

**Community Outraged by Cuts to South Asian Edition – OMNI News**

South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC), the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP), the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) and the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) expressed their shock and outrage to the Rogers Communications' recent announcement about the cuts to multicultural and local news programming on OMNI, particularly to the cuts to South Asian Edition of OMNI News.

Rogers/OMNI's English language newcast, the South Asian Edition, has been a leader in reporting issues of critical importance to the diverse South Asian communities in Canada – giving a strong voice to racialized and marginalized communities and individuals, and providing a platform for discussing issues that helped members of our communities to participate in the broader national issues. The South Asian Edition also broke important stories from the South Asia communities that were then carried by and reported on by other mainstream news outlets. “We are shocked because the South Asian community is one of the largest growing populations in Toronto, the GTA and in Canada and this channel afforded the community a safe space to highlight and raise issues that are unique to the South Asian communities, something that mainstream media was not able to afford on a regular basis,” said Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director of South Asian Women's Centre. “They covered a wide spectrum of issues including immigration, health, HIV, violence against women, poverty, youth issues as well as community events and festivals informing people about what is happening with in Canada, in our communities, and about how to access information, support and resources”.

Vijaya Chikermane, Executive Director of ASAAP also expressed her deep concern. “OMNI served as an educational tool with its coverage of important events and policy changes as well as through its one on one interviews with experts on South Asian issues. It is a tragedy to take this voice away from the South Asian community,” she added.

This move by Rogers is particularly disheartening since we understand that OMNI had committed to reach diverse South Asian communities during the CRTC licensing process that led to OMNI channels being included in the 'basic' channels. Since OMNI's marketing is heavily geared to reach and retain a large South Asian customer base, this move is definitely seems counter-productive. We are asking Rogers to rethink its strategy and not just reinstate but strengthen the program so that it continues to be a critical voice in the South Asian community. Our agencies and leaders from our community would be willing to meet with Rogers to discuss this decision and to provide our support in strengthen local programming for South Asian communities.

A Press Conference on this issue will be held to highlight the concerns, see below for details.

**Date: Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

**Time: 10am to 11am**

**Location: South Asian Women's Centre (800 Lansdowne Ave, Toronto, ON, M6H 4K3)**

For media enquiries or further information:

Neethan Shan, Executive Director, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

Office: 416 932 1359 X15      Cell: 416 824 3399      Email: neethan.shan@cassa.on.ca

Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director, South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC)

Office: 416-537-2276 x 222      Cell: 416 919 0800      Email: kshekar@sawc.org

Shalini Konanur, Executive Director, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)

Office: 416-487-6371 X 40      Email: konunurs@lao.on.ca

Vijaya Chikermane, Executive Director, Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)

Office: 416 599 2727 X224      Cell: 416 9308052      Email: ed@asaap.ca