



CBC/Radio-Canada:  
**Public Purpose  
in a Digital Future**

October 2, 2024



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>PREFACE</u>	<b>3</b>
<u>SECTION 1: The Operating Environment: Canadian Media in Crisis</u>	<b>8</b>
<u>SECTION 2: 90 Years: From Public Broadcaster to Public Service Media</u>	<b>26</b>
<u>SECTION 3: How Public Service Media Can Step Up in the 21st Century</u>	<b>54</b>
<u>SECTION 4: Serving Canadians Where They Are: Public Service Media in Transition</u>	<b>66</b>
<u>SECTION 5: Sustainable Funding</u>	<b>82</b>
<u>SECTION 6: Governance — Why Independence Matters</u>	<b>103</b>
<u>Conclusion: From Public Broadcaster to Public Service Media</u>	<b>115</b>
<u>APPENDIX A: Research Reports</u>	<b>116</b>



## PREFACE

*Public Purpose in a Digital Future* aims to give Canadians, policymakers, industry stakeholders and those engaged in the debate about Canada's public broadcaster the facts about the current state of CBC/Radio-Canada in 2024.

Our hope is that with an agreed-upon understanding of how we got to where we are today, those interested in the future of Canada's largest cultural institution will be better placed to discuss its relevance and sustainability into the future. Because while the domestic media landscape appears bleak, we believe that the public broadcaster should continue to be a bulwark for Canadian news and information as well as a key supporter of our nation's creative output.



St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador | CBC

We begin with the sobering reality of a media industry in profound structural transformation, poorly equipped and resourced to reclaim territory already lost to foreign digital giants over the past decade. While public policy and regulation largely protected and supported domestic media for the past 90 years, today Google, Meta, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Disney+, Spotify and YouTube have become the dominant platforms used by Canadians.



This dominance of foreign media, especially from our southern neighbours, has been a constant for Canadian media. It was true for the new technology of radio in the 1920s. It was true for TV in the 1950s. In each case, public policy has worked to support, protect and promote Canadian culture. CBC/Radio-Canada has been a large part of this mission to ensure that Canadian culture survives in the media. Today, the challenges are different, but the mission and purpose remain the same. The question now is: what role should CBC/Radio-Canada play in the emerging digital world, as a promoter and support for our culture?

As Canadians have migrated in massive numbers to digital platforms, the ability of traditional broadcasters to pivot to serve them and compete with foreign offerings has been inhibited by regulatory obligations that tether the industry to the past. The operating environment is made worse by the fact that foreign digital companies are hoovering up 94% of available digital revenue in the Canadian market.

The resulting state of affairs is concerning on many fronts: the creation of news deserts across the country even while Canadians rely increasingly on social media platforms for news; a weakening of homegrown media and cultural players; the proliferation of disinformation and online harm; and the resulting increase in polarization and decline in trust that undermine social cohesion and our democracy.

It is against this backdrop that a constructive debate about the role of the public broadcaster and the scope of its activities has shifted to whether or not it should even exist. We know from other jurisdictions around the globe that there is a direct correlation between citizens' engagement with, and trust in, public institutions and the existence of well-funded independent public service media. As such, we would posit that, in a world of increasing polarization and division, the presence of a public broadcaster in any democratic nation is more important, more critical, than ever.

*Public Purpose in a Digital Future* aims to correct much of the record and redress misunderstandings that make a constructive debate about CBC/Radio-Canada difficult, if not impossible. We address the many questions that critics raise: Why was public media service established and why does it still matter today? How do we guarantee independence from political influence and how do we ensure transparency and accountability? How do we compare in funding and governance to our peers? Why does the French-language service perform better on TV than the English-language service? Why is advertising on a public broadcaster? How do we compete in a digital world while continuing to serve audiences on all platforms? And finally, how could we improve our services to Canadians so we remain relevant into the future?



Despite the troubled state of Canada’s domestic media ecosystem, we believe that the role of the public broadcaster has never been more important — critical to Canadians’ ability to access impartial news and information wherever they live; critical to connecting Canadians with our rich and diverse cultural and creative talent.

In a recent report of the most plausible global disruptions to Canada, the first ranked threat was found to be “people cannot tell what is true and what is not.”<sup>1</sup> The likely flooding of the information ecosystem with disinformation, misinformation and fake news will continue to contribute to the current trend of increasing distrust and polarization. Clearly a public broadcaster dedicated to providing Canadians independent, balanced, fact-based, non-partisan information will be ever more important in our country’s efforts to combat the swelling tsunami of disinformation propagated by bad actors and artificial intelligence (AI).

Ranked third and tenth in the list of disruptors in the Policy Horizons report are “emergency response is overwhelmed” and “democratic systems break down.” Again, CBC/Radio-Canada is a critical instrument in the nation’s ability to respond to emergencies, whether climate-related or other. The public broadcaster operates the largest transmission system for radio and television in the country, connecting east, west, south and, importantly, the North. It is our firm belief that the public broadcaster, over its 88 years, has supported lively debate across myriad political and social issues and, as such, has contributed to the country’s evolution as one of the world’s most-admired democracies. Maintaining and even expanding the public broadcaster’s role in supporting civil discourse and plurality in political, social and cultural expression will be key to the future of our democracy.

Much of the debate circling CBC/Radio-Canada is about the level of its public funding. And while some would argue that at \$1.3 billion the public broadcaster is more than adequately funded, this paper makes a case for the opposite. The average annual funding of our peers is about \$80 per capita. The level for CBC/Radio-Canada is less than half that amount, a dime a day. And, let us not forget, we serve Canadians across six time zones, two official languages and many Indigenous languages. In order to meet the demands of a digital future, to combat disinformation and erosion of trust, and to continue to support democratic debate in Canada, the public broadcaster must be shored up and strengthened.

---

<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, Policy Horizons Canada Report, [Disruptions on the Horizon](#), 2024.



Canada's public broadcaster has been a cultural anchor for the country for almost 90 years. Despite general erosion in trust in media, CBC/Radio-Canada still ranks first in Canada in terms of reputation and in terms of trusted news.<sup>2</sup> In a future dominated by global digital giants, CBC/Radio-Canada's presence as a primary engine for our cultural and creative industries, and as a provider of trusted local, regional, national and international news, is a precious asset. After all, we are the country's *only* national media service in French, in English and in Indigenous languages.



*El Toro* | Radio-Canada

---

<sup>2</sup> Pollara, Strategic Insights, [Trust in Media - How Canadians feel about news outlets](#), July 2024.

# 1



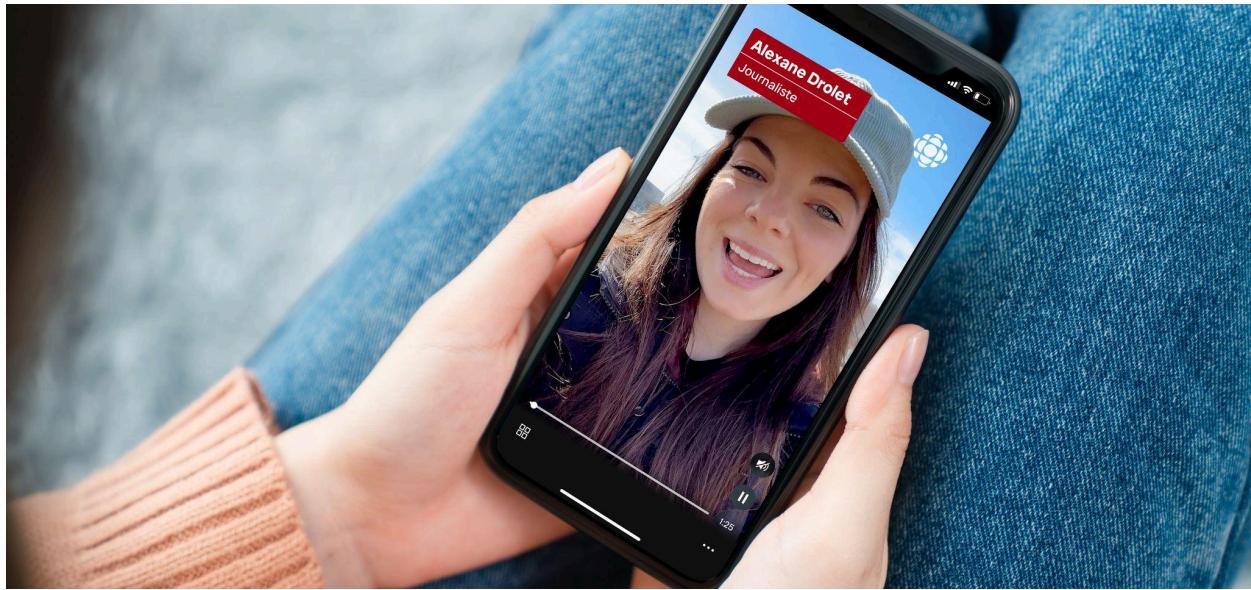
Forest fire, Northern Alberta



## SECTION 1

# The Operating Environment: Canadian Media in Crisis

### The Shift to Digital



*Vidéojournal Québec | Radio-Canada*

The overall media landscape is shifting to digital. The pandemic accelerated this trend. However, the decline in use of traditional media and shift to digital varies by age and language groups. For example, TV and radio are highly used by older Canadians. And digital adoption differs by language groups, with francophones still very loyal to linear TV and radio. Nonetheless, the secular decline of linear platforms, both TV and radio, remains a trend across all age and language groups.

CBC/Radio-Canada is operating in a media environment under transformation and stress. Canadian media businesses are in crisis. Audiences and revenues are shrinking. Companies are slashing costs, and well-paying jobs are being lost. News outlets are closing. Some companies are on the brink of failure. No area, genre or métier is immune, be it entertainment, journalism, documentaries, or sports.<sup>3</sup>

---

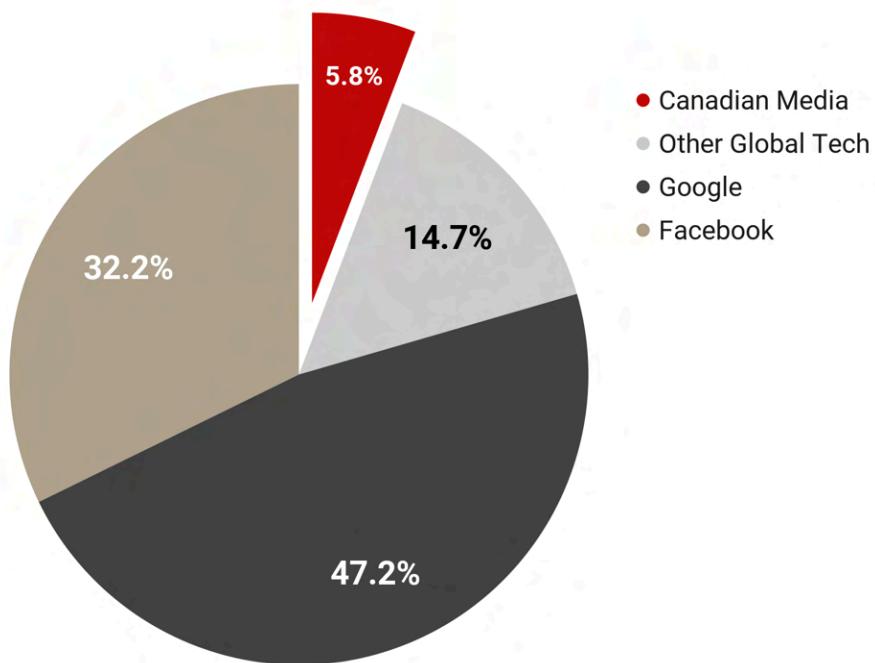
<sup>3</sup> The trends are widely studied and reported. See for example, Communications Management Inc., for the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, [The crisis in Canadian media and the future of local broadcasting](#), August 24, 2020; Canadian Press, “[Bell Media planning cuts to CTV, BNN Bloomberg following BCE layoffs, sale of 45 radio stations](#),” February 8, 2024; Agence QMI, “[Plus de 500 postes supprimés au sein du Groupe TVA](#),” *Le Journal de Montréal*, November 2, 2023; Aime Look, “[Corus shares may be worthless after Rogers television raid, TD says](#),” *Bloomberg News*, June 12, 2024; Marie-Ève Martel, “[We must not allow our country to become a news desert](#),” *Policy Options*, February 19, 2024.



No one doubts the root causes: the shift of audiences to digital media platforms and foreign competition. This shift has had a profound — if not crushing — impact on the revenue picture, both advertising and subscription, for domestic media.

Over the past decade and half, Canadian media companies have seen their advertising revenues contract, to the benefit of a few foreign digital advertising vendors, such as Google, Meta and Amazon. Today, about 70% of ad spending in Canada is placed on digital platforms.<sup>4</sup> Almost all dollars go to foreign vendors. Canadian vendors account for less than 6% (!) of digital ad dollars spent in the country. Nearly all (94%) of the growing part of the ad business already goes to American companies, and 90% of this goes to two companies — Meta and Alphabet/Google.

**Fig. 1. Shares of Canadian Internet Advertising Revenues (2021)<sup>5</sup>**



This dominance is unlikely to be reversed. American ad tech benefits from big capital that funds big tech, which is combined with big data from global users. All this in turn creates a flywheel effect for precise and effective ad solutions whose development and operational costs are globally amortized. No Canadian provider competes well in this space.

<sup>4</sup> Statistica: In 2024, the total ad market is estimated at [\\$23.01B](#), with digital ad placement at [\\$16.19B](#).

<sup>5</sup> See [Canadian Media Concentration Research Project \(CMCR\)](#); Winseck, Dwayne, 2022, “[Media and Internet Concentration in Canada, 1984–2021](#),” (Figure 20: [Internet Advertising: Revenue, Market Shares and Concentration Scores \(based on \\$\)](#), 2014-2021). Google revenues exclude YouTube. “Other Canadian Media” includes Bell, Pelmorex, Postmedia, Rogers, Shaw, Torstar, Quebecor, The Globe and Mail, La Presse Trust, CN21, FP Canadian Newspapers, Glacier and Yellow Pages. “Other Global Tech” includes Amazon, Microsoft/Bing, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter.



The trend lines are dire for domestic media. The more Canadian media businesses become digital, the less money they make from advertising, the more marginal the Canadian industry becomes. This is an unsustainable path.

The second area of commercial revenues, TV subscriptions, is also not faring well. It is contracting, due to cord cutting, cord nevers and cord shaving, and as Canadian audiences increasingly bypass Canadian-owned cable and satellite providers. Again, the beneficiaries are foreign platforms, such as Netflix, Apple, Disney and Amazon.

Add to this the evidence that foreign platform owners are fighting domestic attempts to assert legislative and regulatory autonomy that aim to protect and promote Canadian culture. We saw a *force majeure* move from Meta, for example, in reaction to the Online News Act, commonly known as Bill C-18. Since August 2023, Meta has banned all news (Canadian and foreign) on its platforms in Canada in reaction to the Online News Act.<sup>6</sup>

We may see the same pushback on contributions under the Online Streaming Act (Bill C-11). Alphabet already has gone to court to contest the calculations used by the CRTC that include YouTube under fees to regulate the broadcasting system.<sup>7</sup> The negative reaction of streamers to base contributions ordered by the CRTC in June 2024 augur more fights ahead.<sup>8</sup>

Fighting back in this fashion on domestic laws and cultural regulation is a repeating story for Canadians, as old as mass media in the country.<sup>9</sup>

Yet the stakes are much higher today. Not only is Canadian media being transformed by digital technology; its foundations are rapidly declining while its future is being transformed. Nothing is new under the sun — certainly not an entire industry being disrupted by technology. However, this time, the speed with which the disruption is occurring and the compounding effects of well-funded competitors have contributed to a perfect storm for Canadian media.

