

CITY

# GOVERNMENT SHOULD GET REAL CBC BACK ON AIR

Labour dispute not likely to be solved until politicians step in to help



ALEX MUNTER

Cliff Chadderton is one of a growing number of news-makers who are giving the CBC the silent treatment.

Mr. Chadderton, well-known head of the War Amps and chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations, says he feels "cheated" because the CBC locked out its employees.

He blames CBC bosses for the impasse. So Mr. Chadderton won't grant interviews to managers who are filling in for 5,300 employees locked out across the country.

Managers are struggling to provide an anemic substitute for normally lively CBC programming.

"So long as the lockout continues, I am not in a position to give interviews to the CBC."

Mr. Chadderton, a Second World War veteran, is hardly an uncritical CBC cheerleader. He is well-known for leading a campaign challenging the series *The Valour and The Horror*.

But he says the CBC is a vital, unifying national force and its absence creates a major void. "It's denying people like myself access to a public institution."

Canada's most famous weatherman won't be on the CBC either.

Environment Canada senior climatologist David Phillips says he has enormous respect for the "hard-working and dedicated" locked-out journalists and won't speak to their bosses when they call.

If he judges public safety is at stake, he'll try to find someone else to answer questions.

Mr. Phillips and Mr. Chadderton have joined a growing list that most prominently includes our new governor general but also teachers, experts, writers, pharmacists, firefighters, environmentalists and many more — the kind of people routinely contacted as part of news stories.

What unites this diverse bunch is their anger over the lockout. They don't want to facilitate it by providing content to the CBC.

I will state my colours up front. I believe in public broadcasting. I am a freelance contributor to the CBC English and French local morning radio shows. I am not a member of the CBC union but have friends who are. I can't understand why they were tossed out onto the sidewalk by their employer.

CBC spokesman Jason MacDonald says he's disappointed so many public voices are boycotting the CBC but says "that's largely out of our control."

And he defends the lockout. "People say 'you locked them out when it suited you'. Well, yes."

Negotiations are underway and he expects the lockout will lead to a settlement. "The process is working. Understand that it takes time."

He says the CBC locked out its own people because otherwise, they would likely have gone on strike this week or next, disrupting the launch of the new season.

Of course, we'll never know whether that's true or not. What we do know is that the lockout's impact grows as it drags on.

One area where there is major concern is the cultural sector, which relies heavily on the CBC to spread the word about events.

Sean Wilson, artistic director of this month's ninth annual Ottawa International Writers Festival, says the bulk of festival attendees learn of the event either from the *Citizen* or from CBC Radio.

"I can't help but be worried. We're going to have to find a way this audience — the CBC listener — can find out about the festival," says Mr. Wilson. He expects "Canadian pub-

lishing is going to take a hit" because no media organization devotes as much programming to books as does the CBC.

Other impacts are more prosaic.

During last week's Queensway closure, assistant Crown attorney Donna Eastwood was 90 minutes late getting to court, where she is prosecuting a serious incest case.

When she finally arrived, she apologized for keeping everybody waiting.

Ms. Eastwood didn't know about the snarl on the highway. As usual, she'd been listening to CBC in her car on the way to work.

But *Ottawa Morning* — with 170,000 listeners, the city's top-rated morning show — has been replaced with homogenized programming out of Toronto.

"Unfortunately," she said, "I was listening to the CBC, your honour. As you know, the employees are locked out and there was nothing about the problem on the Queensway on the radio."

"I guess I should have been listening to CHEZ 106 or some other station that still has local items on it."

Canada is an improbable country. We have overcome geography, history, continental market forces — even the weather — by building national institutions that tie us together. The CBC is without doubt one such Canadian achievement.

It is a vehicle for creating Canadian spaces, allowing us to speak to one another. It is not the only such vehicle, but it is the pre-eminent one.

How can you have a country without the development of a shared meaning of what that country is about?

Fundamentally, that is why so many people feel so passionately about the CBC.

It seems CBC management doesn't care what its increasingly cranky constituency thinks. A resolution appears likely only if the federal government knocks some heads together.

"The government has to step in and solve it," says Mr. Chadderton. "It's not your ordinary labour-management situation. I don't see any end in sight unless the government steps in."

The government should deal not just with the lockout, but also with its underlying cause — inadequate funding for the CBC.

Despite rising costs and a parliamentary committee's recommendation to increase stable funding, operating dollars have been flatlined for five years. With bulging federal surpluses as far as the eye can see, there is no reason for this.

CBC management seems disturbingly indifferent to the damage this lockout could do.

If they won't act to save public broadcasting, our elected representatives must.

To drive home that point, concerned citizens are organizing a "Bring back the CBC" rally, headlining national radio star and Ottawa native Shelagh Rogers, on Friday, Sept. 23, at 7:30 p.m. at Glebe Collegiate Institute, 212 Glebe Ave.

WITH FILES FROM JAKE RUPERT.

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Like others, War Amps chief Cliff Chadderton won't be interviewed by CBC managers.

# City Hall's shaky finances force hiring freeze this year

Corporate services told to halt new spending till new year

BY CARLY WEEKS

An increasingly gloomy budget forecast has compelled the city to enforce a hiring freeze and one city department to freeze spending until the end of the year.

The city's corporate services department will freeze discretionary spending until the end of the year, according to department chief Greg Geddes. He sent a memo to employees earlier this week saying there is no room in the budget for extra spending on items such as conventions or conferences.

