



Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2025-289

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Gatineau, 31 October 2025

Public record: 1011-NOC2024-0010

Findings regarding market capacity in the Vancouver radio market

Summary

In Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2024-10, the Commission announced that it had received an application to add a rebroadcasting transmitter to provide improved coverage in Vancouver, British Columbia. It also requested comments on market capacity and the appropriateness of issuing a call for radio applications to serve Vancouver.

Based on the record of that consultation, the Commission finds that the Vancouver radio market cannot support a new commercial radio station at this time, as it continues to face significant financial challenges. As a result, the Commission will not issue a call for applications to serve the Vancouver market.

The Commission will publish the application from Durham Radio Inc. (Durham) for a rebroadcasting transmitter as a Part 1 application since Durham's radio station, CIWV-FM Vancouver, is already licensed to serve Vancouver as a commercial station. The application seeks to improve and expand coverage within the existing station's licensed area and would not result in the entry of a new commercial radio station into the market.

The Commission will also return Rogers Media Inc.'s (Rogers) application to convert its rebroadcasting transmitter, CKKS-FM-2 Vancouver, into a new commercial radio station specifically targeting Vancouver. Given that the Vancouver market cannot support a new commercial station, the Commission is of the view that Rogers' proposal would have an undue economic impact on incumbent stations.

The Commission will not generally be disposed to accept applications for new radio stations to serve the Vancouver market for a period of two years from the date of this decision. Any new applications after this time may trigger a reassessment of the market.

Background

1. On 17 January 2024, the Commission published Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2024-10 (the Notice) indicating that it had received an application by Durham Radio Inc. (Durham) for a licence amendment to operate a rebroadcasting transmitter serving Vancouver, British Columbia. Durham proposed to use one of the last known

frequencies available in Vancouver. Durham noted that its proposed rebroadcasting transmitter (CIWV-FM-1) would provide improved and expanded coverage of the English language specialty commercial radio station CIWV-FM Vancouver.

2. Consistent with Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2014-554 (the Policy), the Commission called for comments on the capacity of Vancouver to support a new radio station and on the need to issue a call for applications for new stations to serve the market. Parties interested in serving the Vancouver radio market were also expected to express their interest as part of the process initiated by the Notice.
3. Vancouver is currently served by 24 commercial radio stations, including seven ethnic stations. The stations are operated by Bell Media Inc. (Bell), Durham, Corus Radio Inc. (Corus), Rogers Media Inc. (Rogers), Stingray Radio Inc. (Stingray), Pattison Media Ltd. (Pattison), Fairchild Radio Ltd. (Fairchild), Akash Broadcasting Inc. (Akash), I.T. Productions Ltd. (I.T. Productions), Sher-E-Punjab Radio Broadcasting Inc. (Sher-E-Punjab), Mainstream Broadcasting Corp. (Mainstream Broadcasting), South Fraser Broadcasting Inc. (South Fraser), and South Asian Broadcasting Corp. (SABC). The stations operated by Fairchild, Akash, I.T. Productions, Sher-E-Punjab, Mainstream Broadcasting, and SABC are ethnic stations. Northern Native Broadcasting operates the Indigenous station. Two non-commercial FM stations are operated by The Student Radio Society of the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Co-operative Radio, respectively.

Interventions, replies, and expressions of interest

4. The Commission received 235 interventions and two replies in response to the Notice. Most interventions came from local listeners commenting on the need for greater coverage in the area. The interventions and replies are addressed below.
5. In addition to Durham's application, the Commission received three expressions of interest, including an application from Rogers, to serve the Vancouver market.

Interventions

6. U Multicultural Inc. (UMI), a not-for-profit corporation, supported the introduction of another radio station but opposed Durham's application for a licence to operate a rebroadcasting transmitter. UMI, which is not currently operating in Vancouver, expressed interest in establishing a community station focused on Indigenous and ethnic programming. UMI's intervention referenced the 2021 Census, which highlighted Vancouver's diversity. It advocated for a non-profit community station to better reflect and serve the city's diverse population, and outlined the benefits of such community stations, including lower financial impact on commercial stations.
7. United Christian Broadcasters Media Canada Inc. (UCB Media), a not-for-profit Christian radio service not currently operating in Vancouver, expressed interest in launching a commercial religious radio station. UCB Media's intervention also referenced the 2021 Census, which showed that approximately 33.1% of Vancouver's

population identified as Christians. UCB Media is of the view that the market can support a religious station with minimal financial impact on other stations given there are no Christian radio stations currently licensed in Vancouver.