This macro context is essential to understand, as it situates the role played by CBC/Radio-Canada as an anchor, if not a cultural and journalistic bulwark, in the digital transformation of Canadian media.

<sup>6</sup> See Darren Major, CBC News, “[Meta permanently ending news availability on its platforms in Canada](#),” August 1, 2023; Leyland Cecco, The Guardian, “[Canada publishers urge Ottawa to stop Meta from blocking users’ news access](#),” August 8, 2023; Hugo Joncas, Radio-Canada, “[Meta commence à bloquer les nouvelles canadiennes sur ses plateformes](#),” August 1, 2023; Radio-Canada, “[Le Bureau de la concurrence invité à enquêter sur le blocage des nouvelles par Meta](#),” August 8, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Press, in The Toronto Star, "Google suing CRTC to have YouTube video ad revenue exempted from regulatory fees," May 6, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Motion Picture Association - Canada, “[CRTC Decision Reinforces Decades-old Regulatory Approach for Cable Companies](#),” June 4, 2024; Barry Hertz, “[How the CRTC ruined Netflix and Disney’s summer vacations, but hopefully not yours](#),” The Globe and Mail, June 6, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Peter S. Grant, Chris Wood, *Blockbusters and Trade Wars: Popular Culture in a Globalized World*, 2009.



## The Video Landscape

TV audiences are shrinking. Linear TV viewing in Canada has declined by 41% since 2011. On average, Canadians now watch 17 hours of linear TV each week. This is down from 28 hours per week in 2011.

Linear TV viewing has shrunk across all age cohorts, but faster among anglophones. The francophone market has remained comparatively resistant, with a slower adoption and shift to digital. Today, francophones consume 24 hours of TV on average per week, versus 15 hours for anglophones. The francophone market is therefore roughly where the anglophone market was 10 years ago, as seen in Figures 2 and 3 below.

### Time Spent Watching TV per Week — Total for Anglophones and Francophones<sup>10</sup>

Fig. 2. Time Spent Watching TV per Week, All Day, Total Anglophones

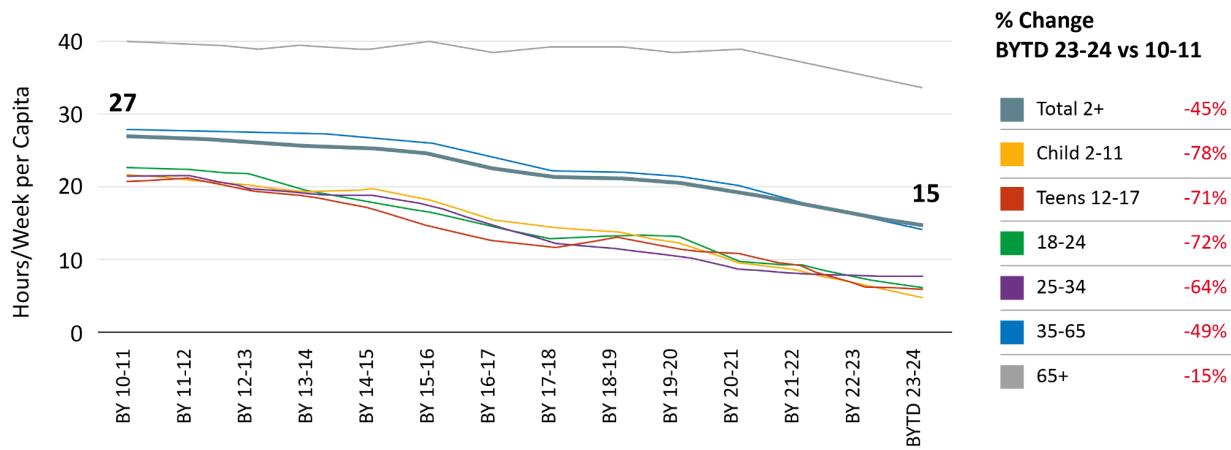
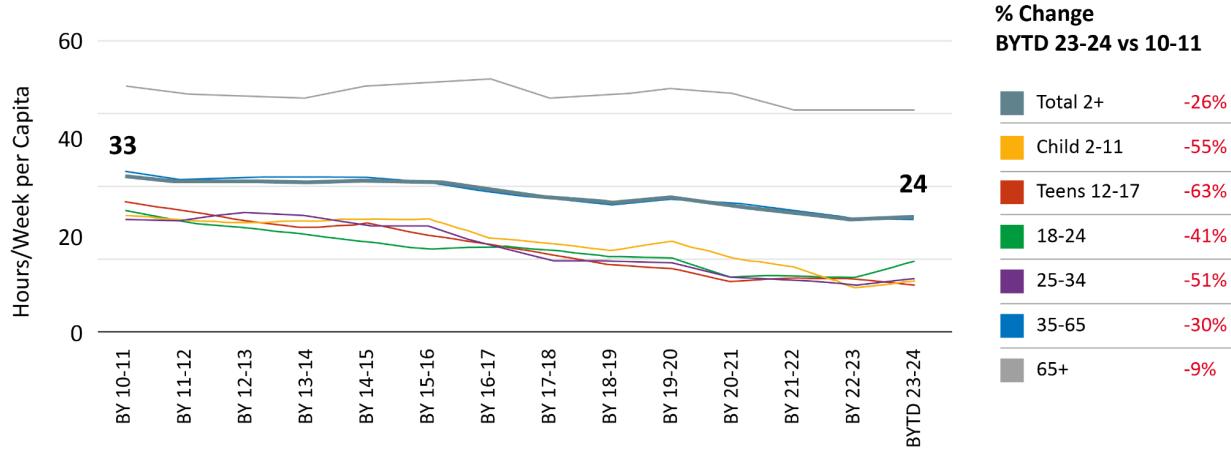


Fig. 3. Time Spent Watching TV per Week, All Day, Total Francophones



<sup>10</sup> Numeris TV PPM, Monday to Sunday, all day. Broadcast Year to Date (BYTD) 23-24 covers August 28, 2023 to December 03, 2023. Anglophones: Canada minus Quebec Franco. Francophones: Quebec Franco.

This asymmetry for the francophone market is partly due to language, which is a natural barrier to trade for American English digital services, and partly because of the singularity of Canadian francophone and Québécois cultural affinities, which only domestic outlets, such as Quebecor and Radio-Canada, reference and speak to.

If there is one rule in Canadian media, it is this: when American services can provide a substitute for a Canadian offering, the U.S. offer usually wins. While francophone audiences remain loyal to traditional domestic media, the language barrier is falling. This is in part due to increased bilingualism among francophones<sup>11</sup>; but also because foreign services now provide subtitles for their content at scale across their globally sourced catalogues. As such, the lag on digital adoption for francophones may not last.

The general data are clear that linear TV is shrinking as audiences move to digital video platforms, commonly called over-the-top (OTT) services. Immigration is not fully offsetting these trends. Only around half of newcomers subscribe to a paid TV service, while 88% have a digital video subscription service.<sup>12</sup> But the shift to digital is not benefiting Canadian players. Rather, American players are benefiting from the shift, and now dominate the market segment in video.



*Murdoch Mysteries* | CBC

<sup>11</sup> La Presse canadienne, “[Hausse du bilinguisme des jeunes âgés de 5 à 17 ans au Canada](#),” *Le Devoir*, 2019.

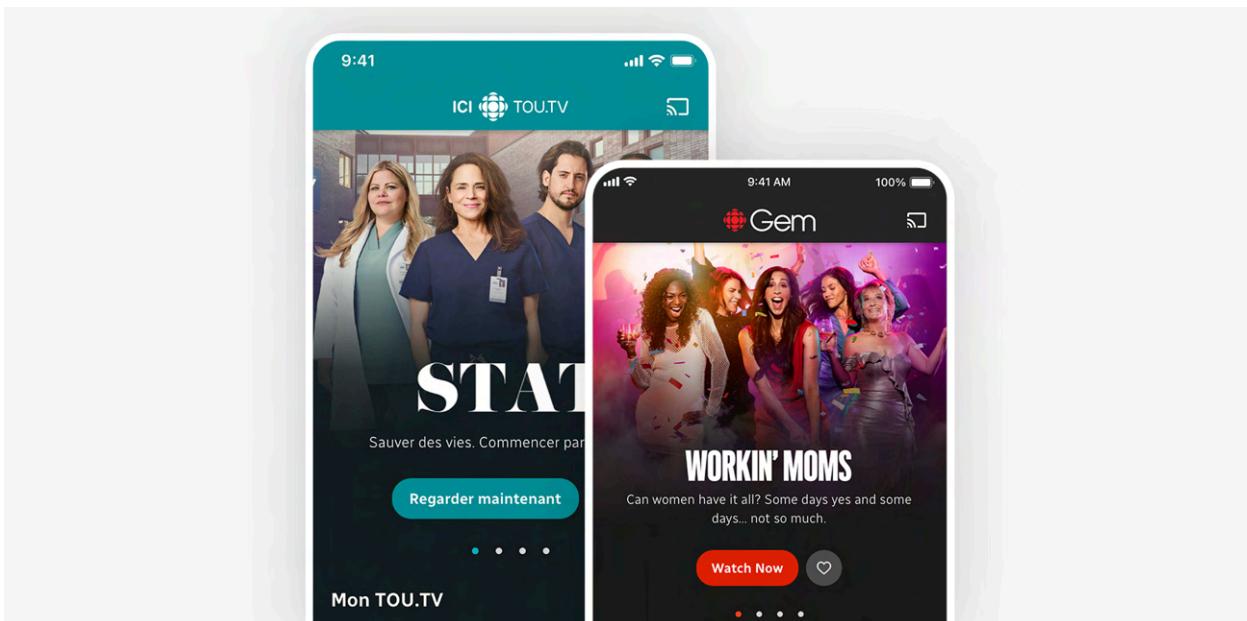
<sup>12</sup> Media Technology Monitor, “[Newcomers - What's On? Newcomers, TV and Video](#),” 2023.



For example, Netflix has a 63% subscription level among anglophones, and 56% with francophones. Amazon has a penetration rate of 54% for anglophones, versus 35% with francophones. And Disney is at 35% for anglophones, and 21% for francophones.<sup>13</sup>

The highest penetrated Canadian video OTT service is Crave, at 22% for anglophones, and 12% for francophones.

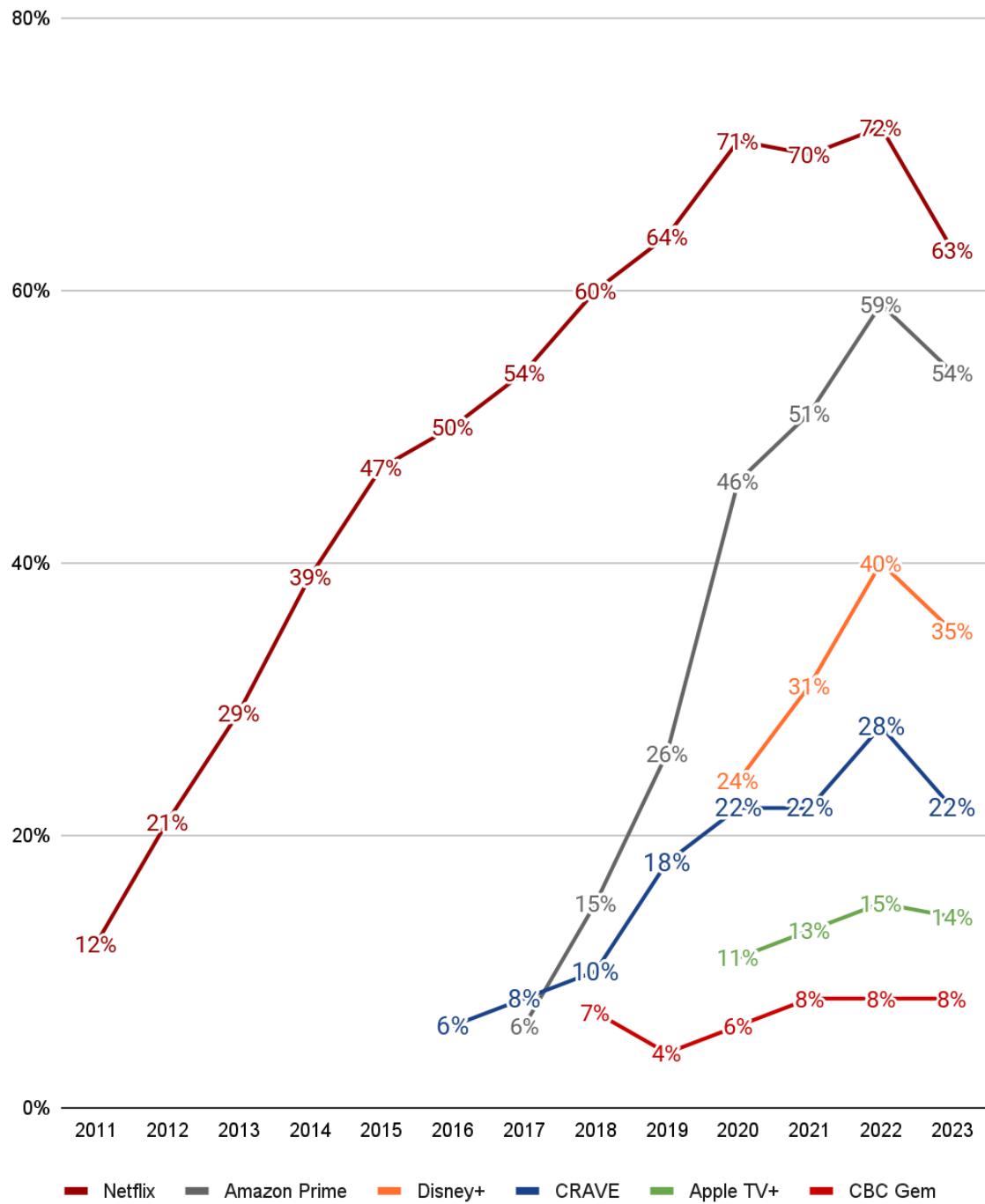
Club Illico is at 8%, while ICI TOU.TV leads at 13%, for francophones as measured across the country. Among anglophones, CBC Gem has an 8% penetration rate.