Every city department has

been putting expenditure controls in place since a report was released showing a dire financial forecast, Mr. Geddes said. The city is currently operating with a deficit of about \$16 million, according to a mid-year status report released several weeks ago.

The financial picture was serious enough to convince city council to approve a 7.5-per cent increase in bus fares earlier this week, seven months ahead of schedule. The fare hike goes into effect Dec. 1.

City manager Kent Kirkpatrick has also ordered a freeze on any non-essential

hiring until the end of the year.

While that's a common practice during tough budget years, it shows the city is facing a shortfall and needs to find ways to offset its deficit, Mr. Geddes said yesterday.

"Our normal way of ensuring that we try to avoid a deficit position is to put expenditure controls into place in the fall," Mr. Geddes said. "Between now and the end of the year, we're not expanding expenditures."

The hiring freeze won't affect essential positions, such as plow operators who will start work in the winter season, Mr. Geddes said.

But the city will try to avoid hiring where possible in order to save money and offset the significant deficit.

"We're going to look at the vacancies and determine whether or not we can live without (replacing) the vacancy until the end of the year," Mr. Geddes said.

Cutting back spending is critical at this point, when reports indicate the city is in rough fiscal shape, Councillor Diane Deans said.

"We're starting to hear reports that the budget is going to be very tough and the financial situation may be gloomier than we originally had hoped," she said. "I think they do need to send the message to the corporation that we all need to tighten our belts."

Without adding any new programs or services, the city is currently forecasting a municipal tax increase of about seven per cent for next year.



Emergency training co-ordinator Christopher Suprun was one of the first people on the scene after a plane struck the Pentagon and says the issue of communication between emergency personnel has still not been satisfactorily addressed even four years after the incident.

# Communications still lacking despite lessons learned from terror attacks: expert

Improvements needed so emergency staff can better co-ordinate efforts

BY CARRIE KRISTAL-SCHRODER

As one of the first emergency workers on the scene after a plane flew into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, paramedic Christopher Suprun knows first-hand the importance of preparation and communication when confronting a disaster.

But as Mr. Suprun prepared to share the lessons learned from terrorist attacks with 300 Canadian paramedics and other medical professionals at a conference in Ottawa yesterday, it appears that a key priority — communication between emergency responders — has yet to be fully addressed by many jurisdictions in the U.S. and Canada, including Ottawa.

"Communications is the key," said Mr. Suprun, speaking about the need for police, fire personnel and paramedics to co-ordinate their responses before, during and after any large-scale emergency situation. When responding to the Pentagon emergency, "we had to use runners to do things face to face, because radios could not talk to each other."

Mr. Suprun now is the training co-ordinator for the Carrollton, Texas, fire department, responsible for emergency medical services, tactical emergency medical services and hazardous materials. He said his purpose in speaking at the Ottawa conference was to share his experiences and learn from his Canadian coun-

terparts on how to ensure major incidents can be managed as well as possible.

However, despite talk after the Pentagon, both in Canada and the U.S., about the need for better communication, a co-ordinated radio system is still not in place in many areas.

"What happens in Ottawa now is that we have a unified command structure. When police, fire and paramedics are at a large event, I have to physically seek out the highest-ranking officer in the fire department and the police department and we have to sit down and inform each other what each one of us is doing," said Mike Cross, a paramedic with the Professional Paramedic Association of Ottawa, which is hosting the conference.

"We all carry the same radios and we were supposed to be able to talk to each other on

them. They were supposed to resolve that, but that has yet to manifest. So consequently, I have to speak to my dispatcher who will then will call the fire dispatcher or the police dispatcher."

During a large-scale disaster, this could prove to be a huge detriment. "What you've got is information passing hands, and you know any time information passes from one person to another, it changes, and that can have a dramatic effect on any outcome," said Mr. Cross.

Mr. Suprun echoed that perspective. During an emergency, "the police may want us to do certain things, but it we can't talk about it, it's not that I'm not willing to do it, it's that we're both doing things and we're not talking to each other. Whether it's a parent-child relationship, a husband-wife, or two agencies, you've got to talk to make things work."

# Alta Vista corridor assessment under review

Committee to look at environmental report

BY CARLY WEEKS

The city's transportation committee will decide Wednesday whether to approve the results of the environmental assessment for the controversial Alta Vista corridor project.

The environmental assessment was initiated in 2001 as a way to meet current and address future transportation needs around the Alta Vista

area health care facilities.

The project has been the source of significant controversy and political squabbling in recent months between city officials who want the project to go ahead and others who want to avoid building another expressway.

In April, Mayor Bob Chiarelli held a press conference announcing his opposition to keeping the Alta Vista corridor as a car and truck route in the city's transportation master plan.

The mayor has said he supports construction of a hospital

link from Riverside Drive to the General campus of the Ottawa Hospital. But the city's long-range plans indicate the rest of the transportation corridor isn't needed for several more years, which means the city shouldn't be focusing on that part of the project.

But supporters of the entire transportation corridor, such as Councillor Diane Deans, say the city needs to worry about its long-range transportation needs now. Ms. Deans said she's worried opponents of the corridor will try to have the environmental assessment results

rejected or delayed so the only piece of the transportation corridor that will ever be built is the hospital link.

"My biggest hope is that (the environmental assessment) will just be passed and there will be no shenanigans along the way, but this has been a rocky road," she said.

A staff recommendation included in the environmental assessment report asks the transportation committee to give the green light to build the hospital link in the near future. That portion of the corridor will cost the city roughly \$30 million.