

FEBRUARY 13, 2007

MP CHARLIE ANGUS CALLS FOR RESIGNATION OF CANADIAN HERITAGE MINISTER

OTTAWA - "The ongoing crisis in the Canadian Television Fund is a direct result of Minister Bev Oda's lack of leadership," declared NDP Heritage Critic Charlie Angus (Timmins - James Bay) today. He says the minister's promise to write a letter to cable giants Shaw and Videotron is simply too little, too late. "Its time for her to step down as minister," said Angus.

In question period today, Angus challenged Oda over her vacuum of leadership.

Oda has developed a reputation as a minister too close to industry to stand up for issues of television policy in this country.

"This crisis in television funding is a very clearly a power play by industry who believe the minister is either unwilling or unable to stand up for her portfolio. This minister has been missing in action from every key file in her jurisdiction - museums, women's centres, Aboriginal languages and now television."

Angus points out that the minister had the opportunity to demand compliance when she met with Videotron and Shaw two weeks ago. In the face of Oda's inaction, however, the cable companies have ratcheted up their refusal to meet the terms of their license. "The CRTC finally said today that they will make the cable companies pay-up, but this is something that Oda should have told them weeks ago," declared Angus.

"We have never had a minister so closely tied to lobbyists and industry. If industry can be free to rewrite the terms of their licenses as they see fit, why do we even have a minister?"

Angus says that yesterday's press conference by Videotron owner Quebecor is an indication of how emboldened the cable giants have become. Quebecor has announced it will not renew payments to the CTF and will instead direct the money to an internal production process that benefits the company.

Angus says Oda's response is simply too tepid to meet the challenge thrown down by Videotron.

"The question is simple: Who is in charge of government policy? Videotron or the government?"

For more information, please contact:
Gaby Senay, NDP Press Secretary 613-295-9228