



Dec. 9, 2015

RE: Editorial independence of journalists

ATTN: Geoff Poulton, President of Vista Radio

Dear Mr. Poulton,

I write to you today in my capacity as the president of the Canadian Association of Journalists. Our National Board was recently made aware of a concerning situation at Vista Radio properties that appears to threaten the editorial independence of journalists who work in your newsrooms.

A Vista Radio employee recently confirmed to the CAJ that the company made an offer to editorial staff to participate voluntarily in commissioned advertising sales during a chain-wide, one-day sales blitz. While we understand the challenges media owners face, and particularly the ongoing struggle even to maintain advertising revenue, we must oppose any effort to involve editorial staff in advertising.

The CAJ adopted a [policy paper](#) in 2007 that explains our position. We hold that separation of editorial and advertising operations are “critical to the long-term financial viability of a newspaper or broadcast outlet. If readers and viewers lose faith in a news outlet’s autonomy, they will abandon it.”

The policy paper on editorial independence offers a section on advertising guidelines that reinforce this principle:

“Complete operational separation should be maintained between editorial staff and advertising staff. Advertising staff should never attempt to influence new coverage in any way, whether it relates to a current client or not.”

The CAJ would strongly encourage Vista Radio to establish internal policy consistent with our policy paper's recommendation to that end:

"All news outlets should create internally a list of guidelines for editors and advertising sales reps that clarify the segregation of editorial and ad functions..."

We understand that no journalist has been forced into ad sales, but clear rules that prohibit any breaches of the firewall between editorial and advertising operations can only enhance the credibility of any news organization.

I'd be happy to discuss this further, at your convenience. Please don't hesitate to reach me at (647) 968-2393 or nick@caj.ca.

Yours sincerely,

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