STAT on ICI TOU.TV | Workin' Moms on CBC Gem

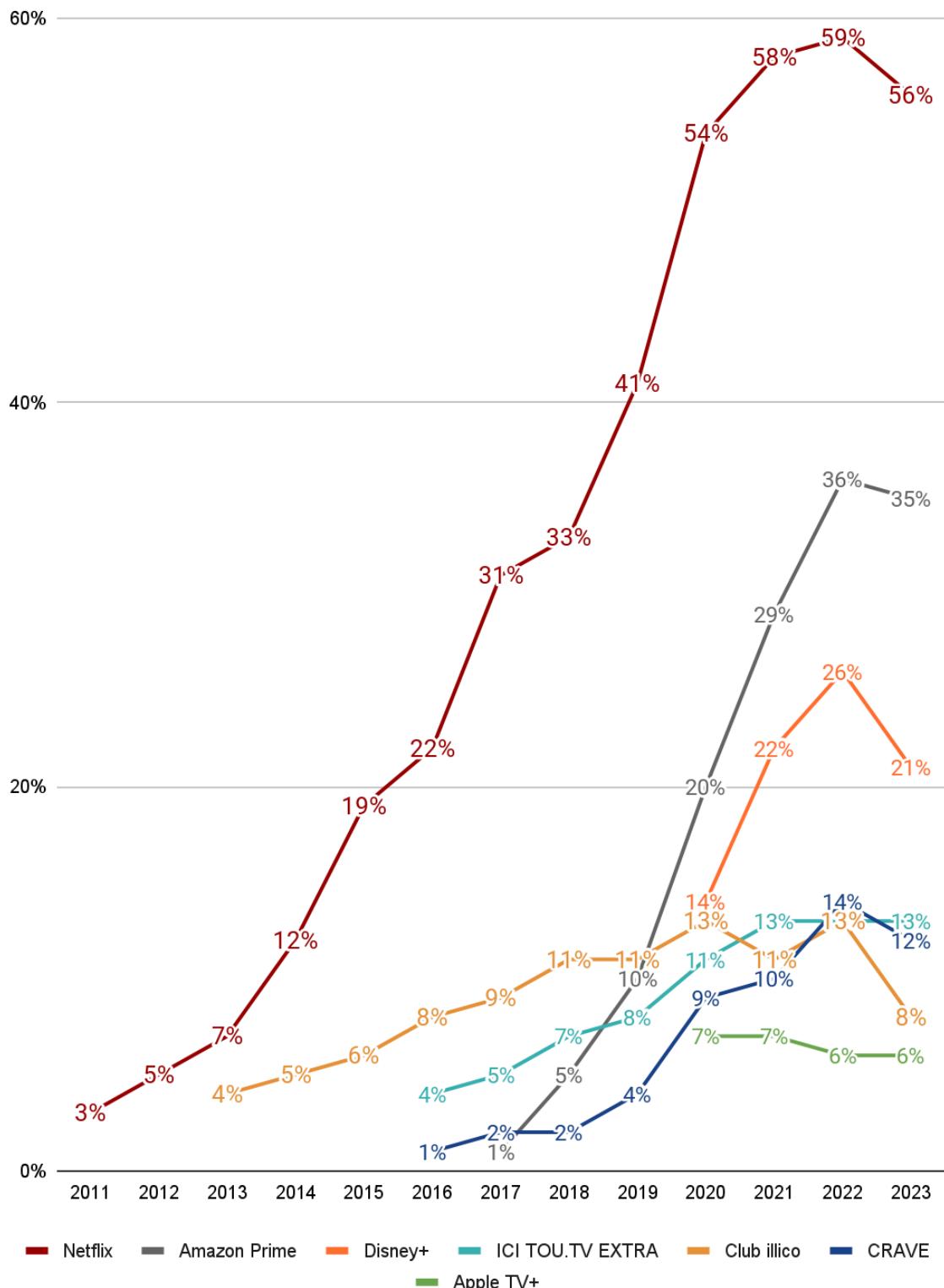
<sup>13</sup> All data from MTM (2023), CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research analysis.

**Fig. 4. Subscriptions to SVOD Services, Anglophones 18+**



Source: MTM 18+, 2011 to 2023.

**Fig. 5. Subscriptions to SVOD Services, Francophones 18+**



Source: MTM 18+, 2011 to 2023.



In sum, Canadian services have wide, possibly insurmountable, penetration gaps in the subscription streaming space (commonly called SVOD services, or subscription video on demand). The widest gap is 40 percentage points, for Crave versus Netflix in the anglophone market. This gap is actually much, much higher when looking at the use of advertising-based video on demand services (AVOD), like YouTube (discussed below).

Subscription data do not show how much *time* Canadians spend on which services. Media is an attention economy. To best measure it, one needs to look at the *time* audiences spend on platforms and services.

When looking at *time spent* metrics, we see that the digital future is not rosy for Canadian video services, either in SVOD or AVOD.

Preliminary data from Numeris shows that hours consumed on Canadian digital services are dramatically low.<sup>14</sup> Numeris currently has data for anglophones in Ontario and francophones in Quebec. This is the majority of the Canadian market, nearly 60%, which offers a good base to see into the future, if today's trends persist.<sup>15</sup>

According to these data, the Canadian group of broadcasters garner just 1.2% of English streaming hours consumed on average across age demos (aged 2+). This means that 98.8% (!) of total hours among Ontario anglophones are consumed on foreign video services.<sup>16</sup>

This is not an insignificant tranche of the population, as Ontario anglophones spend roughly 40% of their video time on streaming services. While the time on Canadian OTT services numbers is slightly higher for older anglophone demos, 2% for those age 50 and above, this fact is *not a good sign* for the future. The CBC OTT service, CBC Gem, leads the Canadian pack with a 29% share; but this represents a meagre 0.346% of time consumed, for ages 2 and above.

The Canadian francophone media system fares better, but still garners only 3.4% of time. This doubles for older demos, 6.7% for age 50 and above. Again, this is *not a good sign* for the future. Radio-Canada's ICI TOU.TV leads the Canadian pack with 47.5% share of time; but this still represents 1.7% of time, for ages 2 and above.

---

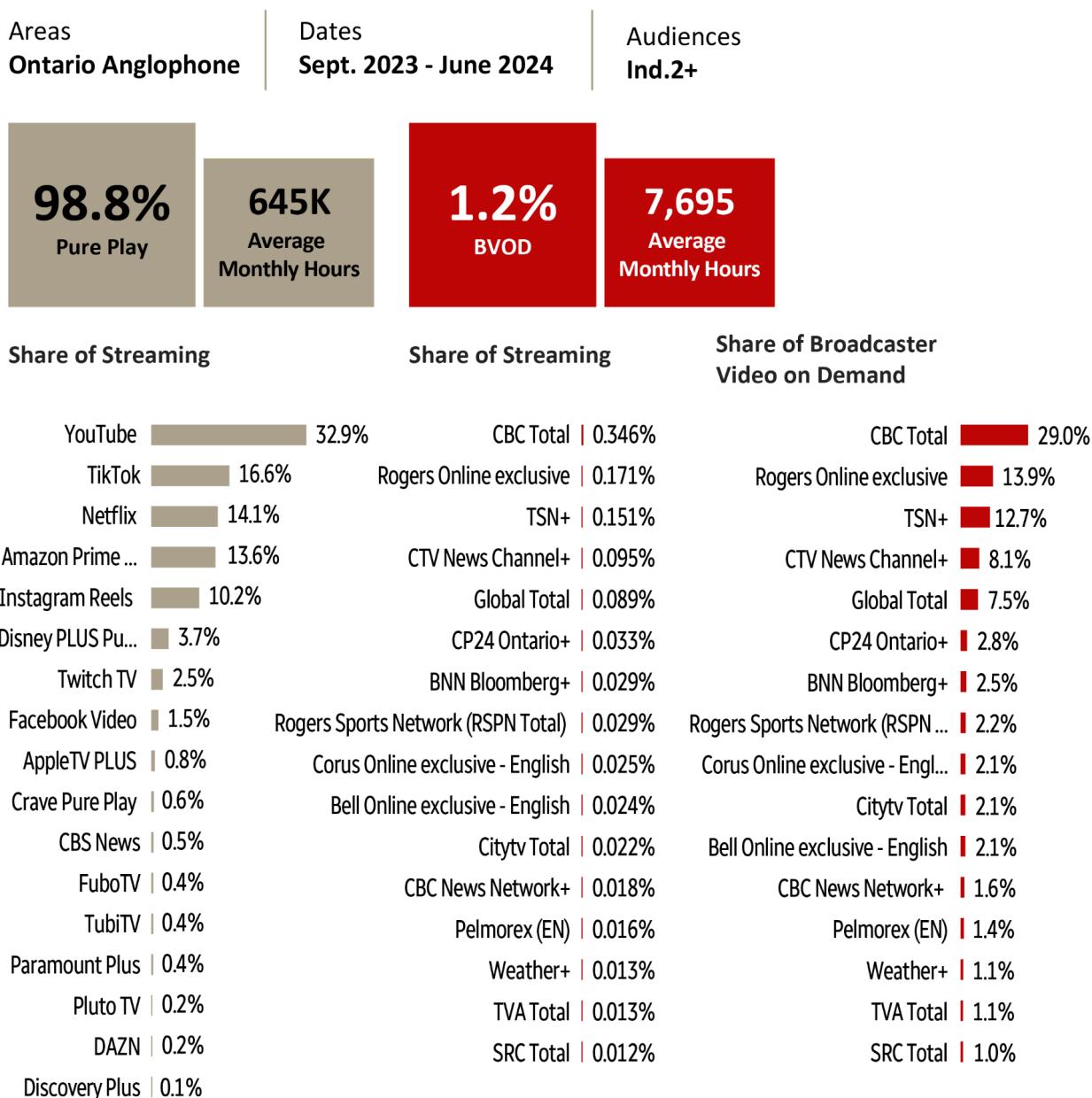
<sup>14</sup> Numeris VAM data, September 2023-June 2024, compiled by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research. Numeris is a “not-for-profit [Joint Industry Committee](#)” that provides the standard measurement for the advertising sector, in radio and television.

<sup>15</sup> Numeris TV PPM, persons aged 2+, 2AM-2AM, All Week, Broadcast year 2022-2023, total Canada, Quebec Franco, Ontario, Univ(000). These Numeris data sets are a MVP, or minimum viable product. These data are available to current clients only, and are being developed for wider industry use in the near future.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, September 2023-June 2024 VAM data.

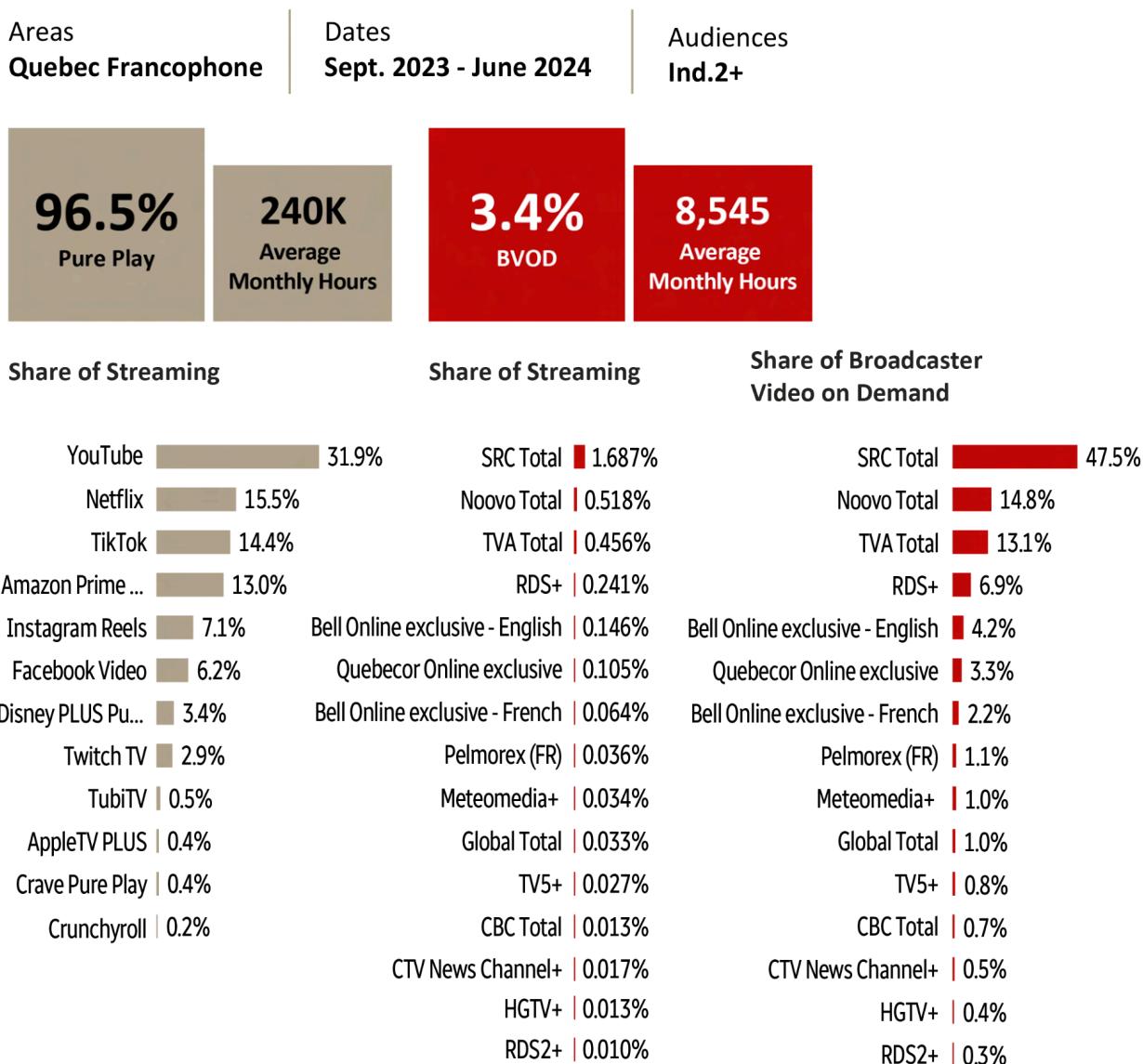


**Fig. 6. Average Monthly Share of Streaming Platform, Viewing Time in Hours (%): Ontario Anglophone**



Source: Numeris VAM data, September 2023-June 2024, compiled by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research.

**Fig. 7. Average Monthly Share of Streaming Platform, Viewing Time in Hours (%): Quebec Francophone**



Source: Numeris VAM data, September 2023-June 2024, compiled by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research.



Different from the Ontario anglophone market, the francophone market has a total time for streaming video consumption roughly half that of anglophones, 23% versus 40%. But this is the case for the average, for all ages 2 and above. It is important to realize that this average hides the faster and more consequential adoption of streaming by younger audiences. For core viewers (aged 25-54), time with streaming services is 60% for anglophones and 40% of time for francophones. And these age cohorts use Canadian services less on average than their elders, as described below.

And which foreign services win the allegiance of most Canadians? Here the data show that too much is made of Netflix and its supposed dominance in the market. Most streaming time goes to the oldest digital video service, launched in 2007, namely YouTube. It leads across all ages with roughly 30% or more of time spent. TikTok, Netflix, Amazon and Disney+ follow; this order varies by age cohorts.

For example, YouTube leads among francophones aged 2-17, at nearly 30% of time, followed by TikTok at over 26%. Thus francophone kids and teenagers spend over half of their time on these two foreign services, one American, the other Chinese. For young anglophones, this is slightly higher, with 2-17 years giving 36% of their time to YouTube, and 28% to TikTok; that is, 64% for both services combined. This is a massive lead for the current video duopoly, and it is a demographic wave coming to hit the system.

Overall, only 0.4% of time is consumed on Canadian services by Quebec francophones aged 2-17. And only 0.3% of Ontario anglophones consume Canadian services.

In short, Canadian services are not currently competitive in the digital video market, either SVOD or AVOD. If the young predict the future, then it is very dire for the overall Canadian broadcasting system.

