

[CIC letterhead]

May 19, 2009

The Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

Re: Broadcast Application by Al Jazeera – English

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Canadian Islamic Congress, its members, directors and appointed executives across Canada, I am writing to reiterate and reaffirm this organization's unqualified support for the application of Al-Jazeera's English language cable television news network to broadcast in this country.

As a result of current trends in massive media consolidation and newsroom downsizing in all genres of journalism, Canadians are receiving an increasingly restricted spectrum of reportage and informed opinion on the local, national and international issues that concern and affect them. Nearly half a century ago, Canadian media specialist Marshall McLuhan warned his generation of the dangers of "narrowcasting," yet this is exactly what threatens the distinctive and diverse society we are proud to call home.

We can help reverse this negative insularity with the addition of Al-Jazeera's respected editorial and reportorial standards to the cable options now available to Canadians. The resulting benefit will be to bring Canada into closer and more immediate informational ties with some 100 other nations that already receive Al-Jazeera's satellite programming.

Although we sincerely hope you are aware of the fact that Al-Jazeera's English programming and news division are distinct from its Arabic-language operations, it is worth emphasizing here that the material Canadians would receive is of global interest, not only Middle East affairs.

Al-Jazeera also comes to us without the prejudgments, political agendas, and commercial influences that have served to suppress so much of the investigative and truth-telling roles that journalism in North America once upheld with pride. The positive competition of Al-Jazeera might restore more freedom and activism to our overly passive Canadian media.

Therefore, the Canadian Islamic Congress once again urges the CRTC to approve Al-Jazeera's English network as a bona fide media resource as soon as possible; and we trust that our cable and satellite providers will in turn welcome the opportunity to make this much-needed alternative news source accessible to all Canadians.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Wahida Valiante
Chair and National President – Canadian Islamic Congress