



makes you think

GO PUBLIC: We All Need to Invest in More Educational TV

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(Check against delivery)

Thank you all for coming today, thank you especially to the Chair of our Board, Peter O'Brian.

And thank you, Mark, for that somewhat old-fashioned introduction: delivered . . . from a podium . . . to a live audience . . . of real people.

Your words and mine today aren't being broadcast, webcast, podcast, YouTubed, twittered, Facebooked, downloaded, or Googled. I don't see anyone videoing with your handhelds, or even fidgeting with your Blackberries. Yet!

Indeed, "this" is the oldest medium of them all, where people gather to talk and listen and most of all, to think. And as we say, TVO makes you think. So what better place to talk about the huge changes in media and how they have transformed the way we work, play, do business and deal with each other.

Now, that huge transformation has been brought on largely by new technologies. Ten years ago, most Canadians watched TV on a television set according to a strict schedule set by the networks and the CRTC. How long ago that seems. Today it's about engaging and interacting with content where, when and on any device you want.

Just last weekend I was in London kicking off *The Agenda with Steve Paikin's* On the Road series on Reinventing Ontario. It started Sunday with a full day public forum called *AgendaCamp* that combined live interaction and social media. We invited Ontarians everywhere to contribute to a publicly accessible idea-sharing website – or wiki. On Monday, yes we did have a live TV broadcast – but that's just for openers. We added a live web stream, live blogging, continued the conversation on the wiki, and then put the program on YouTube and iTunes.

A week ago today, Apple launched their new iPad, hailed as "better than the laptop, better than the smartphone," and described on Apple's website as "a magical and revolutionary device."

It all does have an air of magic, doesn't it?

But as Mark Twain said: "Everyone's in favour of progress. It's change they can't tolerate."

The fact is - digital technology is changing the industry so fast that it's affecting virtually every traditional player in virtually every way.

One of the changes we are grappling with is TMI. Too Much Information. We used to have to seek it out; now it finds us, delivering torrents of often unasked for and 'deeply surface' facts and entertainment.

Information now arrives instantly and in stunning new ways. Some people worry that our attention spans are growing shorter, so our ability to think critically is diminished. After all, thinking does take time.

Indeed, it's been argued that the more TV we watch, the less we can think independently and responsibly. While the number of hours we work is slowly declining – it now stands at 37 hours a week – although I know that no one here has such a short workweek! But the number of hours we watch TV is rising – it now stands at 22 hours a week.

When you add in the number of hours Canadian adults are on the Internet – more than 10 hours per week -- you get a sense of media's tremendous power to shape everything about us.

Yet today, the average item on network news is only 45 seconds. Hardly time for the facts, let alone their analysis. If anything, the "what" has completely overwhelmed the "why." Little wonder more Canadians now watch cooking and home improvement channels than watch cable news networks.

There's a second major change that's sweeping the world of information, and particularly television. I call it BBM, or Broken Business Models. All television is in a state of financial upheaval. Conventional television, driven by advertising revenues, is losing markets and opportunity.

Just as worrisome is another unintended downside, what James Carville called TAA, or Together All Alone.

We all know of the Internet's marvelous ability to create communities. Now, all parents of kids with autism have a way to connect with each other. At least, virtually.

Or look at our recent *The Agenda* episode on the Sri-Lankan conflict. It generated tens of thousands of online streams, including a sizable number from outside Canada, it went viral on the web, and was the subject of much online discussion.

However, as Michael Valpy wrote in a recent column, we're also learning that with the rise of millions of virtual communities comes the decline of shared experience, the idea that the program you were watching was also seen by thousands, even millions of others at the same time.

The result? I believe, an unproductive polarization of people's views and beliefs. We saw this last Fall in America's town hall meetings about healthcare reform. Far from encouraging debate in an engaged way, the internet became home to polarized camps that hardened existing views. It was wide open, often Wild West.

But was it "public discourse?" Was it "considered?" Was it "collaborative?"

Not so much.

Where does this -- TMI, BBM and TAA -- leave public educational television?

Well, that's why I'm here today.

As someone who is committed to building strong Canadian media voices, I believe TVO plays a role that is both impressive given our small size and important in building a cohesive community.

