

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN | ENGLISH SERVICES

# Ombudsman

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

August 13, 2020

Michael Goldbloom, Chairman of the Board  
CBC/Radio-Canada

Catherine Tait, President & CEO  
CBC/Radio-Canada

Members of the Board of Directors  
CBC/Radio-Canada

Mr. Goldbloom, Ms. Tait and Respected Board of Directors Members:

Attached please find the Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman, English Services for the period April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

Sincerely,

Jack Nagler  
CBC Ombudsman, English Services

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# HIGHLIGHTS

Journalism, we hear constantly, is in a crisis. The industry's economics are a mess. The profession's credibility is under attack. The speed and ubiquity of digital platforms, including social media, have supposedly made the mainstream media appear slow and obsolete.

And yet, the 2019-20 year provided two stark instances in which the traditional values of journalism mattered a great deal. The federal election and the coronavirus pandemic have both been important tests of CBC's ability to live up to its mandate with journalism that matters, journalism that informs, and journalism that serves the public's needs in real time.

Much of this year's annual report will focus on these two topics.

First, though, a look at some of the broad numbers from the time period covered by this report, April 1 2019-March 31, 2020:

In all, this office received **6,675** comments, complaints and expressions of concern. Of those, **552** were outside the mandate of this office. Of the **6,123** within the mandate, **1,112** were sent to programmers for a response. The remainder were shared with news management so they could take the concerns expressed into account. This office does not insist on a reply if the nature of a complaint is too broad, or if it duplicates a complaint already received as part of an organized campaign.

These numbers are considerably higher than a year ago. Some of that can be attributed to it being a federal election year. Much of the increase, though, was due to a protest campaign against a documentary called *Drag Kids* which aired on CBC Docs POV. This program told the stories of child entertainers who perform in drag. It drew more than two-thousand complaints, as well as a separate petition that generated **17,315** automated emails to my office. The documentary's journalistic standards were not the issue. Nearly every single complaint focused instead on CBC's decision to show it at all, using words such as "immoral" or "pornographic". CBC's response noted that the film had earned a "G" rating.

As of mid-April there were **13** complaints still awaiting a response. From the complaints to which CBC responded, there were **55** requests for a review. By the close of the fiscal year, **44** reviews had been completed, and the other **11** were carried over into the new fiscal. Of the **44** completed, I found either a violation of policy or room for improvement in **16** of them. This ratio is slightly higher than in previous years, but the nature of the errors and policy infractions in my reviews did not reveal any patterns that suggest a broader problem.

# TRENDS

## | FEDERAL ELECTION

The election campaign generated **446** complaints to my office. It will come as no surprise that the regular theme of the complaints was a perception that CBC was biased.

Typically, this manifested itself in one of four ways:

- Reporters who travelled with the party leaders came under intense scrutiny, and their social media posts in particular were dissected for any word or sentiment that a partisan would find unfavourable to their cause.
- CBC News Network was frequently accused of bias when it broadcast live announcements or news conferences by political figures. Concerns included the amount of time given to one leader versus another, and whether reporters' questions adhered to a party leader's intended message that day.
- Online headlines of stories were often criticised by complainants who saw signs of bias or unfairness in the way stories were framed.
- Complaints arose about coverage of the nascent People's Party of Canada. PPC supporters said there wasn't enough, and what there was seemed too negative. PPC critics said the party received too much attention, and should not have been included in the leaders' debates.

Complaints were all over the partisan map. At some point, CBC was accused of treating every single major party unfairly. The most frequent allegation was of a bias toward the Liberals and/or against the Conservative Party. There were two particular events during the campaign which provoked the most intense reactions.

The first was the incident in which photographs of Justin Trudeau emerged showing him in either blackface or brownface. The story dominated several days in the early weeks of the campaign. Early on, many complainants felt that CBC paid the issue too much attention, and were being unfair to the Liberal leader. Later, a wave of complainants felt that CBC's pursuit of the man who released the first photograph was part of an effort to defend the Liberal leader.

