

# **Vernon Community Radio Society**

**Annual General Meeting - Wednesday, May 2, 2018 – 4:00 PM**

**Vernon Public Library – Community Room**

## **PRESIDENT’S REPORT from GORD LEIGHTON**

It has been my privilege to act as your president since our incorporation as a Society on April 20, 2017. Since then, the inaugural Board has met four times to consider a variety of matters. I will recap the highlights.

To build awareness, we launched a Facebook page and a website, [www.vernoncommunityradio.ca](http://www.vernoncommunityradio.ca). Our Facebook page has 427 “likes” and 433 “followers”. We used both platforms to conduct a survey of area residents to determine levels of interest in community radio. We earned a total of 367 responses. The results confirmed a robust interest in a new community based service, with 31% saying they are “somewhat dissatisfied” with current listening options and 35% saying they are “very dissatisfied” with current radio options.

The reasons attributed to these sentiments were anchored to an inadequate variety in programming, high repetition of music and heavy commercial loads. Respondents said they would like to see more content from music genres not now heard in the community as well as more local news and public affairs. We also probed for potential interest among respondents in volunteering at a community station. 20% said they would be extremely likely or very likely to volunteer. Another 33% said they would be somewhat likely. We consider those responses to be extremely encouraging, since community radio heavily depends on

volunteers. The average number of volunteers in Canada at community stations is about 60.

On your behalf, I invited influential persons and organizations to supply us with written letters of support. The letters will be used as elements in our CRTC application, to which I will speak about a little later. We received support letters from Mel Arnold - MP, Eric Foster – MLA, Mayor Akbul Mund, Ken Hardie – MP for Fleetwood - Port Kells, The Vernon Folk Music Society, The Vernon Jazz Society and the Downtown Vernon Association. We will be soliciting further letters.

I also had the pleasure to speaking to three Rotary Clubs and the Lions Club as part of our awareness campaign.

We launched a fund-raising campaign early this year, with known donor organizations as targets. Understandably, many of these organizations have pre-determined windows of opportunity to submit applications. While we have been turned down by some, I can report that a few remain pending, some submissions have yet to be made and we have had some success. I am delighted to report that the Kalamalka Rotary Club has confirmed we will receive \$8,000 from the proceeds to their 2017 Dream Auction. We will be using the funds to pay for a technical brief in support of our CRTC application. Our next major funding application will be to seek a grant from the BC Gaming Commission.

Since our objective is to serve Greater Vernon, from Coldstream through to at least the North end of Swan Lake, and hopefully to Armstrong, our engineering consultant advised that we should expect to have a transmitter operating at 1,500 watts or thereabouts. This requires a technical brief to be prepared by a professional engineer for submission to Industry Canada and the CRTC. This brief

will provide coverage maps and will confirm a frequency. As the moment, it looks like that dial position will be 97.9 MHz.

Arising from our November Board meeting, we chose to invite the community to help us select a brand for the proposed new station. Using Social Media, we received 21 suggestions for names. From this list, your Board narrowed it down to five. From those five, we launched a social media poll to pick the winner... which is Valley – FM, and derivatives of the name such as “The Valley”, “The Valley Voice”, “The Valley Vibe” and others.

As the final step, your Board has directed that we again ask the community to design a logo to lend a graphic interpretation of Valley FM 97.9. This is currently underway. Why do we want a brand, name and logo before we even know if we have a license? The answer is simple. A name and a brand will make our job of communicating with the community and potential donors much easier. This will help breathe life into our proposed new entity and it will make Valley FM a little more tangible.

When will we file our CRTC application? The technical brief will take up to six weeks, more or less, depending on a variety of factors. With a completed brief, our application to the CRTC should be filed before the end of June. After that, it is a waiting game. The Commission has a number of options. They could issue a license without a public hearing, if they deem our application to be in the public interest and straight-forward. Or, the CRTC could choose to put our application on the agenda of a Public Hearing. A further alternative might be to receive the application and defer it to a public hearing at a later date, and in the meantime issue a public call, inviting others to apply for either a commercial or a community

station. At the earliest, a CRTC decision could take 60-75 days. At the latest, and assuming the matter is slated for a public hearing, it could take six months.

As an aside, the CRTC rarely rejects applications for community radio stations.

While having a license is entirely necessary, we also have one further major hurdle, which is money. We estimate we will require in the neighborhood of \$100,000 to purchase equipment, renovate studio and control room space and install the necessary hardware. This will require a major effort by your Board, and as many volunteers as we can muster to create and execute fund-raising events and reach out to the business community. We will only begin to do this once we receive a license.

I know that one of the elements that is top-of-mind with many of our supporters is programming. More specifically, how will the program schedule be developed; what will be the mix of various music genres, how will volunteers be integrated with paid staff. At the moment, I can tell you a few basics.

Our music will be 40% Canadian. We are required by the CRTC to provide programming that is demonstrably different from current offerings. Accordingly, we will not be leaning heavily into Pop and Top 40 music, which is the core offering of Sun FM. Similarly, we will not be heavily reliant on music from the 80's and 90's, which is the core of Beach FM. Our audience survey showed strong support for Country music, both new and traditional. Classic Rock and Alternative Rock also scored quite highly. Interest in niche genres was fairly evenly distributed with Folk, Jazz, Oldies from the 60's and 70's. Classical, Hip-hop and Bluegrass also scored with a respectable level of interest. I can confirm that one important area of focus will be to provide access to the airwaves by local talent.

At the moment, it is difficult if not impossible for aspiring singer-songwriters to garner local radio airplay.

The CRTC requires community stations to include 15% of the schedule as spoken word programming. This includes news, in-depth interviews and commentaries. We intend to include a daily Monday through Friday local open-line program, likely scheduled in mid-morning, and likely 90-minutes in length. This will provide a platform for robust debate on issues of community importance. Aside from the letters section in the Morning Star, there is very little opportunity for community dialogue on any topic. When have you been able to hear the electorate hold our political leadership's feet to the fire? In many respects, we see Valley FM as a vibrant media element to support our democratic processes and as a platform for free speech.

Ladies and gentlemen, this brings us up to date. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have and I know your Board will also be interested in any suggestions you may have.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gordon Leighton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Gordon Leighton