

Report from

PARLIAMENT HILL

By Mike Chong

MP Wellington/Halton Hills



This is the second in a two part installment on the CBC.

In the last column, we identified why the CBC needs to be fixed. Forty percent of the corporation's budget is spent on CBC Television, chasing ratings and advertising dollars in a vicious cycle that produces mediocre programming no different than any other station on the dial, and all the while ratings fall to abysmally low levels. What should be done?

Governance of the CBC should be reformed. The president of the CBC should be appointed by the CBC board, and not by the prime minister. Currently, the president is accountable to no one other than the prime minister. Unlike any other organization, the CBC board cannot hire or fire its president, thus creating a dysfunctional organization.

CBC Television should completely or partially de-commercialize. The CBC bids on the rights for expensive programming like Hockey Night in Canada, but needs commercials to pay for these rights. The ad revenue required to pay for these rights and the ensuing commercialization undermines what the CBC is supposed to be about. So, one solution is for the CBC to remove commercials from all programming except for sports broadcasts.

Reducing the number of commercials from normal programming would allow the CBC to air a five-minute national newscast at the top of each hour, and a 60-minute national newscast at 6pm and 10 pm. Reducing or eliminating commercials from CBC Television would allow the network to focus on quality Canadian programming, and to abandon the current preoccupation with ratings (which are already abysmally low).

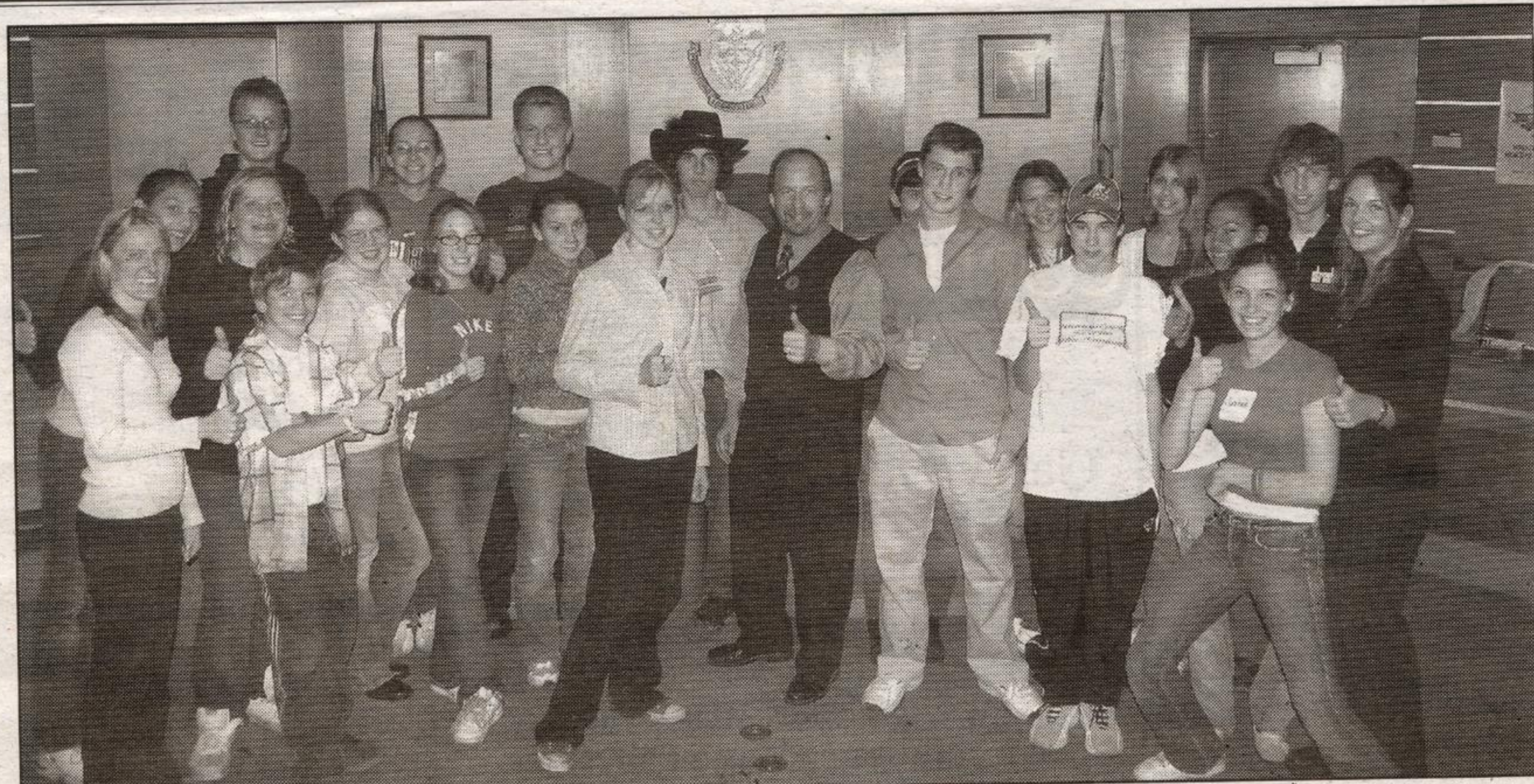
The responsibility as a public broadcaster is not to go after the largest audience and the most ad revenue; that's for the private for-profit broadcasters. The primary responsibility of a public broadcaster is to produce high-quality informative programming from a Canadian point of view. This would allow the CBC to displace TVO and PBS as the choice of viewers looking for intelligent programming.