The second event was CBC's decision late in the campaign to sue the Conservative Party of Canada, accusing the party of violating copyright laws by misusing CBC content in its election advertising. My office received more than 50 complaints. Some found it outrageous that CBC would sue a political party in the middle of a campaign, and must clearly be anti-Conservative.

Others focused on two journalists who were initially named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit: how, the complainants wondered, could these employees be allowed to continue covering the campaign? The two journalists were soon removed as plaintiffs, but that did not appease all the critics. Several months later, this incident still pops up in complaints as an example of CBC's alleged political bias.

I asked CBC to respond to most of the complaints, and explain its thinking. However, I did not treat the lawsuit as a subject which I could review as Ombudsman. It is the place of this office to assess CBC's journalism, not to judge how CBC should best defend its legal interests. That remains true, but there is no way to ignore that this event had an impact on CBC's journalistic reputation. So within the broader perspective of my annual report, there are some things I wish to say.

First, I understand why CBC considers misuse of its content by political actors to be a threat to its journalistic integrity. Video and audio can be edited and manipulated to look as though CBC has endorsed one cause or another. That is a real issue, and if managers felt that there was a long-term benefit to be won by fighting that fight, I do not question it.

At the same time, seeing the corporation initiate a legal dispute with a major political party less than two weeks before election day made for a unique challenge. Ironically, in fighting to preserve its journalistic integrity the corporation led some people to doubt that integrity more than they did before.

The court case is still pending, so I cannot say whether the long-term gain will be worth the short-term public relations pain that CBC experienced. Nonetheless, it is my view that this event made the work of CBC's journalists more difficult at an important moment in the election cycle.

## **Federal Election Reviews**

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I conducted three reviews relating to election coverage. Two concluded there were minor violations of the JSP. One of them is worth reiterating here, and involved the treatment of smaller political parties, sometimes called "fringe" parties.

It is perfectly reasonable that the vast majority of CBC's election coverage focused on the main political parties. However, it is also an expectation during the campaign that the public broadcaster should make the public aware of all of its options, not just the conventional ones. My review found that programmers did meet their requirement to do so in the campaign, but there was room for improvement.

For one thing, the primary coverage of fringe parties was done at the end of the campaign, when many or most voters would have made up their mind. Next time, more should be done earlier in the campaign so Canadians have greater awareness of all their options. The other point in the review was that CBC revealed a bias in its daily online feature "Where the leaders are". The title alone implied that the major party leaders were the only ones in existence. A small tweak to the headline, such as "Where the major party leaders are", would at least suggest that voters had alternative choices. Often, it is these little details that make an outsized difference in the end result.

Overall, my own assessment of CBC's election coverage is that it did well adhering to the values of the JSP. There was clearly a sincere effort to provide fair and balanced coverage. Still, there is no room for complacency. While the allegations of overt bias were not ones I shared, there is one bit of anecdotal data I can provide that merits consideration by the news department.

It involves the times when a complaint about the accuracy of a story was resolved without my intervention, because CBC acknowledged an error and took action to fix it. My office observed this happening seven times during the election campaign. Six of the inaccuracies involved concerns about bias - and in all six cases, the initial flaw either benefitted the Liberals, or harmed the Conservatives and/or People's Party.

I recognize this is quite a small number, and it does not undermine the overall performance of CBC News in the election coverage. But I don't believe the six-for-six pattern should be dismissed as a random event, and I encourage news management to tighten the screws of editorial rigour even further, to offset any inherent cultural bias that may exist in the organisation.

### **Federal Election: Independent Advice Panels**

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There has been a tradition going back several elections now, in which the Ombudsman convenes panels of citizens to help monitor CBC's election coverage, and offer their insights. There were three panels this year, and the participants represented a variety of geographic, ideological, and demographic perspectives. I have previously shared their full reports to Board members as well as to CBC management, but I will summarize their findings here so that they will be part of the public record.

Each of the panels was assigned a platform from which to consume information: one covered television (focusing on The National and Power and Politics); another covered radio and audio (focusing on major newscasts, The Current, The House and the Party Lines podcast); and the other covering the digital experience, including social media.

