

Initially, there was a lot of interest in establishing a new satellite broadcasting initiative along the lines of TV5, the French-language super-station with 20 per cent Canadian content that is distributed worldwide. There has also been some discussion of using the new Internet. And still others say, no, we should build on the already established strength of Radio Canada International (RCI) and expand its satellite capabilities.

In short, the debate on a new Canadian strategy has begun with the issue of *platform*. Instead, I propose that we begin with the basic question: what do we want to say? What do we want to communicate through some new sophisticated system? Instead of talking about platforms, we should begin with the question of *content*. What Canadian values do we want to trumpet? What kind of an effect do we want any information to have? What do we want to achieve with any communications strategy?

Do we want to provide information that would:

- Establish a Canadian perspective on international news?
- Feature Canada's commitment to human rights values around the world?
- Demonstrate Canada's advanced communications technology?
- Promote and reflect Canada's multicultural heritage?
- Reinforce Canada's richly deserved reputation as peacekeepers and mediators?
- Reflect Canada's interest in the welfare of children?
- Show the world that Canada can play a key role in preparing countries for democratization and good governance?

Twinned with each of the above is, obviously, a particular audience and a particular impact. With respect to the worldwide audience, do we want to reach a broad general public, or influential opinion-makers, or government and non-governmental aid workers in developing countries? Do we want to target business interests in order to support and promote our technology industries? Or, is there, perhaps, some way of combining a number of the above?

It is very tempting to come up with a "grand plan" to do something BIG, something major. For example, some suggest that we establish our own Cable News Network (CNN) but with a more public-affairs twist. Should we launch a Canada network that would air Canadian information and programming twenty-four hours a day around the world? Ten years ago that may have worked. Today, though, there are a lot of CNNs, TV5s and British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBCs) out there, and changes in technology and opportunities are bombarding us by the month.

How do we create a new broadcasting entity in a manner we can afford to not only launch, but also to sustain over a period of time? The days of pouring millions of dollars into such a communications initiative are over. It may sound important. It is important. But how do we justify it when Johnny now sits in a classroom with 50 other kids, or the waiting list for open heart surgery grows? We can't afford it, and it won't work.