This industry's path is unsustainable. The more media becomes digital, the less money Canadian providers make from subscriptions, and from advertising, both of which are the revenue growth areas for screen-based productions.

Still, TV and radio will remain used into the 2030s, especially by older demographics and in the Far North. Hence, in order to meet the expectations of all Canadians, CBC/Radio-Canada will need to continue offering traditional television services well into the 2030s, along with digital video services.



## *The Audio Landscape*

The consumption of audio content is also shifting to digital platforms and streaming.

On the face of it, the situation appears less dire for radio. However, this may be a function of limited data in Canada, as no industry-wide systems exist to measure audio media consumption time across both linear and digital platforms.<sup>17</sup>

Existing data show that the *reach* of traditional radio has declined 14% over the past decade. Ninety per cent of Canadians reported listening to radio at least once a month in 2012. This monthly use declined to 77% in 2023.<sup>18</sup>

Over this period, however, streaming audio has exploded, with streaming music services and podcasts. For the first time, in 2020, digital streaming hours surpassed that for radio listening. In that year, Canadians reported using audio streaming services for 9.5 hours per week, versus 7.8 hours of live radio.<sup>19</sup>



Marie-Andrée Gill, [Laissez-nous raconter l'histoire crochie](#) (podcast) | Radio-Canada

---

<sup>17</sup> Numeris has no cross-platform listening systems, and reports only radio listenership for about 30 cities and suburban markets across Canada. Numeris has no plans to develop a measure similar to video, which puts the Canadian system at a reporting disadvantage.

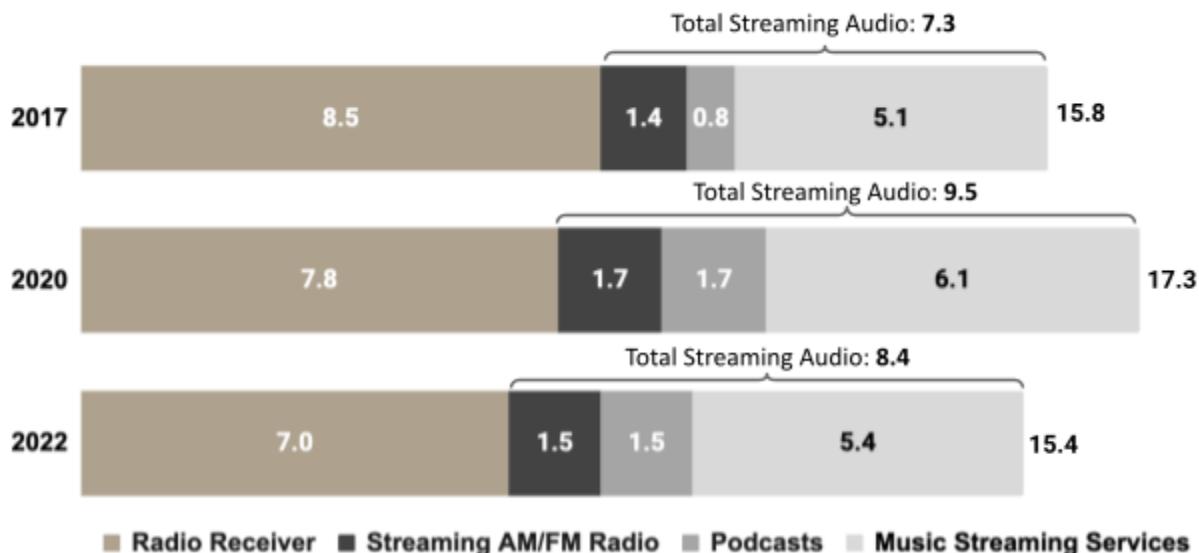
<sup>18</sup> MTM, "Radio in Transition," CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research, MTM data analysis.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*



**Fig. 8. Self-Reported Audio Hours by Platform**

Mean Value in a Typical Week | Canadians 18+



Source: MTM 18+, Fall 2017, Fall 2020 and Spring 2022.

Over the past decade, traditional radio listening has fallen by about three hours per week (down 34%). The decline is much steeper among Canadians aged 18-34 (down more than 40%).<sup>20</sup> It is estimated that 81% of Canadians will actively stream audio by 2027. Among newcomers to Canada, monthly usage is already at 91%.<sup>21</sup>

Podcast use is also growing. In 2024, 13.3 million Canadians are projected to download or stream podcasts.<sup>22</sup> Canadians listen to more than three podcasts per week, for a total of six hours.<sup>23</sup> The rollout of 5G networks and connected cars are expected to significantly disrupt linear and over-the-air radio by 2030. As with traditional television, the shifts and adoption rates changes are fastest among younger demographics.

Interestingly, by 2023 the data showed that digital audio grew to more than 12 hours per week, but not at the expense of linear radio. On-demand podcasts and music streaming are likely responsible for this increase. In any case, engagement with audio seems to be growing overall, driven by digital formats.

When looking at *time* on digital audio, however, the situation is similar as with video: a precipitous fall off for Canadian services. Audio streaming is highly fragmented, but Spotify

<sup>20</sup> Numeris Radio PM, Total Meter, Monday to Sunday, all day. Total Radio, anglophone and francophone stations.

<sup>21</sup> MTM data, 2022, projected out by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Briggs, “[Canada hits fast forward on digital audio](#),” eMarketer, December 14, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Triton Digital, [Canadian Podcast Report 2024](#), p. 5.



accounts for the highest time of any competitor. It accounts for 89% of all streaming time! However, this lead is more than 20 times greater than the second place contender, Pandora SiriusXM, at 3.7% of time. CBC/Radio-Canada is the lead Canadian service, but represents only 0.19% of streaming time. No other Canadian service ranks in the top 10 for time used.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Spotify is the winner-take-all in streaming audio in Canada.

The future of digital audio is marginal for Canadian business, artists and musicians. There is no major Canadian consumer subscription audio service that can compete with foreign services. With small audiences, digital advertising growth will not offset the decline in terrestrial radio for domestic players. As with video, the Canadian system looks to be commercially unsustainable.

CBC/Radio-Canada has a unique role in audio. The Corporation was founded almost 100 years ago as a national radio service to ensure our cultural sovereignty in the face of American radio signals pouring across the border. Not much has changed in this regard, even if the emerging dominant technology is digital.

CBC/Radio-Canada is also an innovator in radio and audio technologies. It was the first media service in Canada to stream live radio, in the early 1990s. The Corporation is a pioneer in digital audio broadcasting (DAB). It was an early mover and actively developed the podcast format, and today is the largest publisher of podcasts in the country.



*Someone Knows Something* (podcast) | CBC

---

<sup>24</sup> Comscore data, April 2024.



To remain relevant into the 2030s, CBC/Radio-Canada must continue innovating in audio formats and digital distribution. Nonetheless, terrestrial radio will remain a key technology platform in hard to reach regions, especially the North. Urban usage remains strong, an important daily habit, especially for commuters. Radio is also a robust medium for serving Canadians in times of crises, including during natural and climate disasters. As such, traditional radio is expected to remain an essential platform to serve Canadians well into the 2030s.

### *The Canadian System in Systemic Crisis*

Overall, the Canadian broadcasting industry is not only in crisis; the sector is in structural decline. As often analyzed and reported, the Canadian broadcasting system is at a tipping point of commercial sustainability. Neither digital subscriptions nor digital advertising can make up for the loss of revenues from traditional media.

This is a systemic problem; a case of sectoral market failure.

While market failure has loomed over the sector since the 1920s, policy solutions were found to create a domestic industry to support Canadian cultural expression and domestic news. Over time, this included the creation of CBC/Radio-Canada, the CRTC, and a multitude of support mechanisms and rules for Canadian content creation and distribution. No successful policy solutions have yet been implemented to fully address the challenge of the digital market. Today, we see that the domestic media sector has lost significant ground to foreign players. This decline will accelerate as youngsters become adults. And the policy responses may be too little and too late in coming.

The prognosis is poor for Canadian media and culture. Without a domestic mass media system, from entertainment to news, Canadians and newcomers to Canada will be acculturated by foreign, mostly U.S., services. The situation is worrisome for francophone culture. Younger francophones (including newcomers) are increasingly opting for foreign streaming services, both subscription- and advertising-based.<sup>25</sup> Culture ties will erode as cultural references continue to be marginalized in the media ecosystem. Misinformation and fakery will increase. This will affect the sense of national identity and shared consciousness, and trust in news, across the country among anglophones, francophones, allophones and Indigenous Peoples.

---

<sup>25</sup> Marc Cassivi, “[Véro Qui?](#)” *La Presse*, September 24, 2022; Caroline Savard, Audrey Perron, “[Portrait des habitudes médiatique des étudiantes et étudiants en Art et technologie des médias du Cégep de Jonquière](#),” September 2022; *La Presse Canadienne*, “[Sans les jeunes, l'avenir de la culture québécoise est menacé, craint Télé-Québec](#),” *Les Affaires*, April 12, 2023; and with regard to francophone media and discoverability, see Marie Maude Denis, “[Des télés connectées déconnectées de la culture d'ici](#),” *Radio-Canada*, March 7, 2024.

The situation is also worrisome for professional news and journalism in the country. Since 2008, over 500 news outlets have closed in 344 communities across Canada. Some communities have no news, and are now classified as “news deserts.” Francophone media are especially vulnerable. And the blocking of news accounts by Meta has further hurt the industry, and cut off entire communities, including Indigenous Peoples and the Far North.

As a result, the pluralism of voices is at risk, which is a crucial factor for civic debate and a healthy democratic life. Too much of the terrain is being left to social media, the trafficking of fakery and misinformation, with the attendant risk to shared understanding of facts and a national sense of identity and purpose.<sup>26</sup>

Other macro trends toward foreign dominance of the Canadian media space remain; some could accelerate. As noted above, Meta continues to ban news on its platforms. This is a loss of exposure to Canadian news, of roughly 9% daily time with digital.<sup>27</sup> This may look small overall, but the entire professional news category represents only 3% of time online. This is three times less than for a single company, Meta, which acts as gatekeeper in social media.

As the next section discusses, little is new about foreign dominance of Canadian media. In the 1920s and 1930s, American companies flooded Canadian airwaves with their radio signals. This happened again with TV in the 1950s. In both cases, CBC/Radio-Canada was one solution, among others, to preserve a domestic cultural space in electronic media. The internet has not eliminated this cultural challenge for Canadians. Foreign digital platforms have only accentuated the challenge, and forced an existential rethink of cultural policies for the entire media sector.

It is unclear how the various public policies will evolve toward 2030 to address, let alone solve, some of these challenges. Comparatively, CBC/Radio-Canada remains the only media organization with stable funding.



The *La petite vie* cast being interviewed by host France Beaudoin on *En direct de l'univers* | Radio-Canada

<sup>26</sup> For the risks, see Aengus Bridgman, et. al., [The Canadian Information Ecosystem](#), Canadian Digital Research Network, Media Ecosystem Observatory (McGill University), 2023, notably pp. 52-54.

<sup>27</sup> Social media represents about 17% of time online. Meta represents about 9% of time online. Comscore data, September-December 2023, analysed by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research.

# 2



Canada Day Show, Ottawa



## SECTION 2

# 90 Years: From Public Broadcaster to Public Service Media

## Public Service Media — Why, What, How, and Now

Public broadcasting began in the 1920s, in the age of a new technology: radio. The international leader at the time, in terms of policy objectives, structure and purpose was the British Broadcasting Company (later Corporation), or the BBC, established in 1922.<sup>28</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, other countries set up public radio broadcasting services, from across Europe to Australia. The general aim was to assert national sovereignty over radio transmission, principally to promote domestic cultural objectives and national shared identity. This aim has remained core to public service media organizations to this day.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, Canada faced increasing dominance of its radio airwaves by U.S.-based services. The U.S. system was roughly 10 times larger in terms of wattage than the Canadian one, and was interfering and overwhelming Canadian broadcaster signals.<sup>30</sup> It was for this reason that the federal government established a Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting in 1928. Its report released in 1929 argued principally for a “public service” broadcasting system to be erected with sufficient wattage from “high-power stations” to counter U.S. services and provide a made-in-Canada alternative radio system.<sup>31</sup>

To this day, Canadian broadcasting and media policy are focused on protecting and promoting national cultural sovereignty, via a system of broadcasting regulations, production subsidies and supports. This policy objective and public purpose has held through technological shifts in media, from television to the internet. An essential component of these policies is a publicly funded, public broadcaster, independent of government and anchoring this entire cultural system.

The advent of the internet has not changed this reality; in fact, it has accelerated it. Today, U.S. and other foreign services dominate the domestic digital media space, from video (YouTube, Netflix, Disney, Apple), to audio (Spotify, Apple, YouTube), to utilities like search, email and

---

<sup>28</sup> For a comprehensive origin story about the BBC, and the evolution to make it independent of government, see Asa Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting*, Oxford University Press, 1961.

<sup>29</sup> See UNESCO, World Radio and Television Council, “Public Broadcasting. Why? How?” (2001); David Ellis, *Evolution of the Canadian Broadcasting System: Objectives and Realities, 1928-1968*, Department of Communications (Canada), 1978; Michael Dewing, “Canadian Broadcasting Policy,” Library of Parliament (2014); and Briggs.

<sup>30</sup> The U.S. stations combined had 680,000 watts, while the Canadian stations had less than 50,000 watts. See Ellis, pp. 1-2; and *The Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting* (Aird Commission), 1929, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Frank W. Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951*, University of Toronto (1969); Aird, pp. 8, 12; Dewing, p. 1; and E. Austin Weir, *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada*, Toronto, 1965, pp. 107-109.



shopping (Alphabet/Google, Amazon) and to an entirely new format, social media (Facebook/Instagram, X/Twitter, TikTok).

In 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (*Société Radio-Canada* in French) was established as a federal Crown Corporation. Since then, CBC/Radio-Canada has evolved with technology from radio services to include television and digital services. CBC/Radio-Canada today provides content and media services across multiple platforms and devices ensuring Canadian-made alternatives to foreign content. In this regard, it is no different from its global peers, such as the BBC (UK), ZDF (Germany), the ABC (Australia), RTBF and VRT (Belgium), France Télévisions and Radio France. Providing multiplatform media is the reason that most “public broadcasters” are today called public service media (PSM) organizations.<sup>32</sup>

Across the world, public service media exist to deliver content to their citizens. Most exist in “mixed” media markets, alongside commercial providers. At least four principles typify organizations like the BBC, the ABC, France Télévisions, Radio France and their peers:

1. Universality: media content and services for all citizens;
2. Diversity: a wide range of content, appealing to various interests and audiences, including Indigenous voices;
3. Independence: operations that are free from government interference, an essential condition for public trust;
4. Distinctiveness: programs and services that differ from commercial media.<sup>33</sup>

All PSM have missions and mandates in legislation and regulation to serve public interests, principally cultural ones. Quasi-commercial objectives are often common as well, such as market support to independent producers and domestic creative sectors in the form of commissioning remits. All PSM have mandates expressed to ensure similar elements: to “inform,” “educate” or “enlighten,” and “entertain” audiences. Some have specific obligations for international services, to promote and export domestic culture and values globally — to project a nation’s “soft power.” Most of these international services are news focused, such as France24 and RFI (part of [France Médias Monde](#)) and the BBC World Service.

---

<sup>32</sup> Public Media Alliance, “[Public Media Worldwide](#),” 2024; and EBU, “[Public Service Media](#),” 2024.