The primary questions I put to the panels were the same in each instance:

1. Does the content deal fairly with individual politicians, parties, election issues and events?
2. Is the coverage in any way misleading, or false?
3. Does the coverage equitably reflect the relevant facts and significant points of view expressed during the campaign?
4. Were the major issues sufficiently explored, and from a sufficient number of perspectives?
5. Did the content serve the purpose of allowing citizens to draw their own conclusions about who to support, and how to participate in the democratic process?

By and large, all three committees came back with favourable sentiments - though each had criticisms and suggestions to offer.

The digital panel summarised its findings this way:

**The panel found CBC’s online coverage during the federal election campaign of 2019 was generally fair, balanced, accurate and explored a diverse range of issues and perspectives. Its multiple digital platforms were convenient and accessible. Relevant facts and points of view were covered relatively equally and in depth.**

This group praised the quality of online fact-checks, as well as interactive features such as [Vote Tracker](#) and the election night [results pages](#). The panel also found that any necessary corrections were completed quickly and transparently. But it felt there was not enough attention paid to regional election coverage, particularly in Atlantic Canada. It would have preferred to see more Indigenous voices, and it felt that for a few days, coverage of the “blackface” incident led too many other stories to fall by the wayside. This panel, attuned as it was to social media, expressed particular concern about CBC’s decision to sue the Conservative Party of Canada.

The radio panel shared the concern about regional coverage. Programs that showcased particular regions received praise, and panelists would have welcomed even more of this type of programming.

The group also grappled with the challenge most radio news producers will recognize: how do you achieve journalistic balance when newscasts are short, and there is no time to acknowledge all the possible stories out there?

**“I do think skipping any party’s leader’s whereabouts appears like avoided coverage and more open to accusations of bias. However, I recognize this can get tedious,”** said one panelist.

**Said another: “I don’t really have to know where each and every leader is, but for CBC to specifically not mention one or more candidates’ whereabouts and activities seems like an omission even if it is not intentional. It would be easier to just routinely note everyone’s daily plan and itinerary to avoid any potential accusations.”**

**Another said they were curious to know how a reporter or host decides to report on some candidates but not others.**

**So, how best to navigate? Consistency would seem to be key. Either mention everyone’s whereabouts, or drive listeners to the website for details of the other leaders whose activities aren’t mentioned in the news roundup.**

The panel also had a message of caution about the use of newscasters doing what it called “chit chat” with hosts of regional programs. These promotional segments are intended to let people know what is coming up in the next hour’s news, but some panellists felt that these informal appearances can come across as commentary or opinion from someone they are relying on to be impartial.



Still, the radio panel praised the overall coverage, in particular stories that explained more about the political process.

The television panel shared two main themes with the others: overall praise for the coverage as fair and balanced politically, but some concern about the regional breakdown:

**The horse race aspect of the coverage did put a lot of focus on Quebec and Ontario, as the important contested areas. This leads to some shows being extremely geographically narrow, with few voices from the west or the east.**

One panellist noted a different geographical issue, observing vast amounts of coverage relating to urban issues, and much less devoted to issues of concern to rural Canadians.

As mentioned, this panel focused primarily on The National and Power and Politics. It was by and large quite complimentary of the performance of the two main hosts they watched (Rosemary Barton for The National and Vassy Kapelos for Power and Politics). One segment that was greeted with particular enthusiasm was “Face to Face”, a series of question-and-answer sessions with voters and the major party leaders.

## | CORONAVIRUS

Journalists have experience reporting from war zones. They’ve learned how to troubleshoot during a natural disaster, or find patchwork solutions during massive power blackouts. Yet I have never seen the workflow of CBC programmers turned upside down the way it was during the first quarter of 2020. The cause, of course, was the novel coronavirus that exploded into a pandemic causing death, fear and economic chaos around the world, and forcing millions of Canadians to retreat into isolation in their homes.

For many of us it was bewildering, in no small part because so much was unknown. Through this period, citizens clamoured for information to help them understand what was happening, and the need for CBC to provide reliable and credible journalism was as great as it has ever been.

