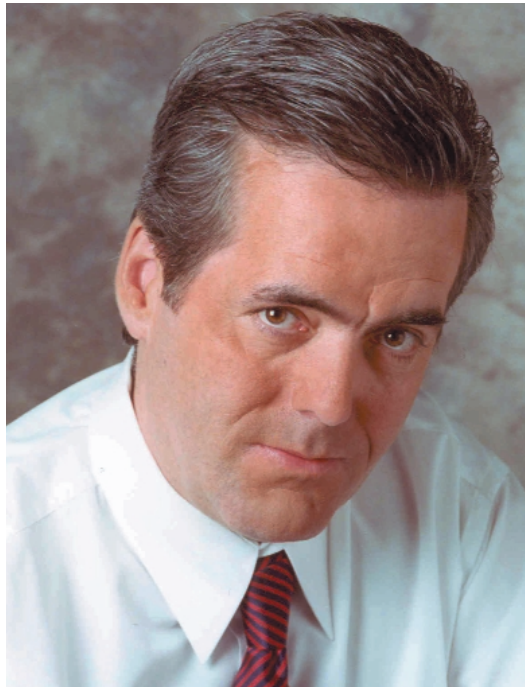
Walk into any private radio and television station and you are immediately struck by the sight of a multitude of trophies and plaques, citations and awards, testimonial letters and photos of minor hockey teams with the station's call letters on their jerseys. Private broadcasters embody the true meaning of community spirit, and they live it every day.

There are the things we do in a broader sense, the contribution we broadcasters make to our larger, national community. We provide Canadians with high-quality programming. We tell Canadian stories. We play Canadian songs. We reflect the rich diversity that is a hallmark of this country, and we help Canadians gain a better understanding of our great nation and the world.

Every year, private radio and television make significant contributions to the development of Canadian artists. For private radio this includes, among others, \$1.8 million a year to FACTOR, MusicAction and other similar undertakings; \$20 million a year in voluntary initiatives to promote Canadian music artists; and \$46 million over the next five to seven years to help the careers of promising artists, through the Radio Starmaker Fund and Fonds RadioStar and for private conventional television and specialty and pay broadcasters, this contribution is reflected in an expenditure of over \$1 billion on Canadian programming.

Private broadcasters also have a proud tradition of playing a positive role by recognizing the impact they have on society and governing themselves in a manner that serves community interests. A perfect example of this fact is the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC). Created by the CAB, the CBSC provides an avenue for Canadians to voice any concerns about what they see and hear on private television and radio in this country. In addition, the CAB has developed a number of codes of conduct that guide our work, such as the CAB Code of Ethics, the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children, and has also developed codes to address violence on television and sex-role portrayal.

We are also committed to tackling tough social issues and using our resources to make a difference. For example, there is our ongoing involvement in alcohol education through airing of public service announcements. There is the Action Group on Violence on Television (AGVOT), of which the CAB is a founding



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member. This body is unique in the world, as it brings together all the major players of the broadcast, cable and production industries to address the subject of violence on television. There is also the newly established Cultural Diversity Task Force, which brings together broadcasters and community representatives to work together to address concerns about the on-screen portrayal and reflection of Canada's ethnic racial and cultural minorities.

The commitment of private broadcasters to their communities, both locally and nationally, is deeply rooted and wide-ranging. I believe firmly that, unlike most other businesses, private broadcasters have two bottom lines: we have a responsibility toward our shareholders to provide the highest return possible, and we have a duty toward our fellow citizens to contribute to the development of our communities and our society.

There are also our official public responsibilities. These include requirements as licence holders to meet, and wherever possible, surpass our regula-

tory obligations. This involves keeping our audiences informed, enlightened and entertained, and providing them with a reflection of themselves.

But when I refer to the second bottom line, I have in mind something that goes beyond licensing requirements. It is the same motivation that pushes some people to seek public office, or to become volunteers. It is a genuine commitment to public service.

For all these reasons, and many more, the CAB has chosen the theme of *Leadership through Public Service for its 2002 Convention*. We intend to celebrate this often-unrecognized commitment that all private broadcasters make to their communities and to our country.

Again this year, the Gold Ribbon Awards will highlight the vital contributions private broadcasters make in Canada's cities and towns. We will also be unveiling this year the results of our national survey of CAB members on the subject of community service, which will give a detailed perspective on this often overlooked aspect of our industry.

Our commitment to community is the defining characteristic of private broadcasting. In a sense, it is our "brand". I think, in this ever-changing world, it is nice to know that commitment is something you can count on. It may not be cutting edge or avant-garde—but it's who we are.