8. Two incumbent ethnic operators, SABC and I.T. Productions, noted that the Vancouver ethnic radio market is already served by seven radio stations, including theirs, and are of the view that it cannot support a new entrant. They supported Durham's application, provided the station remains an English-language station. SABC referenced the Commission's 2018-2022 Vancouver ethnic radio market financial data showing declining advertising revenue and operating margins and noted the increased operating costs for broadcasters due to higher labour costs, higher rental costs for office and transmitter sites, higher electrical costs to power transmitters, and inflationary costs.
9. In their joint intervention, Corus, Stingray, and Pattison (the joint interveners) cited concerns about decline in revenue and profitability within the market. They referenced Broadcasting Decision 2020-216, in which the Commission decided against accepting applications for new commercial radio stations to serve the Vancouver radio market for a period of two years. The joint interveners noted that trends since 2020 have not improved, indicating that the market is not strong enough to support another commercial station at this time.
10. The joint interveners also noted that Vancouver's radio market is highly competitive in both audience and revenue share. As a result, they argued against the issuance of a call for applications. In their view, permitting an additional rebroadcasting transmitter, as proposed by Durham, would have an adverse impact on the market.
11. In its intervention, Emmers Ventures Ltd. noted Bell's closure of two commercial AM radio stations in June 2023. It argued that if the Commission decides that the market can support another FM station, initiating a call for applications for a new FM station in the Lower Mainland would ensure fairness and diversity in the market.
12. Other interveners supporting Durham's application cited reception issues in the surrounding Vancouver areas.

Rogers' intervention and reply

13. When the Notice was published, Rogers re-submitted its 2018 application,¹ which seeks to convert its rebroadcasting transmitter, CKKS-FM-2 Vancouver, into a standalone radio station for the Vancouver market. Rogers currently operates three English-language commercial radio stations in the Vancouver market, including the rebroadcasting transmitter for CKKS-FM Chilliwack, British Columbia.

¹ This application, filed in 2018, triggered an assessment of the Vancouver market in 2020. It resulted in the closure of the market for two years as the Commission deemed the market unable to support an additional station.

14. Citing the Commission's 2018-2022 financial summaries and Trans-Canada Radio Advertising by Market (TRAM) reports, Rogers emphasized that the city's radio market is highly competitive, particularly since it is shrinking and experiencing declining revenue.
15. Rogers argued that its application would have a minimal impact on incumbent radio stations and would not increase its existing coverage or reach. Conversely, it is of the view that Durham's application would increase that station's reach and coverage and, as a result, have a greater negative impact on incumbents by diverting advertising revenue to Durham.
16. Rogers explained that its rebroadcasting transmitter is already included in TRAM reports for the Vancouver market and argued that it is, effectively, an existing commercial radio station in the market.
17. In its reply to the joint interveners, Rogers indicated that its proposal would allow it to compete more effectively with the joint interveners. It did not comment on Durham's application.

Durham's reply

18. Durham acknowledged that the market is underperforming and cannot support a new radio station. Referencing the Commission's 2018-2022 financial summaries and TRAM data that highlight financial struggles in both the Canadian and Vancouver radio markets, Durham emphasized that it is already established in the market and is only seeking to expand its signal to reach areas that are currently inaccessible. Durham also noted that it represents Vancouver's only English-language commercial specialty² station and remains committed to supporting emerging Canadian talent.
19. Durham also highlighted its view that FM radio remains relatively stable and argued that expanding CIWV-FM's signal is crucial for its viability. Durham emphasized its commitment to operating as a specialty service with minimal financial impact on mainstream broadcasters. It disagreed with Rogers' claim that the proposed expansion would significantly divert advertising revenues. It argued that Rogers' proposal to convert its rebroadcasting transmitter would have a greater financial impact on incumbent radio stations.
20. Regarding concerns about frequency availability, Durham noted that in the 2016 Vancouver-Surrey hearing,³ frequency 106.9 MHz was deemed viable and remains unlicensed to date. It also argued that frequency 98.7 MHz, currently available as an allotment in Port Moody, British Columbia, is not viable for a standalone radio station to serve Vancouver because its coverage would be limited in order to protect CIWV-FM from interference. However, Durham stated it would accept any interference from

² The station must broadcast a minimum of 50% category 3 (Special Interest Music) musical selections and 40% Canadian musical selections in both category 2 (Popular Music) and 3.

³ See Broadcasting Decision 2016-464.

using it as a rebroadcasting transmitter for CIWV-FM to optimize the combined coverage in the area.

21. Durham also requested that the Commission treat its proposal as a non-appearing item under the Policy, as it only seeks to enhance an existing service.

Commission's analysis

Vancouver market assessment

22. When the Commission receives an application for a new radio station or a licence amendment to an existing station that is proposing to use one of the last known frequencies in the market, and if an application does not fall within one of the exceptions to the issuance of a call, the Commission will publish a notice of consultation to seek comments on market capacity and the appropriateness of issuing a call.
23. The Commission's assessment of the Vancouver market is being made in accordance with the Policy, which requires an assessment of the market's capacity to support an additional radio station, taking into account economic and financial data as well as the comments received as a result of the Notice. As part of this assessment, the Commission weighs factors such as market capacity, spectrum availability or scarcity, and interest in serving the market when deciding whether to:
 - publish an application for consideration as part of the non-appearing phase of a public hearing;
 - issue a call for applications; or
 - make a determination that the market cannot support additional stations, return the application, and issue a decision setting out this determination.
24. The Commission notes that radio listenership has declined in the Vancouver market in recent years. While there has been a slight increase in radio listenership in 2024 compared to 2023, the overall pattern of sustained decline over the past five years suggests a fundamental change in listening habits.
25. Since 2023, a few major broadcasters have either requested to revoke AM licences or applied to close or consolidate services in the Vancouver market, including Bell, Corus, and Fairchild.
26. The joint interveners noted that the Commission's financial data shows that Vancouver's commercial radio market has experienced a continuous revenue decline since 2019, with continuous negative profitability since 2020 and no signs of recovery, highlighted by a sharp drop in advertising revenue and worsening financial conditions in 2024. This was also noted in SABC's intervention.