It ought to be acknowledged that CBC’s news and current affairs programming across the country distinguished itself during this period for creativity, ingenuity, and bravery if only for producing the volume and breadth of journalism that it did during the early weeks of the pandemic. Nothing is perfect, and I received many complaints about certain aspects of CBC’s COVID-19 coverage. However, I have also received an uptick in emails thanking CBC for providing such a valuable public service.

The pandemic, like the federal election, is a perfect example of why it is that the public broadcaster needs to maintain, and adhere to, rigorous journalistic standards. Whatever the platform, whatever the presentation style, the key principles remain the same: accuracy, impartiality, integrity, balance and fairness.

There were **204** complaints to my office regarding pandemic coverage in the period up to March 31<sup>st</sup>. There have been many more since then, which will no doubt feature in next year's report. Those who found fault in CBC's coverage during March often focused on the numbers. Using the right statistics, placing them in proportion, and reporting them in context came up frequently. The following is an excerpt from my blog that month:

**That could mean distinguishing between raw numbers of cases and the rate of cases per capita. It could be making sure to explain the lag time between tests and results, or between physical distancing and a measurable impact on “flattening the curve”. The sophistication of the coverage - and of public understanding - is improving week by week, but CBC's journalists will never regret checking, double-checking, and triple-checking their work in these areas.**

Another area that has come up often is the broadcasting of live events. There have been so many briefings from which to choose, from politicians and public health officials alike. Viewers had competing desires to see the events most relevant to their own communities, and CBC's decisions came under scrutiny. This was especially true for CBC News Network, which had the unenviable task of deciding which briefings (including those happening simultaneously) merited being shown. The two most common complaints were that CBCNN gave preference to briefings from Ontario at the expense of other provinces, and that it continued to air live briefings from the White House. The latter was criticised by some simply because it was American news that could be found elsewhere, and by others because they felt Donald Trump was sowing public confusion rather than offering public clarity.

One of the areas of complaint I have found most interesting, though, merits a headline of its own in this report: live news conferences.

## | THE ROLE OF REPORTERS AT LIVE NEWS CONFERENCES

Sometimes, politicians hold formal news conferences. Other times they are less formal, and the ensuing exchange is known by both sides as a “scrum”. It is no coincidence that this term is borrowed from rugby; it can be fast-paced, biting and occasionally brutish. Reporters ask hard questions designed to elicit concrete answers from the politician. If it's obvious that the politician is working to stay on a message-track, reporters become all the more determined to knock them off that track, and cajole them to say something more authentic.

Other than hard-core news devotees, most people don't see this side of the journalistic process. Instead, they see the end result: a polished news story that recites facts, adds context, and uses the best quote (or “clip”, in the language of broadcast) from the politician.

During the pandemic (and to some extent the election campaign), these events have become more than a time to gather the news, they ARE the news - events broadcast live, with a public hungry for information and watching closely.

Some in the audience have been disappointed by the behaviour of the journalists, who come off to them as aggressive and disrespectful. They sometimes find the questions themselves indicate a form of bias.

This office has received a number of complaints regarding this very scenario. As I rely on the JSP, it is unlikely I would find that a reporter has violated policy by asking an aggressive or outlandish question; I would assess them based on the end result of the reporting. But this is a phenomenon that may not go away. If the audience is going to judge the performative nature of these scrums and draw conclusions about CBC journalists based purely on the questions they ask, CBC should consider whether that requires an adjustment on the ground, or at least explicit guidelines. Alternatively, it may need to explain more frequently to the rest of us why reporters would adopt these tactics.

# OTHER ISSUES

## | SOCIETAL TENSIONS

Even after accounting for the election and the pandemic, it was striking how frequently a story or issue generated a large number of complaints to this office. They tended to reveal the deep social divides in our society. Some of these spikes in complaints came in reaction to original journalism by CBC News, such as series on [climate change](#), [vaping](#), and [vaccinations](#). Other times, it was that the news itself divided Canadians, for instance: the Wet'suwet'en and rail blockades, SNC Lavalin or the firing of Don Cherry. Still other times, I found myself reviewing complaints about interviews done on CBC Radio. In one, author [Mona Eltahawy](#) made a provocative suggestion that the best way to reduce violence against women just might be women using violence against men. In another, the head of the Toronto Public Library, [Vickery Bowles](#), defended her decision to allow a public event featuring a speaker who'd been accused of making hateful comments about the Trans community.

One review generated enormous feedback, particularly from the North. It examined a [column](#) about racism in Nunavut that was itself accused of being racist against white people. The [review](#) was a complicated one. It included suggestions on how CBC might have handled the situation differently, but also showed how the JSP can help programmers navigate difficult and divisive issues.

## | HEADLINES

I wrote in [last year's](#) annual report about story framing, and how it might create a perception that coverage is biased. This is a necessary evil in journalism - deciding what the story is "about" inherently brings a degree of subjectivity. But I urge CBC to pay even greater attention to the way they construct online headlines.

These little bits of wordcraft are so important. They have to be interesting, or no one will open the story. They also have to be accurate, which can be challenging with limited characters. Their impact is multiplied because so often the headline becomes the text for a post on social media, and affects how a story is shared by others.

When it comes to fairness and balance, they are also powder kegs. An exquisitely balanced and proportioned story can be blown up by a blunt headline. As well, headline conventions such as using a colon to indicate attribution, or even quotation marks, are sometimes used as a crutch by journalists to get provocative ideas into headlines. To the audience it can seem as though CBC is not just attributing an idea, but endorsing it. I'm not saying that these headlines are wrong, but I am saying that this technique can obscure as much as it clarifies.

Add to that, CBC's choice to place opinion pieces in its feed alongside its news stories. These articles often have provocative and opinionated headlines. Even though the articles carry an opinion label, the headlines still generate complaints that CBC has adopted a point of view on some controversy of the day. I often empathise with these complaints.

It all adds up to an issue that CBC ought to be taking very seriously. I recommend that CBC News review its guidelines on the use of headlines. They have an outsized influence on the way the corporation's journalism is received by the audience, and deserve an equivalent amount of attention.

## | CORRECTIONS AND TRANSPARENCY

In [multiple reviews](#) over the past year, I have made a particular recommendation to CBC News: that it should follow the lead of Radio-Canada and create an online web page listing corrections to stories told on television and radio. CBC is already very good in acknowledging corrections in the digital realm, but there is no permanent record of errors made in broadcast.

I am disappointed to have to make the same recommendation again here in this annual report. I understand that News management has been examining this recommendation, along with other measures designed to increase trust from the public. In this environment, there is never enough that can be done to earn that public trust, and I hope that the modest measure I recommended will be implemented sooner than later.

## | NON-MANDATE COMPLAINTS

The Office of the Ombudsman received **275** complaints this year on the subject of commenting on the CBC website.

As usual, I did not assess these complaints. My mandate is to review the journalism created by CBC, and does not extend to comments by the public.

Nonetheless, there were trends worth noting in the complaints that I saw. People expressed frustration about the moderation of comments, and in particular a sense that moderators were harder on conservative comments than on progressive comments. There is also continuous resentment that CBC is unable to provide individual explanations for moderation decisions.

In some ways, the problems with commenting are rooted in its own success. The volume is enormous in part because CBC has worked hard to open more stories to comments and increase public discourse. That means the burden on moderators is great, as is the burden on CBC's Audience Services staff who deal with comments and complaints in this area. I realize there are few easy or perfect solutions to all the challenges. Yet I would be remiss if I did not share this as a recurring issue that I am seeing.

## | RESPONSIVENESS

When I forward a complaint to programmers for a response, I remind them that there is an expectation (though not a rule) that they will respond within twenty working days.

This year, my office began measuring the average response time, and I was pleased to see the average was **14** days.

Beyond that, CBC News made a particular effort to respond more quickly during the compressed time frame of the election campaign. And it has regularly found ways to provide a quick response during the pandemic.

The performance has not been perfect - occasionally, I've had to remind programmers that they were close to the time frame, or even past it. But these incidents are becoming rare, and I extend my praise and gratitude to the programmers and managers responsible.

# CONCLUSION

This has been a particularly tumultuous year in the world, and in the world of journalism. I have not in the main body of this report re-examined other controversies that in the past might have been frontline topics for an annual report, ranging from coverage of escalating conflict between the U.S and Iran, to whether CBC was justified when it broadcast audio of the Prime Minister appearing to gossip about Donald Trump while attending a social event with other world leaders at Buckingham Palace

If volatility is going to be a theme of world events during my tenure in this office, I am grateful to be surrounded by such steady sources of support. CBC President and CEO Catherine Tait has given me all the necessary space and respect to do my work. I have also had full cooperation from program leaders and management elsewhere across English Services. There is a new leadership team at CBC News, including General Manager Susan Marjetti and Editor in Chief Brodie Fenlon. Both have embraced the importance of the Ombudsman's office and the imperative of rigorous journalistic standards, and I am excited to work with both of them. I want to also thank the former leader of CBC News, Jennifer McGuire, who not only took journalistic ethics extremely seriously, but encouraged me both before and after I became Ombudsman.

My counterpart at French Services, Guy Gendron, sets a great example for me by performing his role with thoroughness and firmly held principles. He has, on several occasions, helped sharpen my thinking on an issue, and I am grateful to have him as a colleague. And last, but most certainly not least, I offer thanks to my executive assistant Teresa Batista. She makes the office function smoothly at all times, but her drive and capacity to do so while working remotely during the pandemic has been an inspiration.

# COMMUNICATIONS & REVIEWS

## Number of Communications Received

YEAR	INFORMATION PROGRAMMING	GENERAL PROGRAMS/ OTHER	TOTAL NO. OF COMPLAINTS	COMPLAINTS PROCESSED	AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME (DAYS)
2019-20	<b>*6,123</b> (+(Petition: CBC Docs POV "Drag Kids" - 17,315)	<b>**552</b>	<b>6,675</b>	<b>1,112</b>	<b>14</b>
2018-19	3,131	562	3,693	N/A	N/A
2017-18	3,185	884	4,069	N/A	N/A
2016-17	2,162	1,008	3,170	N/A	N/A
2015-16	1,859	923	2782	N/A	N/A
2014-15	1,706	1171	2877	N/A	N/A

\*2,202 CBC Docs POV Drag Kids

\*\*275 comments complaints

## Distribution of Information Programming Complaints per Platform

YEAR	TELEVISION	RADIO	NEWS NETWORK	CBC.CA	SOCIAL MEDIA	OTHER
2019-20	2,910	417	819	1,432	116	355

## Reviews

YEAR	NO. OF REVIEWS	FOR CBC	AGAINST CBC	RECOMMENDATIONS	CARRIED FORWARD
2019-20	44	28	9	7	11



# OMBUDSMAN'S MANDATE

## | PRINCIPLES

CBC-Radio-Canada is fully committed to maintaining accuracy, fairness, balance, impartiality and integrity in its journalism, as expressed in its unique code of ethics and practice, the Journalistic Standards and Practices. Our journalistic mission is to inform, to reveal, to contribute to the understanding of issues of public interest and to encourage citizens to participate in our free and democratic society. We base our credibility on fulfilling that mission through adherence to the values, principles and practices laid out in the Journalistic Standards and Practices.

The Ombudsman is completely independent of CBC program staff and management, reporting directly to the President of CBC and, through the President, to the Corporation's Board of Directors.

## | MANDATE

The Ombudsman acts as an appeal authority for complainants who are dissatisfied with responses from CBC information or program management.

The Ombudsman generally intervenes only when a correspondent deems a response from a representative of the Corporation unsatisfactory and so informs the Office of the Ombudsman. However, the Ombudsman may also intervene when the Corporation fails to respond to a complaint within a reasonable time.

The Ombudsman determines whether the journalistic process or the broadcast involved in the complaint did, in fact, violate the Corporation's Journalistic Standards and Practices. The gathering of facts is a non-judicial process and the Ombudsman does not examine the civil liability of the Corporation or its journalists. The Ombudsman informs the complainant and the staff and management concerned of the review's findings and posts such findings on the Ombudsman's website.

As necessary, the Ombudsman identifies major public concerns as gleaned from complaints received by the Office and advises CBC management and journalists accordingly. The Ombudsman and CBC management may agree that the Ombudsman undertake periodic studies on overall coverage of specific issues when it is felt there may be a problem and will advise CBC management and journalists of the results of such studies.

The Ombudsman establishes a central registry of complaints and comments regarding information content, and alerts journalists and managers on a regular basis to issues that are causing public concern.

The Ombudsman prepares and presents an annual report to the President and the Board of Directors of the Corporation summarizing how complaints were dealt with and reviewing the main issues handled by the Office of the Ombudsman in the previous year. The report includes mention of the actions, if any, taken by management as a result of the Ombudsman's findings, provided such disclosure does not contravene applicable laws, regulations or collective agreements. The annual report, or a summary thereof, is made public.

The Office of the Ombudsman reports annually on how each media component has met the CBC standard of service for the expeditious handling of complaints.

## | COMPLIANCE

The Office of the Ombudsman is responsible for evaluating compliance with the Journalistic Standards and Practices in all content under its jurisdiction. It can be assisted in this role by independent advice panels.

Panel members are chosen by the Ombudsman. Their mandate is to assess content over a period of time, or the overall coverage of a particular issue by many programs, and report their findings to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will advise CBC management and journalists of these findings.

The evaluation measures performance in respecting the fundamental principles of CBC journalism.

All employees of CBC News, as well as the content they create, and employees of Local Services, Radio Talk information programming, or any service involved in the creation of news, current affairs and public affairs content must respect all of the principles of the Journalistic Standards and Practices namely:

- **Accuracy, fairness, balance, impartiality and integrity.**

With the exception of fiction and comedy, content produced by other employees which touches on politics, social issues, economics, cultural issues, scientific issues or sports – particularly if the issues are controversial – must respect the following principles :

- **Accuracy, fairness and balance.**

User-generated content, when incorporated into information programming, must conform with the principles of the Journalistic Standards and Practices.

Moreover, in an election or referendum period, the Journalistic Standards and Practices applies to all content related to the campaign, parties or candidates that is broadcast and published by the CBC, regardless of the department concerned.

The JSP applies to all news, current affairs and public affairs content commissioned by CBC and produced by third parties.

The Office reports bi-annually.

## | JURISDICTION

The jurisdiction of the Office of the Ombudsman covers all content, produced for radio, television or the internet (including social media used by CBC) that falls within the scope of the Journalistic Standards and Practices.

Complaints beyond the Ombudsman's mandate should be addressed directly to the programs concerned, or [Audience Relations](#).

## | APPOINTMENT

When filling the Ombudsman's position, the CBC openly seeks candidates from outside as well as inside the Corporation.

After appropriate consultation, the President and CEO establish a selection committee of four. Two members, including the committee chair, must be from the public. People currently employed by the Corporation or employed by the Corporation within the previous three years will be excluded from nomination as public members. The other committee members are chosen, one among CBC management, the other among its working journalists. Members representing the Corporation and journalists jointly select the committee chair among the two representatives of the public.

The selection committee examines applications and selects a candidate to be recommended for appointment by the President and CEO.

The Ombudsman appointment is for a term of five years. This term may be extended for no more than five additional years. The Ombudsman's contract cannot be terminated except for gross misconduct or in instances where the Ombudsman's actions have been found to be inconsistent with the Corporation's Code of Conduct Policy 2.2.21.

The outgoing Ombudsman may not occupy any other position at the CBC for a period of two years following the end of his/her term but can, at the discretion of the incoming Ombudsman, be contracted to work for the Office of the Ombudsman.

**NOTE:** Last modified February 27, 2019.



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