
Controversial Canadian Youth News Network Goes Off the Air until January

October 4, 2000

<<<>>>

This document is available on the Education Policy Studies Laboratory website at <http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/CERU/Articles/CERU-0010-86-OWI.doc>

WINNIPEG (CP) - The controversial, Montreal-based Youth News Network has suspended broadcasting until at least January, its president said Wednesday.

``We have to increase the number of schools we have wired across the country" before going back on air, said Rod MacDonald of Athena Educational Partners.

MacDonald said only 14 Canadian schools are taking part in the daily newscasts, though he predicted the release next week of an independent study from a University of Toronto professor would spur more than 50 Canadian school boards to sign up.

Politicians in a couple of provinces have criticized the 10-minute news broadcasts because they show 2 1/2 minutes of commercials and don't always conform to school curriculum.

Manitoba Education Minister Drew Caldwell said Wednesday that he still wants schools taking the service to cancel their contracts after a six-month trial period is up.

Caldwell has also ordered other schools not to sign up for the service.

Saskatchewan Education Minister Jim Melenchuk has asked schools in his province to do the same.

Athena provides participating schools with the use of a rooftop satellite dish, a lab of 25 computers, and a VCR and a 27-inch TV in every classroom.

Athena can use the computer lab evenings and weekends for its private business.

Five of the eight Manitoba high schools have received their equipment, said MacDonald.

He also said Athena has agreed to replace its classroom commercials with public service announcements, and no longer requires that the daily packages be shown during class time.

Despite Caldwell's ban, MacDonald said Athena will not remove its equipment from any of the Manitoba schools and he still hopes he can convince the government to change its position. (Winnipeg Free Press)