This may mean more money is required for the CBC. Since 1993, this government has cut \$200 million out of the CBC's budget in real terms. The BBC receives more than twice as much funding per capita as does the CBC. Among OECD countries, Finland, Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Greece, Sweden, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Japan, Australia, Ireland, Italy, France, Korea and Spain all spend more as a percentage of GDP on public broadcasting than do we. We get good value for our investment in public broadcasting, especially considering our sparse population spread out over a wide geographic expanse and our two official languages.

A newly focused CBC would also have other benefits. It would project Canadian interests in a stronger and more cost effective way around the world. The British have always viewed the money they spend on the BBC as part of their foreign policy thrust. The BBC powerfully projects British interests around the world, in a much softer and more pervasive way than does the military.

A newly focused CBC would tie the regions of the country together in a stronger way, thereby strengthening the national unity.

That is why this government's handling of this lockout was so unfortunate. After eight weeks of disruption, little was accomplished that will help the CBC to refocus itself as a public broadcaster relevant to Canadians.



YOUTH ACTION: Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnetté (centre) poses with Dan van Kessel (right) and Marina Snider, the newly elected chair and vice-chair of MYAC – the Mayor's Youth Action Committee and other members of the youth advisory group recently. – Submitted photo

Region has conditional interest in Affordable Housing Program

Halton Regional Council agreed to advise the Province of Ontario of its conditional interest in participating in the newly revised Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program pending further details.

To date, Halton Region was allocated \$10.1 million under the Affordable Housing Program (AHP), which would be used to build 120 units and fund 90 rent supplement units.

The allocation of funds

under the Province's AHP, will be one of the tools considered by Halton Regional Council, in the development of a Comprehensive Housing Strategy (CHS). The strategy will examine needs and supply across the continuum of housing types for all incomes and all stages of life - from emergency shelters and government assisted housing to private sector affordable housing.

The CHS steering com-

mittee has consulted people in the Region, and based on their findings has developed a Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives for the strategy. The committee has created five staff teams to undertake further analysis in quantifying the need and drafting the strategy.

Local municipal staff and key stakeholders will be consulted as the work plans progress. It is anticipated the Strategy will be presented to Council in

early 2006.

"Housing is a basic human need and an essential building block for having stable families and communities," says Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline. "When people are well-housed, their family life is more stable, leading to better opportunities for good health and better outcomes for children. An investment in housing is an investment in a healthy Halton community."

New wood burning appliances may require building permit –Town

Noting the increased use of wood burning appliances to offset the escalating costs of furnace oil and natural gas, Halton Hills Fire Protection and Prevention Services is advising residents to check with the Town before purchasing and installing any appliance since it may require a building permit.

"Most municipalities have strict requirements about first obtaining a building permit for such projects," says Fire Safety Specialist David Ford. "This is your

protection that the job gets done right."

Ford also suggested residents advise their insurance company of their intention to install a wood burning appliance. Some companies may have specific requirements for additional policy coverage, he says.

If you already have a fireplace or woodstove, have the chimney inspected

before firing up the appliance, Ford says. Bird nests or other animals could have occupied the chimney over the summer and caused

blockages which can cause dangerous conditions when trying to use the appliance. Smoke entering the room when trying to light the appliance is an indicator of a blockage in the chimney or a faulty damper control.

Call a WETT (Wood Energy Technical Training) Certified chimney sweep and arrange for a professional inspection and cleaning, Ford advises.

Check stovepipes and connections ensuring screws are located at all pipe

connections and are tight. Ensure the chimney is equipped with a rain cap.

Regularly check for indicators of problems. Flue pipes and chimneys can deteriorate over time.

Check for corrosion or rust stains on the outer shell of metal chimneys. Loose bricks, crumbling mortar, broken liners, dark stains indicate problems with masonry chimneys. "These should be fixed immediately by a qualified mason," the fire safety specialist says.

No justification for article says satisfied Clinic client

To the Editor

-Re: Lodging complaint following death of pet.

While I sympathize with Ms. Schroeder over the loss of her pet, I am wondering what purpose this article serves. The article indicates that Ms. Schroeder has asked CVO to investigate the loss of her pet and I feel strongly that this should be a private matter between the Rockwood Veterinary Clinic and Ms. Schroeder, without involving the local newspaper. As a multi-pet owner and a long standing supporter and very satisfied client of Rockwood Veterinary Clinic I see no benefit in having involved the local newspaper.

I felt the article was trying to infer that since Dr. Maine is being currently monitored by the CVO there must be a problem with the clinic. The article also made the clinic seem very lackadaisical in the way they deal with things. In my opinion, I feel that both of these points are totally unfair and couldn't be further from the truth. Any time I am at the clinic with one of my pets, the vets and the staff are always very professional. Ms. Schroeder's complaint seems to be that Dr. Roberts performed the surgery. With any of my dealings with Dr. Roberts, he has always been very professional, very thorough, caring and understanding.

If Dr. Maine had to leave the clinic for

an emergency, she should be able to leave the practice in the capable hands of the other veterinarians at the Clinic and her qualified staff. I have the utmost respect for Dr. Maine, Dr. Roberts and Dr. Winder and would have no problem leaving any of my animals in their capable care.

When something bad happens we are too quick to judge and blame. Part of the grieving process is being upset, which turns into anger and blame before acceptance. We have the right to want answers but that query should be between the Clinic and the owner, not written in the papers.

I also read in the article that Ms. Schroeder would not pay her bill. Regardless

of which veterinary clinic you deal with, I am sure all pet owners have had instances where vet bills have been incurred without a happy ending. If all those times people refused to pay their bills there would not be any veterinarians practising.

In closing I just want to reiterate that I strongly feel that there was no justification in this article being published. Maybe the Acton Tanner would have been better focusing on the many accomplishments of the Rockwood Veterinary Clinic and the wonderful work they do in the community.

N. Gilchrist,
RR4, Rockwood.