

Honourable Justice Trudeau
Prime Minister

Honourable Pablo Rodriguez
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Quebec Lieutenant

(By Email : justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca & pablo.rodriguez@parl.gc.ca)

August 17, 2022

Dear Honorable Prime Minister and Honourable Minister Rodriguez,

Government Actions Needed to Protect First Language Media

On behalf of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, I am writing to express our deepest concerns about the recent announcement of Sing Tao Daily's decision to stop printing its daily newspaper on August 27.

Imagine the shock wave that would be sent throughout Canada if one of our two national daily newspapers were to announce that they would stop printing altogether. There would be a public uproar and an immediate call for the Canadian Government to take action. Heads would roll, both corporately and politically, if our leaders did nothing to "save the press".

Yet when Sing Tao Daily, the largest national Chinese language newspapers announced that it would stop printing its daily newspapers later this month, no mainstream media even picked up the story, other than one article in the Toronto Star, a part owner of Sing Tao. Meanwhile, the shutdown of Sing Tao Daily in print was headlined and featured extensively in the Chinese language media both domestically and internationally.

To the 1.8 million Chinese Canadians, Sing Tao is as mainstream as it gets. Many count on it for reliable and credible news and information. With a circulation of 180,000, or 10% of the population of Chinese descent in Canada, Sing Tao has a reach that rivals many mainstream media outlets.

With journalists coming from the readership communities, first language media outlets help keep these communities informed and engaged. They have played a vital role during COVID-19, not only by disseminating evidence-based information about the vaccine, but by raising awareness around the rising tide of racism - before the mainstream media catches on.

Agitators for misguided nationalism and white supremacy have been polarizing many communities by effectively spreading fake news and misinformation through social media. First

language media can and should be important partners in the governments' much needed actions against online hate and disinformation.

There are concerns and fears about foreign interference through controlling media outlets to influence the hearts and minds of Canadians. In the face of these concerns, the absence of any concerted government strategy to protect and enhance Canadian owned local media, including first language media in print and other formats, is seriously disconcerting. First language media outlets, despite being smaller and more vulnerable than bigger English or French language media, can play vital roles to help foster a shared sense of Canadian identity and enhance Canada's national security.

What happened to Sing Tao, sadly, is simply another nail in the coffin for first language media. Remember the once thriving OMNI TV? It too was downsized and had its budget slashed right after it was bought up by Rogers. With no regard for the outpouring of community objections, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) granted the OMNI TV licence to Rogers with little guarantee that the latter would uphold the goal of promoting cultural diversity under the Broadcasting Act.

Ensuing equitable access to quality news and dependable information is not only an important issue for racialized communities. It is what freedom of press is all about. In a world where even wars are fought increasingly through control of information, we need a national strategy to protect and strengthen our media – which must include first language media.

Proposed Action

This is a task too important to be left to the private sector. The Federal government must take the lead. We urge you to provide incentives for Canadian-owned first language print media to continue operating. CRTC should review the outdated Ethnic Broadcasting Policy to live up to its mandate of facilitating programming for *all* Canadians.

For national security as well as the promotion of Canadian identity and democracy, we urge you to act now to protect first language media.

Yours Sincerely,



Amy Go
President
Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice