



For Immediate Release
March 31, 2009

Liberals call on government to help CBC

OTTAWA – Liberals today tabled a motion in the House of Commons calling on the Harper government to provide CBC–Radio Canada with the bridge financing it requires to maintain 2008 staffing and service levels, said Liberal Heritage Critic Pablo Rodriguez and Deputy Senate Leader Claudette Tardif.

“Destroying CBC Radio-Canada has been part of Stephen Harper’s ideological agenda for over a decade, and he and his government are using the pretext of tough economic times to fulfill that agenda,” said Mr. Rodriguez.

“Providing CBC-Radio Canada with a repayable bridge loan – they were not asking for a handout – would have saved jobs and programming. The cuts did not have to be as severe as they were,” he said.

On March 25, CBC-Radio Canada announced that as a result of an anticipated \$171 million revenue shortfall, it would be forced to lay off 800 people and make significant changes to its services. This represents about 10 per cent of its total workforce and does away with the traditional one-third to two-thirds sharing arrangement between French and English networks, respectively, for federal funding.

“As a result of this break with tradition, French network cuts represent almost half of the total number of jobs that were lost,” said Senator Tardif. Liberal Senators also used today’s Question Period in the Senate to grill the government about the issue.

“The government does not respect its commitments to the francophone communities outside of Quebec,” she said. “By cutting Radio-Canada, they’re cutting a service essential to the character of these communities and one of the sole sources of francophone news.”

Mr. Rodriguez argued that the Conservatives could have taken steps to mitigate the damage but refused to do so. They refused to provide bridge financing of \$125 million and they delayed providing its annual \$60 million top-up to its budget until after the cuts to CBC were announced.

“The facts show that the claims the government is making that they have increased funding to CBC Radio-Canada every year are patently false,” he said. “Conservatives

have long argued that subsidies to CBC were a waste of taxpayer dollars. The current economic crisis is providing the government with exactly the opportunity it has been looking for to cripple the CBC.”

Senator Tardif pointed out that in a country as geographically vast as Canada, the CBC plays a critical role.

“This government seems to forget that there are many rural and isolated communities that depend on the CBC not just for jobs but also for information,” she said. “It’s sad that the government does not have the courage to debate the future of CBC-Radio Canada openly and honestly. Instead, they are using a recession to implement their ideological attack on a national institution.”



www.OnProbation.ca

-30-

Contact:

Office of Pablo Rodriguez
613-995-0580

Office of Senator Claudette Tardif
613-947-3589