27. In their interventions, SABC and I.T. Productions noted that the Commission's data shows that Vancouver's ethnic radio market experienced a similarly sharp revenue decline from 2018 to 2022. The Commission finds that the market showed notable stability after the pandemic, but growth has remained stagnant. Ongoing profitability challenges raise concerns about long-term sustainability and growth.
28. The Commission notes that, compared to national and provincial averages, Vancouver's commercial radio market continues to struggle financially. Its ethnic market has shown more resilience, though it still falls below the Canadian average. Overall, despite some signs of improvement, both Vancouver's ethnic radio market and the broader commercial radio market remain weak.
29. In light of the above, the Commission finds that the Vancouver radio market cannot support a new commercial radio station at this time. Despite Vancouver's growing and diverse population, the radio market continues to face economic challenges, including declining radio revenues, continuous profitability issues, and a long-term decline in listenership. Both the ethnic and commercial radio markets in Vancouver have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels and continue to face financial challenges.
30. As a result, the Commission will not issue a call for applications to serve the Vancouver market and will not generally be disposed to accept applications for new commercial radio stations to serve the Vancouver market for a period of two years from the date of this decision.

How should the Commission deal with the applications filed by Durham and Rogers?

31. Following a determination that a market cannot sustain an additional radio station, the Commission typically returns any applications filed to serve that market.
32. However, the Commission considers that the application submitted by Durham does not seek to launch a new radio station. Rather, Durham proposed a technical amendment to add a rebroadcasting transmitter to improve and expand coverage for its existing commercial specialty station, which is already licensed to serve and already targets the Vancouver market.
33. Durham argued that its proposal would also be unlikely to negatively affect frequency scarcity because the rebroadcasting transmitter would be adjacent to another Durham station. Since frequency scarcity is an important consideration in the Commission's treatment of radio applications, the Commission considers that publishing this application would allow Durham's positions regarding its proposal's lack of effects on frequency scarcity and the market to be fully examined and considered.
34. Given that Durham does not seek to introduce a new commercial radio station into the Vancouver market, the Commission is of the view that considering Durham's application is consistent with its market capacity findings. Once the application has

been published online, the public may comment on the specifics of the proposal. The Commission will consider all submissions before making its decision on whether to approve the application.

35. Conversely, Rogers is seeking to convert its rebroadcasting transmitter into a standalone commercial radio station. This would have no impact on frequency scarcity. However, the standalone station would be specifically licensed for – and as a result would specifically target – the Vancouver market. Currently, CKKS-FM is licensed to serve Chilliwack and the Fraser Valley, British Columbia, and its rebroadcasting transmitter CKKS-FM-2 retransmits the signal to Vancouver. Replacing a rebroadcast of a separate market with a dedicated broadcast for the Vancouver market would represent a significant change and, in the Commission’s view, would constitute the addition of a new station to the market. As noted above, the market is not currently in a position to support a new station.
36. Further, the Commission finds that Rogers’ application does not meet the exceptions outlined in the Policy. In line with the Commission’s findings regarding market capacity, the Commission will return Rogers’ application.

Conclusion

37. In light of all of the above, the Commission finds that the Vancouver radio market cannot support a new commercial radio station at this time. Consistent with the approach set out in the Policy, the Commission will not generally be disposed to accept applications for new stations to serve the Vancouver market for a period of two years from the date of this decision.
38. The Commission will publish Durham’s application for a rebroadcasting transmitter for CIWV-FM Vancouver as a Part 1 application. The Commission considers this to be in line with its findings regarding Vancouver market capacity because the application does not seek to launch a new radio station.
39. The Commission will, however, return Rogers’ application to convert its rebroadcasting transmitter into a standalone commercial radio station because this application seeks to add a new station to the Vancouver radio market.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Call for comments on market capacity and the appropriateness of issuing a call for radio applications to serve Vancouver, British Columbia*, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-10, 17 January 2024
- *Findings regarding market capacity and the appropriateness of issuing a call for radio applications to serve Vancouver*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2020-216, 6 July 2020

- *Licensing of new radio stations to serve Surrey and Vancouver, and addition of a transmitter in Surrey*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2016-464, 28 November 2016
- *A targeted policy review of the commercial radio sector*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2014-554, 28 October 2014