<sup>33</sup> UNESCO, pp. 11-13; and EBU, “[Empowering Society: A Declaration on the Core Values of Public Service Media](#),” 2012.



The financing sources for PSM vary little around the world. All PSM have mixed models of funding, combining different levels and sources of public monies with revenue from different types of commercial activities. Public funding ranges from annual grants and appropriations, to dedicated taxes and levies. Commercial activities range from program licensing to advertising and subscriptions to rental of facilities and equipment.<sup>34</sup>

One constant debate since the founding of public media is the question of competition with private enterprise. Does the existence of a publicly funded media make it harder for private media to prosper? Over decades of analysis, the facts do not support this hypothesis. In fact, the opposite is true. Research repeatedly demonstrates that where public service media exists, it raises the quality of output across media systems to the benefit of all citizens, and thus “crowds in” rather than “crowds out” private media.<sup>35</sup>



*Schitt's Creek* | CBC

---

<sup>34</sup> See Drisdell Consulting, “International Commercial Practices of Public Service Media,” March 31, 2024 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study); and UNESCO, pp. 14-15.

<sup>35</sup> The literature here is extensive. See McKinsey & Company, “Review of Public Service Broadcasting around the world,” September 2004; Annika Shel, Richard Fletcher, Robert G. Picard, “Crowding Out: Is there evidence that public media harm markets? A cross-national comparative analysis of commercial television and online news providers,” *European Journal of Communication*, 2020; EBU, “Debunking the Crowding Out Myth; How Public Service Media dynamize media markets,” Media Intelligence Service, March 2023. And for some history, see Ellis; Weir; Briggs; and UNESCO.

## Media in Canada Today

Canada is a highly competitive media market. Today, approximately 76% of Canadians are anglophone, and 22% are francophone.<sup>36</sup> The majority of the French market is in Quebec, with an additional one million francophones living in other provinces. This French market has a strong appetite for homegrown cultural content in French. The English market, however, is dominated by a vast quantity of popular American programming, most of it coming directly from American networks and streaming services. The amount of, and financial resources behind, foreign programming has always posed challenges for sustaining a domestic programming industry and has necessitated significant government support.<sup>37</sup>



Marie-Maude Denis, *Enquête* | Radio-Canada

Today, foreign digital giants eclipse Canada's domestic services. They also capture most of the advertising and subscription revenue in the domestic market. At the same time, the continued shift to digital platforms is fragmenting Canadian audiences and increasing the cost of content creation and competition for talent. The less time Canadians spend on Canadian platforms has serious policy implications for social cohesion and trust in national institutions.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> See Government of Canada (Canadian Heritage), [Statistics on official languages in Canada](#), Table 3: Population by first official language spoken, Canada.

<sup>37</sup> Dewing (2014), p. 5-6; and See Senate of Canada, Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, [Time for Change: The CBC/Radio-Canada in the Twenty-first Century](#) (July 2015), pp. 14-16.

<sup>38</sup> Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review (Yale Panel), [Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act](#) (2020), pp. 117-128.

Over the past decade or so, there has been a significant shift in media consumption behaviour. The use of traditional platforms — television and radio — has declined. Consider that in 2011, 63% of Canadians accessed video content by watching live television.<sup>39</sup> Today, that number has fallen to 14%. As mentioned previously, radio listening has also fallen by about three (3) hours per week (-34%) over a decade, and the decline has been even steeper among Canadians aged 18-34.<sup>40</sup> In 2020, for the first time, streaming hours for audio programming surpassed time listening to live radio.<sup>41</sup> The adoption of digital is particularly strong among teens, young adults and newcomers to Canada, yet the shift to digital is evident across all age cohorts.

## CBC/Radio-Canada Today

### *A Unique Mandate and Role in the Media Ecosystem*

CBC/Radio-Canada is the country's largest federal cultural institution. It is the largest producer and commissioner of Canadian content. The Corporation deploys the biggest news force in the country (over 3,500 news professionals), ensuring credible news and information for Canadians in both official languages and eight Indigenous languages, across six time zones. It also operates an international service, Radio Canada International (RCI), which delivers news content in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Punjabi and Tagalog.

CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate is enshrined in the [Broadcasting Act](#), which requires that CBC/Radio-Canada provide "a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains."



*This Hour Has 22 Minutes* | CBC

<sup>39</sup> Media Technology Monitor, "Canadian Viewing Profiles," Fall 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Media Technology Monitor, "Canada Viewing Profiles, 2022-23."

<sup>41</sup> Media Technology Monitor, Spring 2022 data, 18+.



The Act specifies that the Corporation's programming should:

- be predominantly and distinctively Canadian,
- reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,
- actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,
- be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the specific needs and interests of official language minority communities,
- strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French,
- contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,
- be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and
- reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.<sup>42</sup>

This is a broad and far-reaching mandate. It has often been reviewed over the years, and adapted over time to reflect changing policy objectives.<sup>43</sup> Most recently, in the [Online Streaming Act](#) passed in 2023, a recognition of Indigenous broadcasting, and the need to represent under-represented groups and communities, were added as objectives to the broadcasting system.

Similar objectives were included by the CRTC in CBC/Radio-Canada's current conditions of service.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> See [Broadcasting Act](#), Section 3 (1) (l) (m).

<sup>43</sup> See Ellis (1979) p. 79, Dewing (2014); Roger Bird (ed), *Documents of Canadian Broadcasting*, Carleton University Press Inc., 1988; Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (Lincoln Report), [Our Cultural Sovereignty, The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting](#), House of Commons Canada, June 2002; The Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (Dawson, Plett), [Time for Change: The CBC/Radio-Canada in the Twenty-first Century](#), Senate of Canada, July 2015; and Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review (Yale Panel), [Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act](#) (2020).

<sup>44</sup> For the complete dossier on the 2022 CRTC decision, see CBC/Radio-Canada, "[Licence Renewal](#)."



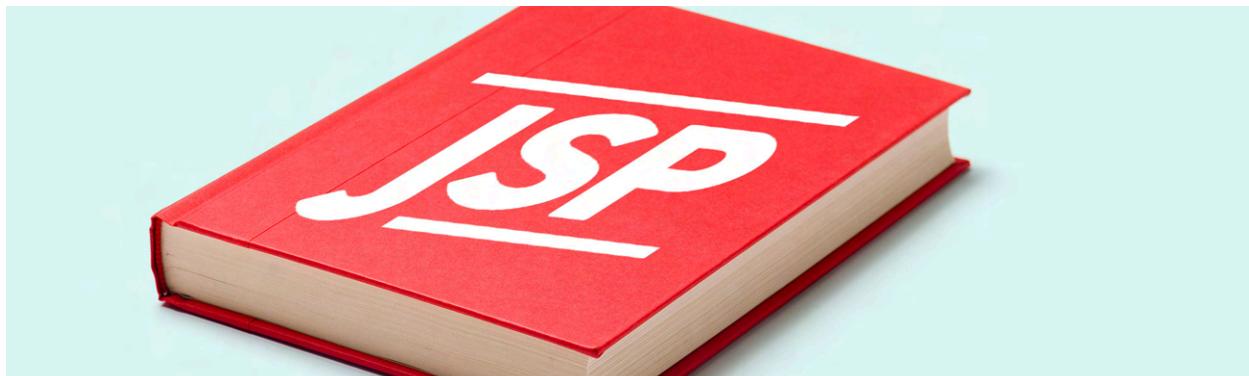
## *Connected and Accountable to Canadians*

CBC/Radio-Canada operates 27 television stations, 88 radio stations and one digital-only station. It has five subscription television channels and four Canada-wide radio networks, two in English, and two in French. Around the world, it operates six permanent foreign bureaus (plus a temporary bureau located in Taiwan), and sets up temporary bureaus as needed.

CBC/Radio-Canada has approximately 7,000 full-time employees.<sup>45</sup> It is headed by a Governor-in-Council appointed President and CEO, who oversees a senior executive team. The Corporation is governed by a 12-person independent board of directors. This board is appointed by the federal government based on the recommendations of an independent advisory panel.<sup>46</sup>

CBC/Radio-Canada is accountable to Canadians through the Parliament of Canada. It communicates information about its operations through its annual public meeting, quarterly reports, proactive disclosures, responses to access-to-information requests, and other reporting activities to the government, the public, the broadcast regulator and the Auditor General of Canada.

As a broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada is also regulated by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission ([CRTC](#)), an independent regulatory agency and quasi-judicial tribunal. CBC/Radio-Canada also employs two independent ombudsmen to ensure that its journalism meets the standards of accuracy, fairness, balance, impartiality, and integrity as expressed in the Corporation's [Journalistic Standards and Practices](#) (see section below, on Trust).



Journalistic Standards and Practices (JSP) | CBC/Radio-Canada

---

<sup>45</sup> As at April 1, 2024.

<sup>46</sup> See Government of Canada, [Independent Advisory Committee for Appointments to the CBC/Radio-Canada Board of Directors](#).



## *A Wide Range of Programming, Content and Platforms*

The Broadcasting Act mandates that CBC/Radio-Canada "... provide broadcasting services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains ..."<sup>47</sup> Hence, the Corporation today produces and distributes a broad range of content which includes local, regional, national, and international news and public affairs programs, amateur and professional sports, documentaries, arts and culture programs, dramas and comedies, variety programs, podcasts, music, talk shows, films and more.

While it seeks to serve many audiences, the public broadcaster aims to serve and connect all Canadians with tentpole programming such as its election coverage, major world events, cultural celebrations like the Juno Awards and the Prix Gémeaux, and, of course, the Olympic and Paralympic Games. These large productions are foundational to CBC/Radio-Canada's role as "*rassembleur*" or convener for the country. The ability to gather large audiences — many millions — of Canadians together is increasingly rare in the Canadian media landscape, and its power to build national pride cannot be underestimated.

Overall, CBC/Radio-Canada is a distribution powerhouse. On a daily basis it provides over 7,000 hours of content in audio and video across linear channels and digital platforms. This is equal to 2.6 million hours of output per year.<sup>48</sup>

On a yearly basis, CBC/Radio-Canada provides Canadians with:

- Approximately 45,000 hours of Canadian TV content:
  - 22,000+ hours of news and information
  - 2,000 hours of kids and youth content
  - 10,000 hours of Canadian drama, comedy and other entertainment programming
- On radio:
  - 95,000+ hours of local news and programming
  - 13,000+ hours of music
- 11,200+ hours of live sports coverage on digital platforms, including youth sports and regional, national and international competitions
- 48,000+ hours of podcasts and other audio content online
- Over 450 original news articles each day on CBC.ca and Radio-Canada.ca.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> See [Broadcasting Act](#), Section 3 (1) (l).

<sup>48</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, Media Presentation Centre, internal data, May 2024.

<sup>49</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, Corporate Research, confidential internal data: Key Programming Outputs, June 2024.

CBC/Radio-Canada continues to serve Canadians on all of the platforms they use, from traditional radio and television to digital streaming, podcasting and websites. This means that CBC/Radio-Canada must constantly stretch its resources and programming to ensure no Canadians are abandoned.

Offering such a vast amount of content across so many platforms – without restrictions or paywalls – ensures that all Canadians have affordable access to high-quality news and information and entertainment programming regardless of their socio-economic status or Internet availability.



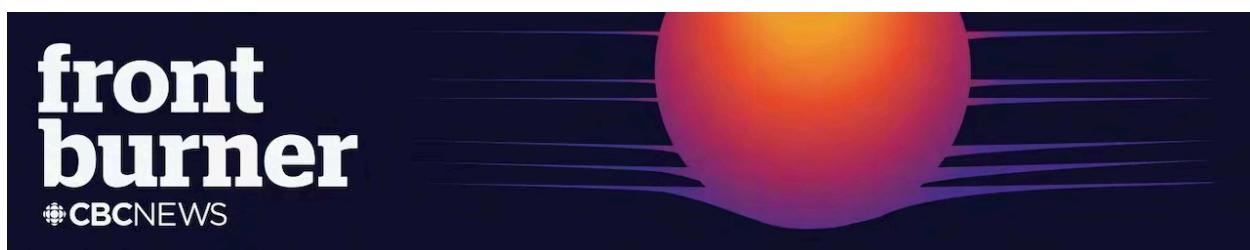
*Tout un matin* | Radio-Canada

Radio-Canada's 13 multiplatform production centres, along with some 20 other radio stations across the country, enable the Corporation to deliver a wide range of content that reflects the realities of francophones from coast to coast to coast. Radio-Canada provides TV viewers with approximately 12,000 hours of news content per year through its 15 daily *Téléjournal* newscasts and other programming. It also broadcasts 20 radio morning shows, 18 drive-home shows and over 120 daily local and regional radio newscasts. Its digital offering comprises 18 video newscasts for mobile devices and about 200 news articles published daily. Radio-Canada is also a driver of local culture and a vital component of the francophone creative industry. Its partnerships with independent producers generated approximately 140 original programs presented on TV in 2022-23, and 40-odd digital originals made available exclusively on ICI TOU.TV. Similar industry collaborations have helped boost Radio-Canada's digital audio



offering, which now consists of more than 250 podcasts produced in-house or externally and available on OHdio.

Every day, 14 CBC TV stations broadcast local news to Canadians across the country — a total of more than 10,000 hours of news and information every year. On CBC Radio One, 36 radio stations collectively produce more than 50,000 hours of local and regional programming every year, including 33 morning shows and 20 drive-home shows. CBC continues to offer more digital content to complement its TV and radio programming. On a daily basis, its journalists publish more than 250 online news articles. CBC News Explore, its free ad-supported streaming television (FAST) channel, offered 150 hours of original content in its first year in 2022. To date, CBC has launched three more FAST channels — CBC Comedy, CBC News B.C. and CBC News Toronto — with plans to launch another 12 free local FAST channels within a year. In addition, more than 200 podcast series and other audio programming representing more than 18,000 hours of content are available on CBC Listen.