I am here today to make the case for a new way of thinking about TVO -- and for supporting it.

After all, our governments, our think tanks, our editorial pages can all agree on one thing. If we are to prosper, it will only be because we can out-think, out-create and out-innovate other jurisdictions. So when we say "TVO Makes You Think," not only is that our imperative, it's Toronto's, Ontario's and Canada's!

If anything, TVO is the one broadcaster that's aligned with the playbook of the most important international competition there is: using our brains and our creativity as our greatest competitive advantage.

True, at TVO we face many of the same challenges all television does -- disintermediation, where the pivotal role of the network has diminished, where control is now in the hands of the viewer, and the fact that, despite huge growth in online consumption, online revenues haven't caught up. These are just a few of the challenges we face.

But TVO is not only different from all conventional television in Canada; it is unique as an educational broadcaster in the world.

No other network in the world produces more than 400 hours of in-house educational TV programs a year, then makes most of it available -- free -- online, PLUS creates hundreds of microsites, games, chats, blogs and more.

Across all these different platforms, our audiences are growing dramatically. The same with the level of engagement with our content. Indeed, last season, we had 5 million – million! – podcast downloads of TVO’s current affairs programs alone.

Today, TVO engages Ontarians in ways that were unheard of when it first went to air 40 years ago. In fact, the digital revolution is the best thing that has ever happened to TVO. It provides so many new ways to deliver on our mandate.

Our programs are extraordinarily innovative. In October, TVO partnered with Canada’s Perimeter Institute in an amazing festival called *Quantum to Cosmos: Ideas for the Future*. It brought together the world’s top scientists to explore the fundamental questions of science and technology.

So, not exactly big potential for high ratings. But here’s my point: Yes, this celebration of science drew 40,000 people through the doors in Waterloo but it engaged nearly one million more – one million! -- through TVO’s live and ongoing broadcasts, web-streaming, video-on-demand and podcasts.

For us and for the Perimeter Institute, opening a world of discovery is the critical first step in enriching lives, in deepening communities. But let’s not forget, as Mike Lazaridis, the Institute’s founder, would say, scientific literacy is inextricably tied to economic growth.

Today, we also help make kids ‘school-ready.’ We’re renowned for our programs that educate young children. They’re ALL safe, commercial-free, uninterrupted and most important, trusted. In fact, everything we produce for kids is developed hand in hand with educators, and tested in classrooms with specific educational expectations in mind.

Today we have over 160 curriculum-based online games and activities. We get more than 300,000 unique visitors each month, and over 5 million page views. Little wonder

TVOKids.com is recognized by the 65,000-member American Public Library Association on its list of Exceptional Websites for Children.

And we keep innovating. Just two weeks ago we launched our first iPhone App for early learners. It's a literacy game called *Melvin's Marvellous Words*. It's a safe mobile experience that parents can rely on for their preschoolers.

At *TVOKids*, while they have fun, the kids also work harder. The results are tangible. When the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education did a family literacy study using TVO's programming, it turned out that children whose families watch *TVOKids* become, as a direct result, more successful readers earlier in school than those who don't.

And our focus on kids extends to their parents. We're providing a growing toolkit to enable parents to be the best first teachers to their kids. In 2008 we made educational resources available at *TVOParents.com* in 19 languages.

This month, we'll be adding new digital materials to help newcomers to the province -- and there are 200,000 immigrants arriving each year -- teach their children basic literacy and numeracy skills and address cultural identity and inclusion at school. This is especially critical in light of the report issued last fall by TD Bank Financial Group that revealed the clear link between illiteracy and economic instability among new immigrant groups.

We not only allow seriously big ideas to creep into our programming; we insist on them -- in big portions. Downloads of our Sunday afternoon *Big Ideas* Lectures are now ranked number one in the iTunes higher education category in Canada, and number two in the U.S.

We also commission some of Canada's most powerful and provocative documentaries. We don't flinch from big issues and controversy. This month, we're premiering *Invisible City*, which explores racial profiling of visible minorities in Toronto. The story is told through the eyes of two teenage boys from Regent Park, whom the filmmakers followed for three years.

Mark Johnston, the director of *Empire of the Word*, our new 4-part documentary series on the power language and reading put it this way in the Toronto Star: “We don’t get an opportunity in Canadian television anymore to make these kinds of programs. With the exception of TVO, broadcasters are not participating in these series that are about big ideas.”

We also provide depth and context in other ways as well. At a time when less than a third of Canadian youth eligible to vote actually do, we’ve launched a new website called *Civics 101*. It’s fresh and it’s fun. But its true purpose is to demystify the fundamental concepts of Ontario’s legal and political systems. It includes things like how a law is made and how a budget gets made!

And we’re incredibly proud of *The Agenda’s* track record night after night in delivering analysis of the big issues not found anywhere else. As one Globe and Mail columnist said last fall “*The Agenda* now outdoes anything on CBC.”

There are many, many more initiatives I could mention, from long-running favourites like *Allan Gregg in Conversation* – which now includes amazing web-exclusive video content – and of course, the longest-running movie program anywhere on TV, anywhere on earth -- *Saturday Night at the Movies*. Each week, we present uninterrupted feature films themed around a pertinent issue. These are films that are rarely seen on other networks. And when coupled with our exclusive filmmaker interviews, they make watching movies on TVO a complete and engaging experience.

But you get the point. TVO is able to stay true to its original mandate in ways that were simply not contemplated when we first went to air 40 years ago. Our footprint is growing: across multiple platforms, across the province, across cultures and across traditional programming boundaries.

TVO today is the thinking man's, woman's and children's network – one of the few anywhere.

Some people may still view us as just a well-respected, traditional TV broadcaster. But we're much more.

In ways that match and even outpace other television, TVO is the vanguard of what's new. Certainly, we help our audiences capitalize on the benefits of new communications technologies. But at the same time, we give viewers of every age that incredibly rare and important thing: an alternative to the world of instant news, information deluge and content lacking rigour.

Ultimately, we are a trusted content curator.

We offer programs that are always thought-provoking, often provocative, and responsibly controversial.

We've also had to do some hard thinking about ourselves.

Our big question is: how can we be even more innovative, more daring and more effective?

Canada is coming out of the worst recession since the depression. Everyone's feeling it: our shareholder faces major financial challenges. So do our corporate sponsors and individual donors.

We're fortunate that a high proportion of TVO's operating budget – about 80% -- comes from the Ontario Government -- a government that also made a special investment in 2006 to take us digital.

Clearly, Queen's Park values the crucial role we play not only in educating the province's children, but in acting as a sparkplug for lifelong learning. In fact, the province's operating grant for TVO works out to a mere \$3 per person per year – exactly what it costs for one single ride on the TTC. Now, in my book, that's value!

But it's also clear to me that we have to adopt a new funding model. It should be more like the province's universities and hospitals, where the bulk of funding may come from the province. But more and more comes from the private sector, including individual donors.

Ten percent of our budget now comes from donors and from corporate sponsorship. These companies' goals and values are aligned with ours and they help fund our programming in return for recognition. Companies like TD, RBC, and Vale Inco are all major, long-term sponsors.

For example, TD is the major funder of our many *TVOKids* literacy initiatives. Their sponsorship aligns perfectly with their focus on children's literacy, and the conclusion of their report about immigrant literacy that drew so much attention last year.

Like every broadcaster and content provider, we are also exploring new revenue streams from digital media. We've partnered with the likes of YouTube, Yahoo Canada, Rogers On Demand Online and iTunes for distribution of our content. At this stage, making money from digital media is still a work in progress.

It's been hard for anyone smaller than the aggregators like Google and Facebook to make money with digital media and even they are still trying to figure out the revenue models. For traditional media players who have begun exploring digital media distribution, the revenues haven't caught up with the growing traffic.

But I think everyone now understands that monetization is both necessary and coming. The world of "free content" may exist now, but it won't forever. The big players like Fox, Google,

Apple, Microsoft and as of two weeks ago, the New York Times, are starting to rewrite the rules. For now, TVO is in a good position to participate in the financial upside when the revenue model emerges.

The reality is, we need all of this support – from the government, from corporate sponsors, from donors and from new revenue streams -- just to maintain our current level of activity.

But if we are to sustain our momentum and our relentless excellence, our business model must change.

We simply can't count on government alone to fund TVO's operational needs, and fund our innovation as well.

