

Ryerson Radio's Future Clearer, but still uncertain

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Published on Monday, 14 November 2011

(from the Trent U school paper "Arthur")

On January 28 2011, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) revoked the license of the campus station CKLN, based out of Ryerson University. According to the CRTC press release, this action was a result of "numerous complaints about the station's governance structure, day-to-day management and operations, programming and ability to remain on air."

The in-fighting amongst staff and volunteers became so severe that volunteers were locked out of Ryerson's Student Campus Centre second floor studio. The CRTC website stated that "during the seven-month lockout, CKLN-FM broadcast an intermittent loop of programming without any ongoing community involvement or oversight by the licensee." Once back on the air, the administrative structure and programming had "little involvement from the Ryerson University student body."

Since it was designated a campus station, the CRTC requires that there be representation from the faculty and students on the board of directors. So, after continued violations of their license agreement with the CRTC (and since airwaves are public property of the Canadian people), they were stripped of the 88.1 frequency. "Holding a broadcasting license is a privilege that comes with responsibilities and regulatory obligations," said Konrad Von Finckenstein, Q.C., Chairman of the CRTC.

According to reports from Ryerson's *The EyeOpener*, the students of Ryerson have voted to put in a bid for their old frequency, which is vacant for the first time in 27 years.

The staff and students who put forth the referendum question of whether to apply for the frequency are not formally affiliated with CKLN, and the proposed new station will not bear the name or likeness of CKLN. The cost of the bid is around \$50,000.

Ryerson has frozen \$250,000 in levy money from 2011-2012 tuition that would have gone to CKLN. Ryerson will put this money toward the new station if the application for the new station is accepted. The proposed board structure for the new station will be a nine person board consisting of three student representatives, three faculty representatives, and three community members.

Being the only non-commercial bidder amongst at least 10 other commercial bidders, the Ryerson students are confident that they have a good chance of getting their frequency back. "It's hard to tell [what are chances are.] But I have confidence that, if we put together a good case for a student-led RTA-supported [Radio and Television Arts program]

type of arrangement, with a strong board, we will be successful," Ryerson student president Sheldon Levy told *The EyeOpener*.

One of the other bidders is the Evanov Radio Group, which looking to relocate its Z103.5 station. Bill Evanov owns 3 radio stations in Toronto and 11 across Canada. He has pioneered interesting new commercial radio formats, including the 2007 launch of Toronto's CIRR-FM known as Proud FM. The station "programs to Toronto's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) population," and claims to be the first of its kind in the world.

The 2008 CRTC diversity of voices by-law states that, "The Commission recognizes that a plurality of ownership does not necessarily guarantee a diversity of programming in the system and that large corporate entities may have a greater ability to provide high quality news and entertainment programming." So the CRTC is not necessarily looking to privilege a campus or community station, but wants "the Canadian broadcasting system [to] provide access to a diversity of voices through broadcasting services from the public, private and community elements." But, the diversity of voices bylaw clearly favours the Ryerson bid in that one of the definitions of diversity in programming is that "the airing of content [be] made by a variety of producers, including independent producers."

We'll have to wait until next year to see whether Ryerson Radio is back on the air at 88.1 FM.