*Front Burner* (podcast) | CBC

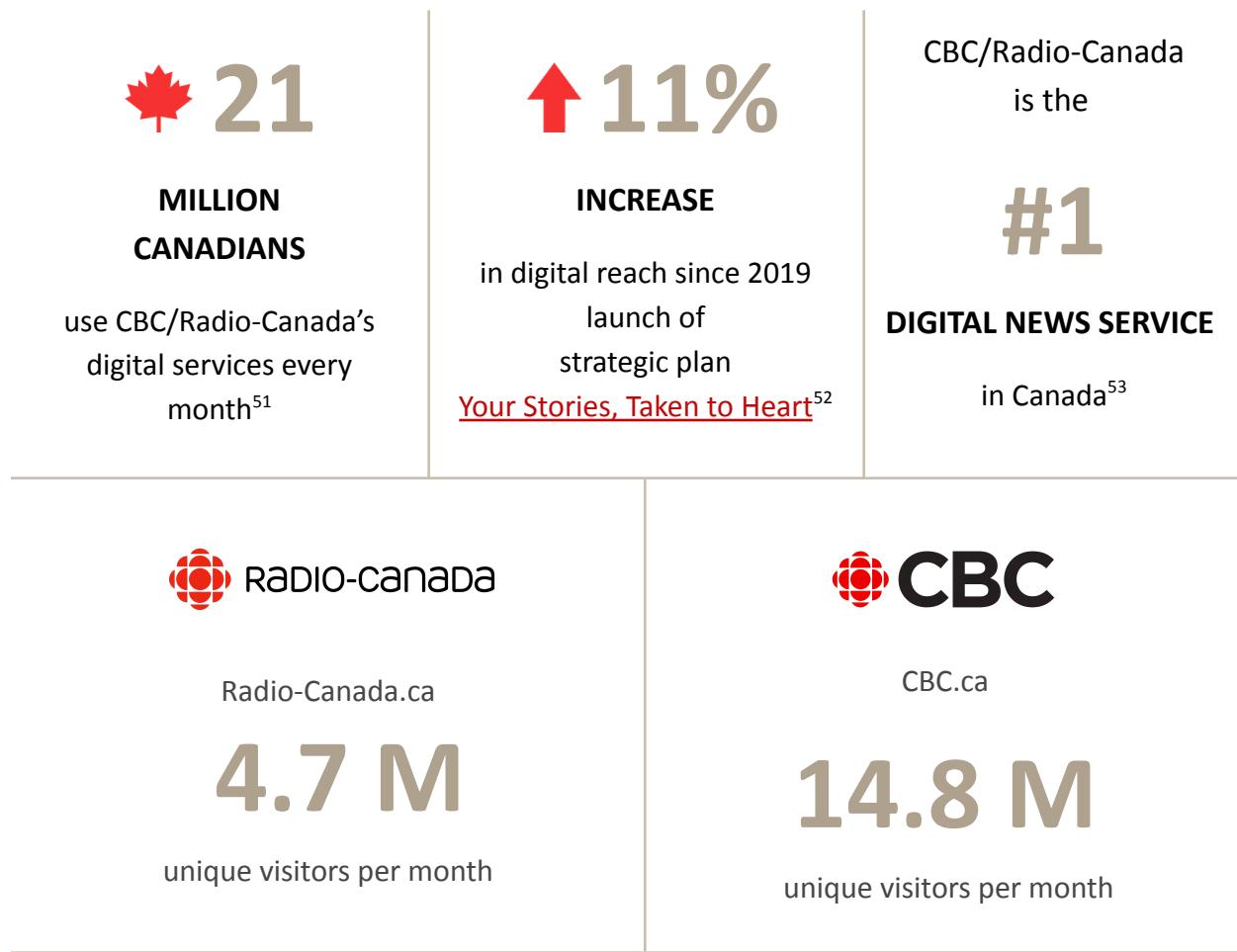
Across TV, radio and online, CBC/Radio-Canada offers more than 200 programs touching on Indigenous life in Canada. More than 50 of these programs, such as *Bones of Crows* and *Pour toi Flora*, are offered partly or solely in Indigenous languages, such as Innu, Anishinaabemowin and Cree. CBC North is currently digitizing more than 70,000 hours of archival material, dating to the 1960s, a unique documentation of the lives, experiences and voices of Indigenous life in northern Canada. CBC/Radio-Canada also offers coverage of some Olympic events in Indigenous languages. At the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic games, basketball, skateboarding and wrestling were among the events broadcast in Indigenous languages. The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games featured hockey games called in Inuktitut for the very first time.

CBC/Radio-Canada also provides children and youth programming, connecting young Canadians from across the country through services like CBC Kids and *MAJ (Mon actualité du jour)*, Radio-Canada's *Zone Jeunesse* and its educational platform Curio.



CBC/Radio-Canada reaches Canadians on the platforms they use, through a combination of TV, radio and digital services, including social media platforms and connected TVs.<sup>50</sup> Today, CBC/Radio-Canada is one of Canada's top digital networks used by 21 million Canadians each month, and consistently the leading news service online in both French and English.

### CBC/Radio-Canada in the Digital World



<sup>50</sup> The Corporation operates a transmission network that is one of the largest in the world, for TV and radio, from coast to coast, and across the vast north of Canada. It maintains and operates over 750 transmitters on more than 500 sites across the country. In addition, it operates online streaming for audio and video, both live and on demand. In total, the Corporation distributes over 2.6 million hours of programming each year across the broadcast and streaming network. This is roughly 7,000 hours of programming distributed each day. In addition, the newsrooms produce over 450 stories a day, 80% of which are local and regional.

<sup>51</sup> Comscore Media Metrix® Multi-Platform, total audience (desktop 2+, mobile 18+), average of monthly unique visitors, April 2023 to March 2024, Canada. Unduplicated reach of CBC/Radio-Canada digital platforms.

<sup>52</sup> Comscore Media Metrix® Multi-Platform, total audience (desktop 2+, mobile 18+), average of monthly unique visitors, April to March, Canada. Unduplicated reach of CBC/Radio-Canada digital platforms. April 2021-March 2024 (22.4) vs April 2018-March 2019 (20.2).

<sup>53</sup> Comscore Media Metrix® Multi-Platform, total audience (desktop 2+, mobile 18+), average monthly unique visitors, April 2023 to March 2024, Canada. Unduplicated reach of CBC/Radio-Canada digital platforms.



## *Sustaining and Amplifying Our Official Languages*

CBC/Radio-Canada plays a unique, fundamental role in supporting the vitality of Canada's two official languages and promoting English and French cultural expression across the country. The Corporation's obligations with respect to that role are enshrined in the Broadcasting Act and mentioned in the Official Languages Act.

While that commitment reflects the Corporation's mandate as defined by law, it is also part and parcel of our history and identity as the national public broadcaster. Provision of services to francophone minority communities, for example, dates back to the 1954 opening of Radio-Canada's first French-language station outside Quebec, in Moncton, New Brunswick. Another watershed moment was the acquisition in 1973 of CKSB, a private radio station in St. Boniface, Manitoba, an anchor for francophones in Western Canada since 1946.

To continue living up to that historic role, CBC/Radio-Canada ensures compliance with the conditions of licence established and overseen by the CRTC.<sup>54</sup> To that end, the Corporation holds regular consultations with official language minority communities (OLMCs) and directs part of its spending to independent producers from those communities — both English-language OLMCs in Quebec and French-language OLMCs elsewhere in the country.<sup>55</sup> Given the crucial importance of services for the latter, Radio-Canada ensures compliance with a number of other conditions (e.g., delivering a minimum level of local TV content and making sure that at least a third of news content on ICI RDI originates from outside Quebec).<sup>56</sup>

The Corporation's offerings, however, go well beyond legislative and regulatory requirements. Radio-Canada broadcasts 20 morning and drive-home shows in minority-language radio markets, along with 18 others produced in various regions of Quebec. Since 2020, we have rolled out 18 regional video newscasts, 10 of which are produced in minority-language settings. To deliver that multiplatform coverage, Radio-Canada employs local teams at 13 TV stations, 20 radio stations and 23 news bureaus across the country. In a time of unprecedented crisis for our news ecosystem, that presence has become crucial, all the more so in minority-language markets with few or no other options for Canadians to get their news in French.

All this explains why supplementary measures are needed to bolster French-language services and the vitality of francophone culture, including in communities all across the country. It is why 43% of public funding goes to Radio-Canada, although francophones make up just 22% of

---

<sup>54</sup> CRTC, [CBC/Radio-Canada's broadcasting licences renewed until 2027](#) – CRTC 2022-165.

<sup>55</sup> CRTC, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2022-165, [Appendix 3](#), condition 10. d) and e).

<sup>56</sup> The Corporation shall ensure that at least one-third of original programs and program segments broadcast by ICI RDI each broadcast year are produced in the regions of Atlantic Canada, Ontario, Western Canada, the North and Quebec (excluding Montreal). Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2022-165, [Appendix 3](#), condition 44.



Canadians. And it means that, while CBC/Radio-Canada costs each Canadian \$32 per year in public funding,<sup>57</sup> per capita funding for Radio-Canada is about three times higher than that for CBC.

In recent amendments to the Official Languages Act,<sup>58</sup> Parliament acknowledged the precarious situation of French in North America, across Canada as well as in Quebec. That vulnerability is also manifest in the threats to francophone culture in the digital universe. In a space dominated by foreign giants, it is increasingly difficult for French-language content to find its audience — starting with our youngest viewers, listeners and readers.

The Official Languages Act underscores CBC/Radio-Canada's key role in promoting French, through the fact that it "contributes through its activities to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities and to the protection and promotion of both official languages."<sup>59</sup>

In an increasingly globalized market, CBC/Radio-Canada is still the media organization that commissions the most original homegrown content in this country, and it remains a key touchpoint for content that reflects and resonates with Canadians, in both French and English and eight Indigenous languages.

### *Reflecting Contemporary Canada*

Canada's population is growing rapidly. It has increased 47% over the past 30 years to more than 40 million.<sup>60</sup> By 2030, Statistics Canada projects the population will be 44 million.<sup>61</sup>

Immigration is the main source of this growth. In 2023 alone, Canada welcomed nearly half a million permanent residents.<sup>62</sup> Statistics Canada projects that immigrants will represent 28% of the population of Canada by 2031.<sup>63</sup>

CBC/Radio-Canada is adapting its workforce and content to ensure that it fairly reflects Canada's changing society. For example, the public broadcaster has achieved gender parity across the

---

<sup>57</sup> Nordicity, "The Case for Advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada," July 2024, p. 55, using 2022 data and as expressed in Canadian dollars (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).

<sup>58</sup> Tabling of the improved Bill entitled An Act to amend the [Official Languages Act](#), to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

<sup>59</sup> See Government of Canada, Official Languages Act, Part VII, [Section 41\(2\)](#).

<sup>60</sup> Statistics Canada, [1991 Census i-lightlights](#); and [The Daily — Canada's demographic estimates for July 1, 2023: record-high population growth since 1957](#).

<sup>61</sup> Statistics Canada, [Table 17-10-0057-01 - Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 \(x 1,000\)](#).

<sup>62</sup> Institute for Canadian Citizenship, [ICC Immigration Dashboard: 2023 in Review](#).

<sup>63</sup> Statistics Canada, [Ethnic diversity and immigration](#).



organization over the past decade and has attained platinum certification by Women in Governance for each of the past four years.

In its 2022-2025 [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan](#), CBC/Radio-Canada committed to ensure that all Canadians are represented in its programming and in its workforce, including in leadership positions. Half of its new hires for executive and senior management positions will be Indigenous people, racialized people or people with disabilities, and it has committed to double the retention and promotion rates of these groups.

In program production, CBC/Radio-Canada is putting people from underrepresented groups in key creative positions. Its results are now reported annually to the CRTC. In its 2022 licensing decision, for the first time, the CRTC introduced expenditure requirements on CBC and Radio-Canada for content produced by members of underrepresented groups.<sup>64</sup>

Today, almost a quarter of Canadians identify as living with a disability.<sup>65</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada is committed to making its services and content more accessible to them. It first aired closed-captioned programming more than 40 years ago, in 1981. Today, CBC/Radio-Canada offers a wide range of accessibility options for programming, including descriptive video, closed captioning and sign language interpretation for major live events. In 2023, the public broadcaster launched its first [Accessibility Plan](#) to better serve people with disabilities, to better reflect them on screen, and to become the barrier-free media organization Canadians deserve (see details below).

To adapt its programming and workforce, CBC/Radio-Canada partners with organizations such as Reelworld Film, the ReelAbilities Film Festival, BIPOC TV & FILM, the Black Screen Office, the Indigenous Screen Office, APTN, AMI-Télé and the Disability Screen Office. These partnerships support the development of projects from creators who are Indigenous, racialized or live with disabilities.



Material used during accessibility consultations | CBC/Radio-Canada

<sup>64</sup> CRTC, [Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2022-165 and Broadcasting Orders CRTC 2022-166 and 2022-167](#).

<sup>65</sup> Statistics Canada, [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022](#), December 1, 2023.



*Lakay Nou* | Radio-Canada



*Allegiance* | CBC



*Bollywed* | CBC



*Black on the Prairies* | CBC



*100 génies* | Radio-Canada



*Lumières sur Paris* | Radio-Canada



*L'autre moitié de l'histoire* (podcast) | Radio-Canada



*Sort Of* | CBC

## First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada

Approximately 1.8 million First Nations, Inuit and Métis live in Canada — about 5% of the population. This is the fastest-growing segment of the population in Canada, with a median age of 31. CBC/Radio-Canada has served Indigenous Peoples and communities since the establishment of its northern service in 1958. Today, CBC North, CBC Indigenous, ICI Grand Nord and *Espaces autochtones* operate to serve First Nations, Inuit and Métis across the country.

In 2024, CBC/Radio-Canada launched its first National Indigenous Strategy: [Strengthening Relations, Walking Together](#) (2024-2027). The three-year plan consolidates commitments to work with Indigenous Peoples to better reflect and serve them. The strategy has been Indigenous-led from the outset, engaging with hundreds of Indigenous communities, leaders, producers, creators and employees from across the country.

CBC/Radio-Canada is also strengthening its relationships with relevant partners including [APTN](#), the world's first national Indigenous broadcaster, and the [Indigenous Screen Office](#) (ISO), to share with all Canadians the rich cultures and realities of life in Canada today. This is an important contribution to Truth and Reconciliation.



Juanita Taylor, *The National* | CBC



Rosanna Deerchild, *Unreserved* | CBC



*Bones of Crows* | APTN, CBC and Radio-Canada



*Pour toi Flora* | Radio-Canada



## *The Largest Commissioner of Original Canadian Content*

Canada has a rich, diverse culture and incredible talent, but bringing that culture to the attention of Canadians in the sea of foreign choices remains a challenge.

The public broadcaster plays a critical role in the discovery, development and showcasing of Canadian talent, from music and literature, to drama and comedy. CBC/Radio-Canada is the largest single commissioner of Canadian dramas, comedies, documentaries and variety shows in the country.

CBC/Radio-Canada is an essential driver of Canada's cultural and creative sectors. Its annual budget of \$1.8 billion anchors the country's creative economy that contributes \$72.9 billion to Canada every year and provides jobs for at least 630,000 Canadians.



*Run the Burbs* | CBC



*Pa t'mentir* | Radio-Canada



*Still Standing* | CBC



*C'est comme ça que je t'aime* | Radio-Canada



Great Canadian Baking Show | CBC



Jean-Philippe Wauthier, Bonsoir bonsoir! | Radio-Canada



The Secret Life of Canada (podcast) | CBC



L'Agent Jean! Le balado | Radio-Canada

Between 2018-2022, CBC/Radio-Canada contributed over \$1.4 billion in financing to programming from independent screen-based producers across the country.<sup>66</sup> This program spending triggered billions of dollars in production activity, stimulated economic activity in communities where the productions took place, and ensured cultural employment in Canada along with the development of domestic intellectual property.

CBC/Radio-Canada  
independent  
production spending  
**\$1.4B**  
(2018 - 2022)



Triggered **\$4B**  
in independent screen-based  
productions across  
the country



Source: CBC/Radio-Canada analysis of CRTC, Aggregate Annual Returns 2018-2022; Nordicity methodology on licence fees production leverage applied.

<sup>66</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada analysis of CRTC, [Aggregate Annual Returns](#), 2018-2022.

Over the five-year period between 2018 and 2022, CBC/Radio-Canada contributed nearly 40% of total expenditures on independent production — and in certain key programming categories, such as domestic dramas and comedies, *spent more than the rest of the broadcasting sector combined*.<sup>67</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, as productions were suspended or cancelled, CBC/Radio-Canada's spend on independent productions increased from 36% to 42%, helping to keep that industry and those stories alive during difficult times.