We need strong government support, but equally strong philanthropic support from corporations, and from many, many individual donors – large and small.

Just like private sector companies, TVO has to manage to a bottom line--we have to balance the books and run the place efficiently. But we have a double bottom line—with a mandate to serve the public good.

TVO needs to change how we're funded because if we don't, the qualities that make us a vital part of the province's educational system and social infrastructure will slowly disappear.

That's why I'm really here today.

I'm thrilled to announce the launch of the TVO Go Public Campaign.

Why do I say "Go Public?"

Because it's time.

It's time for people and families across Ontario to Go Public with their support for our Public TV by making a donation to TVO.

Today we have thousands of supporters, including our staff, our Board members, and some of you in this room. People who are inspired by what we're doing.

The time has now come for us to turn that inspiration into action. After all, what do people do when they feel strongly – and positively – about something? They tell their friends.....AND.....they go public with it.

So we're going public – starting officially today – in asking Ontarians and their companies to step up and donate to TVO's future excellence, while helping secure our existing mandate.

I'm talking about significant individual and corporate donations.

They will have to be--since our goal each year is to raise \$10 million from the TVO Go Public campaign. That's twice the \$5 million we have to raise each year just to maintain our current level of activity.

We can raise that from a single \$10 million donation, or 10 million one dollar donations. But likely something in between. If 200,000 people – that's only one twentieth of the number of people TVO reaches each week - gave \$50 each, we'd have that \$10 million.

And today I'm asking you as individuals, as business leaders and as community leaders, to include TVO in your giving this year and beyond.

We need that \$5 million more to take TVO to the next level of excellence. And if ever an organization deserved to take up that challenge, and is ready to as well, it's TVO.

What will that new \$5 million buy you? Let me give you five brief examples:

First, it will expand our school-readiness resources by putting a book bag into the hands of every Ontario preschooler.

Second, it will help improve literacy skills for young Ontarians most at risk.

We've partnered with OISE to create Literacy Camps that will get young children, especially those new to Canada, off on the right foot as they prepare to start school.

Third, I spoke earlier about our hard-hitting documentaries. In fact, without the support of TVO, the art of "point of view" documentary film-making in Canada might die. With your support we can strengthen the next generation of young Canadian documentary filmmakers and commission more full-length docs for TVO – and the world.

Fourth, one of our most successful ventures has been *The Agenda On the Road*, where we create rare opportunities for public discourse and debate in communities across the province. This is so important for a public organization in a province that's the size of France and Great Britain combined. But on-location costs are always high.

Your donations will help us expand *The Agenda On the Road*, and take other programs like the *TVOKids Don't Sit Still Tour* on the road as well.

And one final example: TVO has 40 years of archival material – a gold mine of the province's recent social, political, economic and educational history. We want to open it all to the public.

But many of those programs can't be made public yet because they have to be digitized and their rights cleared. This will only happen with your help.

TVO is doing extraordinary things -- I have to say—on very small budgets.

But we are no longer a single TV station. TVO today is five different content channels and countless other platforms. With each new distribution channel comes the need for new revenues. In place of money, we've relied on creativity and new thinking. But it's simply not enough anymore.

We need new funding. We need much more of it. And we need it from you and yours.

I hope you share my belief that TVO is one of those rare jewels, a Canadian success story we can all stand behind and stand up for.

In a globalized world, it's crucial that we have a made-in-Ontario perspective.

TVO has the mandate. TVO has the content, the reputation and the momentum.

More than ever, TVO is extraordinarily well positioned to provide that made-in-Ontario perspective.

I hope you will leave this luncheon with a fresh, new understanding of what, for many of you is an old friend.

I want you to think hard about the role that educational television and TVO can play in a world where slick and shallow are everywhere – but need not be everything.

But most of all, I want to enlist you as early adopters of a movement called Go Public that we want all Ontarians to join.

Our great strengths - current affairs with an attention span, citizen engagement, scientific literacy, early childhood learning - are some of the most important issues our society faces today.

Supporting TVO is something all of us can do naturally, and annually. And while I've asked you to think about giving today, our real dream is that for tens of thousands of Ontarians – companies, families and individuals – Going Public for TVO – will be something you don't have to think about; you just do!

Thank you.

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