

October 27, 2017

Mr. Scott Hutton  
Secretary General (Acting)  
Canadian Radio-television and  
Telecommunications Commission  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

Dear Mr. Hutton,

**Re: Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2017-365 *Applications for the renewal of services with mandatory distribution on the basic service pursuant to section 9(1)(h) of the Broadcasting Act; Application #2017-0586-5 by Pelmorex Weather Networks Inc.***

1. National Pensioners Federation (“NPF”) is a national, not for profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian organization of 350 seniors chapters, clubs, groups, organizations and individual supporters across Canada with a collective membership of 1,000,000 seniors and retirees devoted entirely to the welfare and best interests of ageing Canadians. Our mission is to stimulate public interest in the welfare of ageing Canadians. Our goal is to help seniors and retirees have a life of dignity, independence and financial security.
2. NPF is pleased to intervene in this proceeding to express to the Commission the importance for our members that Pelmorex’s application be approved and The Weather Network and MétéoMédia continue to be distributed as part of the basic service. Ageing Canadians rely more than the general population on available accurate, local weather information; are less available to afford to pay for additional television channels; and are less comfortable or capable of accessing information online. As such, there may be no group of Canadians for whom the availability of The Weather and MétéoMédia on the basic television service is more important than Canada’s seniors and retirees. We are pleased to elaborate more on this need below.

**Access to local weather information**

3. Accurate, local weather forecasts are more important for Canada’s seniors and retirees than for other segments of the population. Because of mobility challenges, increased risk of falls and injury, and less comfort driving in inclement weather, NPF members need to know the weather forecast before leaving home. Knowing not only the current weather situation, but what it will be like during a return trip or while being out of the house, helps seniors and retirees make the important decisions of whether to leave more time for their excursion, call a taxi instead of driving, or to postpone the venture to a different day.

4. The Weather Network and MétéoMédia are critical resources for helping inform such decisions. Because it provides local forecasts on TV to more than 1,000 different communities, virtually every Canadian with a TV subscription can access local weather, any time of day. Were The Weather Network and MétéoMédia not available, NPF members would have to rely on TV and radio news for weather information. However, these sources are only available a few times per day, and for many communities across the country are not available or are not local. Indeed, for many Canadian seniors, The Weather Network or MétéoMédia are the only sources of local weather news and information. Reducing their availability would be a great disservice to ageing Canadians.

#### **Access to a low-cost weather information source**

5. Many Canadian seniors and retirees are on fixed incomes and have little or no room to increase their spending. The past and current availability of The Weather Network and MétéoMédia on the basic television service has always been a great comfort. Seniors know it is a service they can rely on access to on-demand weather news and information regardless of what television service package they can afford.
6. Recent moves by the Commission to make the basic television service more affordable by capping the price a service provider can charge has helped make access to essential news, information and entertainment more affordable. This fixed price also more starkly illustrates how much more seniors may have to pay to access The Weather Network or MétéoMédia if they were removed from the basic service.
7. A quick scan of television service provider websites reveals that prices for the next 'tier' or service package ranges from \$45 to \$57 per month. That represents an increase of \$240 to \$384 per year that a great many seniors and retirees cannot afford. Even to add a single channel on a standalone basis typically costs at least \$4 per month, or \$48 per year. This would also be beyond the reach of many NPF members and would ultimately foreclose access to these important planning and safety information sources.

#### **Not comfortable using alternative information sources**

8. While many Canadians may increasingly rely on the internet to access weather news and information, this is not the case for a great many Canadian seniors and retirees. Many seniors are not comfortable using the internet. Many also cannot afford an internet connection, computer and/or a smartphone. And many with some comfort level using the internet still greatly prefer to access information like weather news from the television. The televised weather news delivered by The Weather Network or MétéoMédia provides significant context and up-to-date analysis that NPF members need and enjoy.

9. NPF understands that media consumption trends are changing. Indeed, many more seniors and retirees use the internet now than did even a few years ago. But we can confidently say that, among our members, the tipping point where a great majority prefers online delivery to TV has not been reached. Ensuring low-cost access to representative and essential news and information is one of the objectives of designating services with mandatory distribution on the basic service pursuant to section 9(1)(h) of the *Broadcasting Act*. The Weather Network and MétéoMédia clearly continue to warrant that designation.

## Conclusion

10. Canadians, including seniors and retirees, have come to rely on The Weather Network and MétéoMédia being available regardless of what TV service provider or subscription level they have. As the Commission has found in the past, these services make an extraordinary contribution to the Canadian broadcasting system and belong on the mandatory basic service. NPF wholeheartedly agrees. In fact, we believe that ageing Canadians rely on these services being available on the basic package as much, or more, than any other demographic.
11. NPF therefore strongly and respectfully submits that the Commission should renew the broadcasting licence for The Weather Network and MétéoMédia and ensure they continue to be distributed on the basic service so they are available to all Canadians.
12. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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