As noted earlier, CBC/Radio-Canada also invests in producers from various under-represented groups, including Indigenous Peoples, OLMCs, racialized groups, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ people.<sup>68</sup> The goal of these investments is to build capacity and help shape the market for new entrants in the creative economy.

CBC/Radio-Canada also dedicates programming dollars to showcase and celebrate the vast array of creative talent across the country. Annual shows like the Juno Awards and *I'ADISQ* are critical to shining light on the nation's extraordinary musicians and performers. Similarly, CBC and Radio-Canada highlight literary talent with shows such as Canada Reads, Kids Reads, and *Le combat des livres* — programs that engage communities and travel the country in libraries and live events. CBC and Radio-Canada also celebrate our screen talent at the Canadian Screen Awards and les Gémeaux as well as myriad other celebrations such as the Legacy Awards, National Acadian Day, the Indspire Awards and the Governor General Performing Arts Awards, just to name a few.



Charlotte Cardin, Juno Awards | CBC

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* Data from CRTC Programming Category 7 (drama and comedy).

<sup>68</sup> CRTC, [Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2022-165](#) and [Broadcasting Orders CRTC 2022-166 and 2022-167](#). The CRTC set different targets for CBC and Radio-Canada — each with ramp-ups during the licence term. For example, by 2026/27, CBC must direct at least 8% of its total independent (audio-visual) programming spend on Indigenous producers, 6% on producers from OLMCs, and 35% on producers from a combination of Indigenous, OLMC, racialized, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Radio-Canada, by 2026/27, must direct at least 1.8% of its total independent (audio-visual) programming spend on Indigenous producers, 6% on producers from OLMCs, and 15% on producers from a combination of Indigenous, OLMC, racialized, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

And let us not forget about sports. CBC/Radio-Canada became Canada's official Olympics broadcaster in 2014 and will be until the 2032 Games in Brisbane. Showcasing high-performance athletes on a year-round basis, ensuring equitable coverage of female and male sports, and expanding the sports schedule to include para-sports are cornerstones of the public broadcaster's sports strategy. Last year, CBC/Radio-Canada broadcast over 11,200 hours of live sports coverage on its digital platforms, including youth sports and regional, national and international competitions.



Olympic Games Paris 2024 | CBC/Radio-Canada

In 2020, CBC Sports committed to achieving gender parity in its sports coverage. This 50% target is regularly met across CBC platforms every month, and last year, Radio-Canada Sports streamed more women's competitions than men's. As a result, Canadians have witnessed a groundswell of support for female competition — like the Professional Women's Hockey League — and CBC/Radio-Canada is once again the official broadcaster of the Paralympics.



At the most recent 2024 Olympics in Paris, seven in 10 Canadians watched the Olympic Games on television, and a record number of hours (over 24 million) of programming was consumed on digital platforms. At a time of uncertainty and political tensions, CBC/Radio-Canada's coverage of the Olympics rallied Canadians in astonishing numbers, demonstrating the importance of the public broadcaster's role in building national pride.



## 2024 Olympics in Paris

**7 in 10 Canadians** watched the Olympic Games on television, and a record number of hours (over 24 million) of programming was consumed on CBC/Radio-Canada's digital platforms.

In short, the public's investment in CBC/Radio-Canada yields substantial returns to Canadians. In fact, every dollar invested in the public broadcaster generates over two dollars for the Canadian economy.<sup>69</sup>

### *Building Trust*

Canadians have never before had access to so much information at their fingertips. But not all of it is credible or trustworthy. Yet trusted sources of news are essential to fostering healthy debate in civil society.<sup>70</sup> A well-informed citizenry is a public good. On this, the benefits of strong public service media are clear; countries with well-funded PSM also have high levels of trust in public institutions, including their news media.<sup>71</sup>

While the internet has aggravated social polarization, which undermines public trust in public institutions, Canadians continue to trust their public broadcaster. Twice a year, the Corporation measures public perceptions of trust through the Mandate and Vision Perception Survey (MVPS).<sup>72</sup> Results are reported in the Corporation's annual financial reports, and filed annually with the CRTC. The Fall 2023 MVPS results show that CBC is trusted by 70% of anglophones, and

<sup>69</sup> Deloitte, [Economic Impact of CBC/Radio-Canada in 2013](#), 16 June 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Canadians report high levels of anxiety around the effects of fake news and disinformation. See Justin Ling, [Far and Widening: The Rise of Polarization in Canada](#), Public Policy Forum, August 2023.

<sup>71</sup> OECD data; Elvestad, et. al., *Misunderstanding News Audiences*. See also Joshua Benton, "[Do countries with better-funded public media also have healthier democracies? Of course they do](#)," January 24, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> To ensure polling accuracy, these studies are conducted by outside research firms. The samples and results are weighted against the last census data. To ensure accuracy with key target groups, the samples are boosted and larger than compared to other surveys done domestically (over 5,000 respondents). Moreover, the samples are increased to best represent francophones and anglophones in minority-language communities, as well as increased for those living in the North, among Indigenous Peoples, for racialized respondents, and those living with disabilities.



Radio-Canada by 85% of francophones. Those MVPS trust numbers have been relatively stable over time.<sup>73</sup> Other studies confirm the Corporation's trust and reputation scores.<sup>74</sup> In 2024, CBC/Radio-Canada ranked as the most-admired media company in Canada by the polling company Leger.<sup>75</sup>

What anchors these perceptions of trust are journalistic standards, transparency and accountability. CBC/Radio-Canada strives to ensure that its journalism is accurate, impartial, independent and fair by adhering to clear standards and practices. Some key elements include:

- *Editorial independence and the public interest.* CBC/Radio-Canada is funded by parliamentary appropriation but operates in law independent of the government.<sup>76</sup> This ensures that its journalism holds governments and private institutions to account on behalf of the public. CBC and Radio-Canada newsrooms also make editorial decisions independently from the Corporation's senior management. Journalists do not support or advocate for corporate positions. Unlike some private media organizations, CBC/Radio-Canada does not endorse political parties during elections.
- *Transparency and accountability.* CBC/Radio-Canada journalism is guided by the Corporation's longstanding [Journalistic Standards and Practices](#) (JSP). The JSP is written by editorial staff in the newsrooms at CBC and Radio-Canada, and approved by the Corporation's Board. The JSP sets out standards on things like confidential sources, reporting conflicts of interest, double sourcing of facts, and how journalists conduct interviews. The JSP is public, and is also available to be used by other news organizations to guide their own standards and practices.

If Canadians have any concern about news programming, they are able to contact the ombudsman for [CBC](#) or [Radio-Canada](#) who investigate complaints. Each ombudsman operates independently of the newsrooms and the Corporation. They issue public reports and judgments and provide advice to the newsrooms. Their annual reports are presented directly to the board of directors and made available for the public to consult. Canadians are also able to raise concerns about news programming to the CRTC.

---

<sup>73</sup> Overall, combining francophones and anglophones, the Corporation is considered a trusted source of information by 73% of Canadians. See The Mandate and Vision Perception Survey, Summary Report, p. 3, CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research, 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Gustavson Brand Trust Index 2022, detailed analysis for CBC/Radio-Canada.

<sup>75</sup> Leger, [Reputation 2024](#), March 2024.

<sup>76</sup> See Broadcasting Act, Sections 2(3), 35(2), 52(1)(2); and 46(5) which is explicit on this point: "The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence."



CBC/Radio-Canada is also transparent about the accuracy of its reporting. When a correction or clarification is necessary to a story already published, it is indicated in the story and a public record is kept under [Corrections and Clarifications](#) for CBC and [Mises au point](#) for Radio-Canada.

The chief news editors also regularly post [Editor's Blogs](#) and [Mots de l'info](#) to explain issues around their journalism or how stories and issues are covered.

- *International community and standards of practice.* CBC/Radio-Canada is part of a global network of media organizations dedicated to trusted news practices. [Reporters Without Borders](#) has established an international standard for identifying and promoting trustworthy journalism worldwide. CBC News and Radio-Canada were the first Canadian media organizations to be certified under its [Journalism Trust Initiative](#).<sup>77</sup>

CBC News is a partner in the [Trust Project](#), an international consortium of news organizations promoting standards of transparency, accuracy, inclusion and fairness so that the public can make informed news choices. And Radio-Canada's [Décrypteurs](#), which tracks and combats disinformation, is a member of Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network.



*Décrypteurs* | Radio-Canada

<sup>77</sup> In September 2024, CBC News and Radio-Canada's news service were both recertified under this program. See "[CBC News and Radio-Canada Info recertified by Reporters Without Borders' Journalism Trust Initiative](#)", CBC Media Centre.



## *Supporting a Strong News Ecosystem*

A strong media sector is essential for Canada, for its democracy and cultural life. As we know, the news business is under stress, its business models failing. Since 2008, [over 500 news outlets have closed in 344 communities](#) across Canada. Some communities have no news, and are now classified as “news deserts” by the Local News Research Project which tracks the decline. Francophone media are [especially vulnerable](#). The deliberate blocking of Canadian news accounts by Meta in 2023 has further undermined the industry, and cut off entire communities from news, including those of [Indigenous Peoples](#).

CBC/Radio-Canada believes a healthy news ecosystem with a plurality of voices is essential for democracy and for Canadians. For decades, many of its trained journalists and news production staff have brought their skills and professionalism to successful careers across private media.

Over the past several years, the Corporation has been exploring opportunities and testing initiatives to proactively contribute to a more healthy media ecosystem. It consults with private media groups and their associations about what CBC/Radio-Canada can do by sharing training and resources. These discussions have produced several initiatives, such as:

- Newsroom content and resource-sharing between the *Winnipeg Free Press* and CBC Manitoba;
- Offering CBC/Radio-Canada’s advertising inventory to help private news outlets promote and sell digital subscriptions;
- A memorandum of understanding with Canada’s Indigenous broadcaster, APTN, for co-productions and content sharing for events such as Truth and Reconciliation Day and the North American Indigenous Games;
- The Leaders’ Debate Consortium for federal elections and the provision of broadcast feeds for elections and national events;
- Collaboration in fighting online harm, under the #NotOK initiative, and producing open-source materials for the industry such as the [Newsroom Guide for Managing Online Harm](#); and
- Promoting local journalism with Canadians through the [local news directory](#).

As a founding member of the [Global Task Force](#) for public media, CBC/Radio-Canada works with six national public broadcasters to defend independent journalism and media freedom from state pressure. At the Public Broadcasters International conference in September 2021, CBC/Radio-Canada and both Belgian public service broadcasters (VRT and RTBF) spearheaded



the Brussels Declaration, a set of principles and specific steps to combat threats to journalist safety. This Declaration has been signed by 46 public broadcasters and media associations from around the world.<sup>78</sup>



Global Task Force for public media

### *A Key Developer and Exporter of Canadian Talent*

Around the world, audiences are discovering that Canadians have great stories to share. CBC and Radio-Canada programs continue to make television history: *Schitt's Creek* was the first series ever to win all comedy categories, at the 2020 Emmy Awards; *Bones of Crows* is the first Indigenous drama series to be produced in English, French and Cree; *Lakay Nou* is the first comedy series to showcase the Canadian-Haitian community in Montreal; and the 2021 edition of *Bye bye* remains the most-watched French-language broadcast in Canada of all time.<sup>79</sup> Today the dominance of foreign players in the Canadian market threatens to drown out these Canadian stories and perspectives.

So CBC/Radio-Canada leverages its strengths. It collaborates with a wide range of industry partners as well as other public broadcasters in audio and video program exchanges and co-productions, including the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), BBC, France Télévisions, Belgium's RTBF and Germany's ZDF. This strengthens Canada's ability to compete in today's global digital economy, and helps bring Canadian storytelling to Canadian and international audiences.

---

<sup>78</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada and others, "[Brussels Declaration: CBC/Radio Canada, VRT and RTBF, together with other PSM and international organizations, call for journalist safety and media freedom](#)," October 1, 2021.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Therrien, "[Le Bye bye 2021, l'émission la plus regardée de tous les temps](#)," La Presse, January 11, 2022.



*Hollywood Exiles* (podcast) | BBC and CBC



*Washington d'ici* (podcast) | RTS, RTBF, RFI, franceinfo and Radio-Canada



*Mesrine : l'orgueil et le sang* (podcast) | France Culture and Radio-Canada



*Andrew the Big BIG Unicorn* | ABC and CBC

The public broadcaster also has a deep relationship across *la Francophonie*, especially with the Médias Francophones Publics, which includes domestic and European French-language public broadcasters. A selection of Radio-Canada's scripted series, newsmagazines and documentaries is also available in 196 countries on the *TV5MONDEplus* streaming platform.

In Canada, CBC/Radio-Canada collaborates with cultural organizations, including the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm Canada, the National Film Board, the Indigenous Screen Office, the National Arts Centre, and Canadian museums to support and promote homegrown talent.



## *Building a Sustainable Public Service Media Organization*

CBC/Radio-Canada is also doing its part to help address the challenge of climate change.



Johanna Wagstaffe, *Planet Wonder* | CBC

Its environmental sustainability strategy, [Greening Our Story](#), was launched in 2021 and includes environmental commitments in everything CBC/Radio-Canada does: how it produces and commissions content, operates its business, reduces waste and energy consumption, and limits its carbon footprint.

CBC/Radio-Canada is a member of [Canadian Broadcasters for Sustainability](#), and has joined Canada's Net-Zero Challenge and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.



Catherine Mercier, *La semaine verte* | Radio-Canada

# 3



Tamara Alteresco, Céline Galipeau and Alec Castonguay | Radio-Canada

## SECTION 3

### How Public Service Media Can Step Up in the 21st Century

Since its founding, CBC/Radio-Canada has responded to shifts in audience behaviours as new technology emerged in the media sector by finding new, innovative ways to engage with Canadians.

Today, the pace of the digital transformation is accelerating, bringing new opportunities and challenges. Artificial intelligence for “good” can help the public broadcaster to evolve its systems, workflows and, with care, even its creation of some content. At the same time, disinformation, deep fakes and polarization will continue, testing the ability of public institutions to maintain the trust and support of their citizens. Public service media around the world are seized with this challenge and are working in concert to protect citizens’ rights to independent, trusted news and information.

Most public service media have innovation enshrined in their mandates: a recognition of their role at the forefront of using technological change to benefit their publics. CBC/Radio-Canada’s current legislation does not specifically recognize this important role.<sup>80</sup> It should. Innovation is one of the distinguishing characteristics of public service, investing and experimenting in new ways to serve Canadians — to the benefit of all media.



Giacomo Panico, host of CBC Ottawa’s *In Town and Out*

<sup>80</sup> See CBC/Radio-Canada submission to the Yale Commission, January 2019, [Our Culture, Our Democracy: Canada in the Digital World](#), Recommendation 2, p. 14.

## How We Innovate

### Programming

CBC/Radio-Canada's journalists, producers and programmers bring creativity and innovation by constantly finding new formats and ideas to improve how they deliver news, information and entertainment programming to audiences. CBC reinvented a great teen TV series, *Street Cents*, for the TikTok generation to make sense of money for younger Canadians on a platform they love. *Rad*, Radio-Canada's journalism laboratory, is making news and information more accessible to millennial and gen Z audiences through a completely rethought news experience that combines creative digital storytelling with journalistic excellence. CBC's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* was a unique combination of sketch comedy and news satire which paved the way for shows like NBC's *The Daily Show*. *Zenith* is an entirely original musical show format created for Radio-Canada and the format is now selling internationally.



