



## Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2020-386

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Reference: Part 1 application posted on 29 May 2020

Ottawa, 30 November 2020

### **Radio Blanc-Sablon inc.**

Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, Quebec

*Public record for this application: 2020-0167-6*

### **CFBS-FM Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon – Technical changes**

*The Commission **approves** an application to change the authorized contours of the bilingual (English and French) community radio station CFBS-FM Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, Quebec. The technical changes approved in this decision will help improve the station's signal quality within its authorized coverage area.*

#### **Application**

1. Radio Blanc-Sablon inc. (Radio Blanc-Sablon) filed an application to change the authorized contours of its licensed bilingual (English and French) community radio station CFBS-FM Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, Quebec. Specifically, it requested to change the station's authorized contours by increasing the maximum effective radiated power (ERP) from 300 to 900 watts, increasing the average ERP from 178 to 900 watts, replacing the existing directional antenna with a non-directional antenna, increasing the effective height of the antenna above average terrain from 31.6 to 40.25 meters, and amending the existing coordinates of the transmitter site.
2. Radio Blanc-Sablon indicated that this technical amendment is necessary to address signal deficiencies within their coverage area due to terrain. The licensee added that the equipment (transmitter and antenna) is being changed due to old age.
3. The Commission received no interventions related to this application.

#### **Commission's analysis**

4. The Commission has the authority, pursuant to section 9(1) of the *Broadcasting Act* (the Act), to issue licences for such terms not exceeding seven years and subject to such conditions related to the circumstances of the licensee as it deems appropriate for the implementation of the broadcasting policy set out in section 3(1) of the Act, as well as to amend those conditions on application of the licensee.
5. When a licensee of a radio station files an application for technical changes, the Commission expects the licensee to present compelling technical or economic evidence justifying the changes. The Commission may, as an exception to this general

approach, approve applications that do not provide compelling technical or economic evidence where the particular circumstances of the licensee warrant.

6. Given this expectation, and after examining the information provided on the public record for this application in light of the applicable regulation and policies, the Commission considers that it must address the following issues:
  - whether the applicant has demonstrated a compelling technical or economic need for the technical changes;
  - whether the requested technical changes are appropriate on a technical basis;
  - whether the requested technical changes represent an appropriate use of spectrum;
  - whether approval of the application would have an undue financial impact on incumbent radio stations; and
  - whether approval of the application would undermine the Commission's licensing process.

### **Technical or economic need for the proposed technical changes**

#### **Technical need**

7. In order to demonstrate a compelling need for the proposed power increase, the Commission generally requires an applicant to submit evidence in support of technical deficiencies within its authorized contours. Although Radio Blanc-Sablon claims to have reception difficulties on each side of the city on Highway 138, it has not submitted any evidence of technical deficiencies within its currently authorized 3 mV/m contour.
8. The Commission notes that realistic contours representing the coverage of the proposed transmitter, which demonstrate that the signal is impacted by terrain to a certain degree, were included with the application. However, as no realistic contours of the existing transmitter were submitted, the Commission does not consider this to be sufficient evidence of technical deficiencies within the currently authorized coverage area.
9. Accordingly, the Commission recognizes the need to replace the aged transmitter, but finds that Radio Blanc-Sablon has not demonstrated a compelling technical need for the proposed power increase on the basis of signal deficiencies within their authorized 3 mV/m contour.

#### **Economic need**

10. Radio Blanc-Sablon indicated that it does not anticipate that the proposed amendment would result in a change to existing financial projections and that the proposed amendment is not necessary for the financial viability of the station.

11. In light of the above, and since the application is not based on a financial need, the Commission finds that the applicant has not demonstrated such a need for the proposed amendment.

#### **Appropriateness of the requested changes on a technical basis**

12. In requesting technical changes to a radio station, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the changes are appropriate on a technical basis (i.e., that the technical solution proposed will have the least impact on the market in which it was licensed to serve).
13. While the applicant did not demonstrate a compelling technical need for the proposed amendment, the Commission notes that the power increase represents a minimal coverage expansion that does not target more communities, but rather provides better service along the highway entering the city. The transmitter would remain a class A undertaking and the proposal did not receive any interventions.
14. Consequently, the Commission finds that the technical changes requested to address signal deficiencies represent an appropriate technical solution to improve service reception in the community.

#### **Appropriate use of spectrum**

15. As the applicant is not proposing the use of an alternate frequency, the Commission finds that the proposal represents an appropriate use of spectrum.

#### **Financial impact on incumbent stations**

16. The amendments would have an impact on the population served by CFBS-FM which, within the primary (3 mV/m) service contour, would increase from 698 to 1,112 (an increase of 59%), and within the secondary (0.5 mV/m) service contour, would increase from 1,112 to 1,328 (an increase of 19%).
17. However, CFBS-FM is the only licensed radio station originating from Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, and the proposed contours would not intersect with any other commercial or community stations.
18. In light of the above, the Commission finds that approval of the requested technical changes would not have an undue financial impact on incumbent stations in the Blanc-Sablon market.

#### **Integrity of the Commission's licensing process**

19. The power increase requested by Radio Blanc-Sablon represents a minimal coverage expansion that does not target communities outside the market it was licensed to serve but rather seeks to provide a more reliable signal along the highway entering the city. The expanded contours also do not impact any other stations.

20. Consequently, the Commission finds that approval of the present application would not undermine the integrity of the original licensing process during which the original application to operate CFBS-FM was approved.

## **Conclusion**

21. While the licensee has not demonstrated a compelling technical or economic need justifying the requested technical changes, the Commission considers that it would nevertheless be in the public interest to expand the signal. In particular, a better signal would benefit the residents of Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon that rely on the radio station to broadcast local news and information, community events and local music and spoken word talent that reflect the linguistic duality (English and French) and social characteristics of the community.

22. Consequently, the Commission considers that an exception to the Commission's general approach is justified in the particular circumstances of this case as:

- CFBS-FM is the only originating station licensed to serve the isolated community of Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon;
- the proposed amendment would provide an expanded service to the benefit of the community;
- the proposed amendment would not enter or have an impact on surrounding markets;
- the Commission received no interventions; and
- there are no concerns with regards to maintaining the integrity of the Commission's original licensing process.

23. In light of all the above, the Commission **approves** the application by Radio Blanc-Sablon inc. to change the authorized contours of its licensed bilingual (English and French) community radio station CFBS-FM Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, Quebec.

24. Pursuant to section 22(1) of the Act, this authority will only be effective when the Department of Industry notifies the Commission that its technical requirements have been met and that a broadcasting certificate will be issued.

25. The licensee must implement the technical changes by no later than **30 November 2022**. To request an extension, the licensee must submit a written request to the Commission at least 60 days before that date, using the form available on the Commission's website.

26. As set out in section 16 of the *Radio Regulations, 1986* (the Regulations), all radio station licensees have obligations relating to the broadcast of emergency alert messages received from the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination System. In regard to the changes to CFBS-FM's authorized contours resulting from the

implementation of the technical changes approved in this decision, the Commission reminds Radio Blanc-Sablon that continued compliance with section 16 of the Regulations may require that any alert broadcast decoders (e.g., ENDEC) used for the purposes of broadcasting emergency alert messages on that station be reprogrammed to properly account for the new authorized contours.

Secretary General

*This decision is to be appended to the licence.*