



Canadian Association of Broadcasters  
Association canadienne des radiodiffuseurs

July 31, 2008

Minister Jim Prentice, PC, MP  
Minister of Industry  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, 235 Queen Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of Canada's private broadcasters with regard to Canada's upcoming transition to digital television.

As the Minister responsible, you are in the unique position of overseeing this transition from two key perspectives: first, implications for broadcasting spectrum usage, and second, impacts on Canadian consumers.

The CRTC has identified a shut-down date for over-the-air analog television transmissions of August 31, 2011. A portion of the television spectrum currently utilized for analog TV services is being remanded and ultimately will be auctioned by Industry Canada for other purposes. We understand negotiations with the U.S. to finalize the Canada/US agreement on the DTV transition are nearing completion. The outcome of these negotiations is of critical importance to private broadcasters, given that they are unable to proceed with applications for permanent DTV transmitters until measures are in place that will allow them to file the necessary technical applications with your department.

The digital transition will affect all Canadian viewers, allowing them to receive enhanced digital video and audio signals, provided they have the appropriate receiving equipment. In this regard there are an estimated 3 million analog television sets that are not compatible with digital signals and not currently connected to cable or satellite. The transition will also affect the licensees of more than 750 over-the-air analog television transmitters. It represents a significant financial and operational change for the broadcasting industry and consumers, far exceeding that experienced during the colour TV conversion in the 1960s.

The purpose of this letter is to request that Industry Canada take the lead in establishing a government/industry working group with a mandate to oversee the implementation of an effective and consumer focused transition to digital television.

We are recommending that the working group include representatives from private and public broadcasters, broadcasting distribution undertakings, Canadian and US electronic industry representatives and the responsible government departments and agencies.

Private broadcasters are currently developing a plan for the transition taking into account the practical options for continuing over-the-air delivery of television to Canadian viewers, the technical and financial challenges, the potential areas for government incentives to assist the industry and the need for a joint public education program to inform Canadian consumers of the impact of the digital transition. We anticipate being able to share this implementation plan with your departmental officials and the CRTC before the end of September.

Broadcasters in the US have been working since 2007 with their government on the US DTV implementation plan which will be completed in February of 2009. Based on this experience, the CAB strongly believes that co-ordination and clear public education is critical to ensure that consumers continue to have the ability to view Canadian television as it transitions to a digital environment.

We look forward to your early reply to this request.

Yours sincerely,

*Original signed by:*

Glenn O'Farrell  
President and CEO

c.c. Minister Josée Verner, Department of Canadian Heritage  
Mr. Konrad von Finckenstein, CRTC  
Mr. Simon Kennedy, Privy Council  
Mr. Darrell Reid, Office of the Prime Minister