*Zénith* | Radio-Canada

CBC took its history of traditional radio expertise and brought it to the new podcast format, winning accolades worldwide for shows like *Finding Cleo* and attracting new, younger audiences to daily news with *Front Burner*. Radio-Canada launched OHdio, its digital audio service, in 2020. Some of its podcasts, such as *Le radiojournal*, are among the most-downloaded French-language podcasts in Canada.<sup>81</sup> Radio-Canada's groundbreaking vertical mobile format — *les vidéojournaux* — is bringing local news to younger audiences.

<sup>81</sup> Triton, [2024 Canadian Podcast Report](#), p. 17.



*Finding Cleo (podcast) | CBC*

In Sports, CBC has piloted a new streaming experience for hyper-local sports. CBC/Radio-Canada Sports Connect deploys AI-guided robotic cameras at sporting events and allows Canadian families to follow their young athletes in arenas or gyms across the country.

### *Digital*

In 2022, CBC/Radio-Canada became the first end-to-end internet protocol (IP) broadcaster in North America at the Maison de Radio-Canada in Montreal. This is the future of journalism. It means that news production is no longer tethered to one studio, radio or television, but can be done from a desk, anywhere across the country, with multiple journalists instantly able to access the same content at the same time. Using cloud technology and ever lighter equipment for the capture, editing and transmission of content, the public broadcaster is more efficient and more effective at serving Canadians close to where they are.

As the public broadcaster deploys its IP technology to the Toronto Broadcast Centre, CBC/Radio-Canada has gone one step further in its journey to modernize the way it delivers content. The CBC teams have explored state-of-the-art solutions for production studios and are developing the “universal production platform.” This smaller, more agile studio will be multi-platform and allow radio, TV and digital production all from the same space and with the same tools.

Today’s public broadcaster maintains all of its linear television and radio infrastructure while continuing to invest in its digital future. As audiences migrate from television to streaming services, CBC/Radio-Canada meets them with CBC Gem and ICI TOU.TV; as audiences move from radio to digital audio services, the Corporation meets them with CBC Listen and OHdio. Most importantly, the Corporation serves over 20 million Canadians each month on digital services and applications, including CBC.ca and Radio-Canada.ca and CBC News and Radio-Canada Info. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the Corporation is evolving to remain relevant to Canadians.



Perhaps the greatest technological challenge facing all media organizations today is the advent of artificial intelligence. While the promise of AI to improve translation, captioning, production and distribution processes, workflows and even content production is significant, the threats to trusted news and information are even greater. The public broadcaster will play a role in the development of AI applications in the public interest through initiatives such as the Public Spaces Incubator.<sup>82</sup>

Introducing new digital services while maintaining existing ones is a costly undertaking. The public broadcaster's annual budget for capital expenditures (about \$100 million) has not been adjusted in over 30 years. And yet, CBC/Radio-Canada continues to maintain costly infrastructure associated with legacy services as well as investments in new digital solutions which provide a path to future audiences. The public broadcaster simply cannot compete with pure play technology companies (Spotify, Netflix, Apple etc.) when its budget for digital investment and innovation is a rounding error for these digital giants.

At the same time, CBC/Radio-Canada continues to operate the country's only coast-to-coast-to-coast transmission towers for delivery of radio and television services — over 750 towers across 500 locations.<sup>83</sup> These towers are not just a critical resource for the public broadcaster, they serve a variety of community transmission needs, represent critical infrastructure in times of emergency, and assert territorial sovereignty, especially in the North.

### *Media Literacy*

CBC/Radio-Canada believes that the public broadcaster has an important role in making sure Canadian kids are digitally savvy and equipped to navigate the many platforms where they consume content. In 2018-2019, CBC and Radio-Canada created CBC Kids News and *MAJ (Mon actualité jeunesse)* to help kids better understand the media landscape, to understand how news is researched and reported, and to even become the journalists of tomorrow.

---

<sup>82</sup>CBC/Radio-Canada, [Public Spaces Incubator unveils innovative concepts for better online public conversations and increased civic engagement](#) (May 7, 2024), [Public Spaces Incubator panel discussion now online](#) (May 30, 2024).

<sup>83</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada: Over-the-air Signal Transmission (internal data).



CBC Kids News | CBC



MAJ | Radio-Canada



Collab: Partnership Program with Public Libraries | CBC/Radio-Canada

In its 2019-2024 Strategic Plan, CBC/Radio-Canada made reaching hard-to-reach audiences a priority. Whether newcomers to Canada with no prior exposure to the public broadcaster, youth who only consume content on social media, or those who simply cannot afford to pay for access to the Internet or other media services, CBC/Radio-Canada identified these groups as new potential audiences.

In 2022, CBC/Radio-Canada developed Collab, a partnership program between CBC/Radio-Canada and public libraries across the country. Staff host media literacy programs, teach podcasting and video production, and introduce new audiences to Canadian music, books and other great programming through digital portals in libraries, CBC Corner and *L'espace Radio-Canada*. To date, this program has connected with over 30,000 Canadians in more than 200 communities and the portal has been launched in 1,000 libraries.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Launched in October 2022, [CBC Corner](#) / [L'espace Radio-Canada](#) are now available to five million cardholders in nearly 1,000 public library branches throughout the country.



## *Creating Safe Online Spaces*

The internet promised a public square of connection around the world. Instead, too often, targeted harassment and abuse are silencing voices and driving people away from social platforms. New ways are needed to make the public space *public again*.

CBC/Radio-Canada, along with public broadcasters RTBF (Belgium), SRG SSR (Switzerland) and ZDF (Germany), in collaboration with the nonprofit organization New\_Public, launched the Public Spaces Incubator in 2022. The incubator is exploring new ways for public service media to support citizen engagement and democratic discourse by adding new features to protect and guide users in healthy debate on the PSM's own platforms. It is developing digital solutions and AI-guided moderation, with over 100 digital prototypes that aim to encourage positive online exchanges. Underlying this innovative work is the principle of open-source availability, so that other media in Canada and abroad can adopt the products developed.

A similar threat is the serious online harassment of journalists, which increasingly flows into real world confrontations. In 2021, CBC/Radio-Canada led an industry-wide initiative, #NotOk, to provide journalists, newsrooms and media professionals concrete tools to help them when their safety is threatened online. The program included workshops, the establishment of best practices to support news professionals and the publication of a [Newsroom Guide for Managing Online Harm](#). An open-source version of this document was shared with dozens of news organizations in an effort to benefit the entire news ecosystem, and the guide was made available online for other organizations as well.<sup>85</sup>



#NotOK | #CestAssez: CBC/Radio-Canada initiative to bring awareness and support to online harm to journalists

<sup>85</sup> More information is available on the [#NotOK website](#).



## Combating Disinformation

The rise of social media has accelerated the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation and fake news across all digital platforms. Whether motivated by disruptive or destructive intentions, or deliberate foreign interference, the result is increased polarization and a dangerous erosion of trust in public institutions. Public media around the world are working together to try and address this issue in order to protect and promote freedom of the press and independent journalism.

CBC/Radio-Canada is part of the Trusted News Initiative, a global partnership initiated by the BBC in 2018 to build audience trust and find solutions to combat the spread of disinformation. The Trusted News Initiative has established a fast alert system between newsrooms worldwide to identify the most harmful cases of disinformation, and has developed a technology solution to quickly authenticate the source of news content.

CBC/Radio-Canada was a founding partner, alongside Microsoft, The New York Times and the BBC, in a project initially called the “Project Origin,” now the [Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity](#) (C2PA). It has developed a watermarking technique to provide content provenance credentials.<sup>86</sup> This technique is becoming the industry standard and is essential to combating AI-manipulated content.<sup>87</sup> Again, in the spirit of “open source,” CBC/Radio-Canada has encouraged all members of the news community to join this coalition for the authentication of news sources in order to combat the growing global challenge of disinformation.



Mika Ste-Pierre interviewed by Dave White, CBC Yukon remote broadcast from the *Fireweed Community Market*

<sup>86</sup> BBC, [Project Origin: Securing Trust in Media](#).

<sup>87</sup> Canadian Press, [Experts seeing 'more and more' hate content created by artificial intelligence](#), May 26, 2024.



## Bringing the World to Canadians and Taking Canada to the World

### *CBC/Radio-Canada's Foreign Bureaus*

Over the past five years, Canadians have shown a growing interest in international affairs, and how it impacts their lives at home. This interest reflects the challenges of a global pandemic, climate change, mass migration, shifting economic and political movements amongst allied nations, pivotal elections and, of course, conflicts such as Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Hamas. And yet, most domestic news outlets have had to dramatically reduce their numbers of foreign correspondents in response to financial pressures across the sector.

In this regard, CBC/Radio-Canada operates the largest foreign news group in the country: six (6) permanent bureaus abroad<sup>88</sup> and 40 reporters, producers and support staff around the world. Canadians care deeply about our foreign correspondents, though they may not be aware of the often dangerous circumstances of their work. With extremely limited resources – two decades ago, the Corporation operated 13 international bureaus<sup>89</sup> – CBC and Radio-Canada continue to cover world events from the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II to the Coronation of King Charles III, to D-Day memorial events, to European elections. Vast parts of the globe — South America, Africa and Oceania have no permanent CBC/Radio-Canada presence — and we cover India with one reporter and one producer from Mumbai and China with one reporter from Taiwan.

With a growing population largely stemming from immigration, Canadians' interest in world politics, economics and social change will only increase.



Chris Brown, southern Israel,  
CBC News



Margaret Evans, Beirut,  
CBC News



Salima Shivji, Mumbai,  
CBC News

<sup>88</sup> New York, Washington, Paris, London, Istanbul, Mumbai and Taipei (temporary bureau).

<sup>89</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada Annual Report 2004-2005, p. 16.

## *Radio Canada International*

Every major public service broadcaster operates a world service to provide their country's credible and impartial news to external audiences and to influence other parts of the globe through soft diplomacy. The U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) operates the largest of these services, with an annual budget well in excess of CDN \$1 billion, provides service in 62 languages, and has an estimated total weekly audience of nearly 400 million.<sup>90</sup> BBC World Service has an annual budget of CDN \$690 million, provides service in 41 languages, and has an even larger estimated weekly audience of nearly 500 million.<sup>91</sup> At the other end of the spectrum is Australia's ABC International, which is primarily focussed on the Indo-Pacific region, is offered in two languages, and has an annual budget of CDN \$22 million.<sup>92</sup>

Originally created to broadcast news from home to Canadian soldiers serving abroad in WWII, CBC/Radio-Canada's international service, Radio Canada International (RCI),<sup>93</sup> is today distributed through the Internet,<sup>94</sup> with content provided in seven (7) languages: English; French; Spanish; Chinese; Arabic; Punjabi and Tagalog. The service is greatly diminished from its original purpose due to resource constraints.



Radio-Canada foreign correspondents: Philippe Leblanc, Azeb Wolde-Giorghis, Frédéric Arnould, Marie-Eve Bédard, Tamara Alteresco and Raphaël Bouvier-Auclair.

<sup>90</sup> Fran Unsworth, "CBC/Radio-Canada: A New Global Presence," August 2022, Chart 27 (commissioned by CBC/Radio-Canada).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> An international programming service is specifically required under subsection 46(2) of the Broadcasting Act. The Corporation is mandated to have an international service to "produce and distribute programming targeted at international audiences to increase awareness of Canada, its values and its social, economic and cultural activities."

<sup>94</sup> Internet distribution is required under s. (b)(ii) of [Order in Council P.C. 2012-0775](#).



In 2022, CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned a third-party research study to offer guidance on how, with additional resources, it might expand the footprint of RCI.<sup>95</sup> The findings were compelling: Canada has an opportunity to play a role in certain areas of the world where it has a critical interest in leveraging its trusted brand and offering alternative narratives to non-democratic players.

But without sufficient funding, at least at the levels of the smaller global services such as Australia's ABC International or SWI Swissinfo, the case to continue RCI is weak to non-existent.<sup>96</sup> Despite a recognized brand, it is hard to break through internationally — especially in the face of global players that are highly invested in penetrating difficult-to-reach nations and regions in dozens of languages using all manner of platforms and advanced technologies to circumvent formidable censorship regimes.

### *Emergency Broadcasting*

The timely, factual and comprehensive provision of emergency information is a hallmark of public service media all over the world. Climate change is impacting the scope and nature of natural disasters; civil unrest and war has taken hold in many regions; and of course the pandemic put a spotlight on global and localized health events and responses.

With the country's most extensive broadcast transmission network (see more below), full-time employees based in every Canadian province and territory, over 100 radio and television stations operating in both official languages, the ability to distribute news across radio, television, and digital platforms (owned-and-operated and third-party where allowed), and a professional journalistic workforce practised and trained to deliver time-sensitive news and information, CBC/Radio-Canada is well-positioned to provide all manner of emergency coverage at local, regional and national levels.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Fran Unsworth, "CBC/Radio-Canada: A New Global Presence," August 2022 (commissioned by CBC/Radio-Canada). Ms. Unsworth was BBC's Director of News from January 2018 to January 2022. As the Head of the BBC's journalism, she oversaw both its editorial output and longer-term strategic vision. Before holding the top journalistic job at the BBC, she was Director of the BBC World Service from 2014 to 2018, comprising the BBC's international television, radio, and online output. The research was prepared by Fred Martenson, former Head of Strategy at BBC World Service and Global News.

<sup>96</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada is, however, obligated to provide an international programming news service in the Broadcasting Act, Section 46(2).

<sup>97</sup> Note that CBC/Radio-Canada has also played a key role in the [National Public Alerting System](#). All licensed broadcasters have an obligation to pass through emergency alerts through Alert Ready, Canada's emergency alerting system. Alert Ready delivers alerts to Canadians through television, radio and LTE-connected and compatible wireless devices. The Alert Ready system was developed with many partners, including federal, provincial and territorial emergency management officials, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Pelmorex, the broadcasting industry and wireless service providers. Together, these partners work to ensure Canadians receive alerts immediately and know when to take action to stay safe.



Flooding in Sainte-Marie, Québec | Radio-Canada

However, to provide this key service, CBC/Radio-Canada journalists — and professional journalists everywhere — need continued access to the frontlines of disaster areas to provide the most reliable news and updates.

Access to third-party platforms used by Canadians is also critical. Meta's decision to block all news on Facebook and Instagram in 2023 and to the present day — including during severe wildfires that obviously threaten life and property — is a legitimate problem. The dissemination of emergency information requires all parts of the value chain to deliver the most critical, time-sensitive news when Canadians need it most.<sup>98</sup> Many Northern and Indigenous communities rely on Facebook more, so the impact is especially felt in those areas.

---

<sup>98</sup> See CBC/Radio-Canada, "[Call for Meta to end news-blocking for wildfire communities](#)," August 24, 2023.

# 4



Shooter editor Richard Marion, Iqaluit

## SECTION 4

### Serving Canadians Where They Are: Public Service Media in Transition

To meet its mandate to serve all Canadians, CBC/Radio-Canada continues to own and operate dozens of AM and FM radio stations throughout Canada, in addition to two distinct over-the-air television networks with their own respective suite of local and regional stations. Those stations, in addition to the discretionary specialty services, are carried by cable and DTH satellite distributors in all provinces and territories.

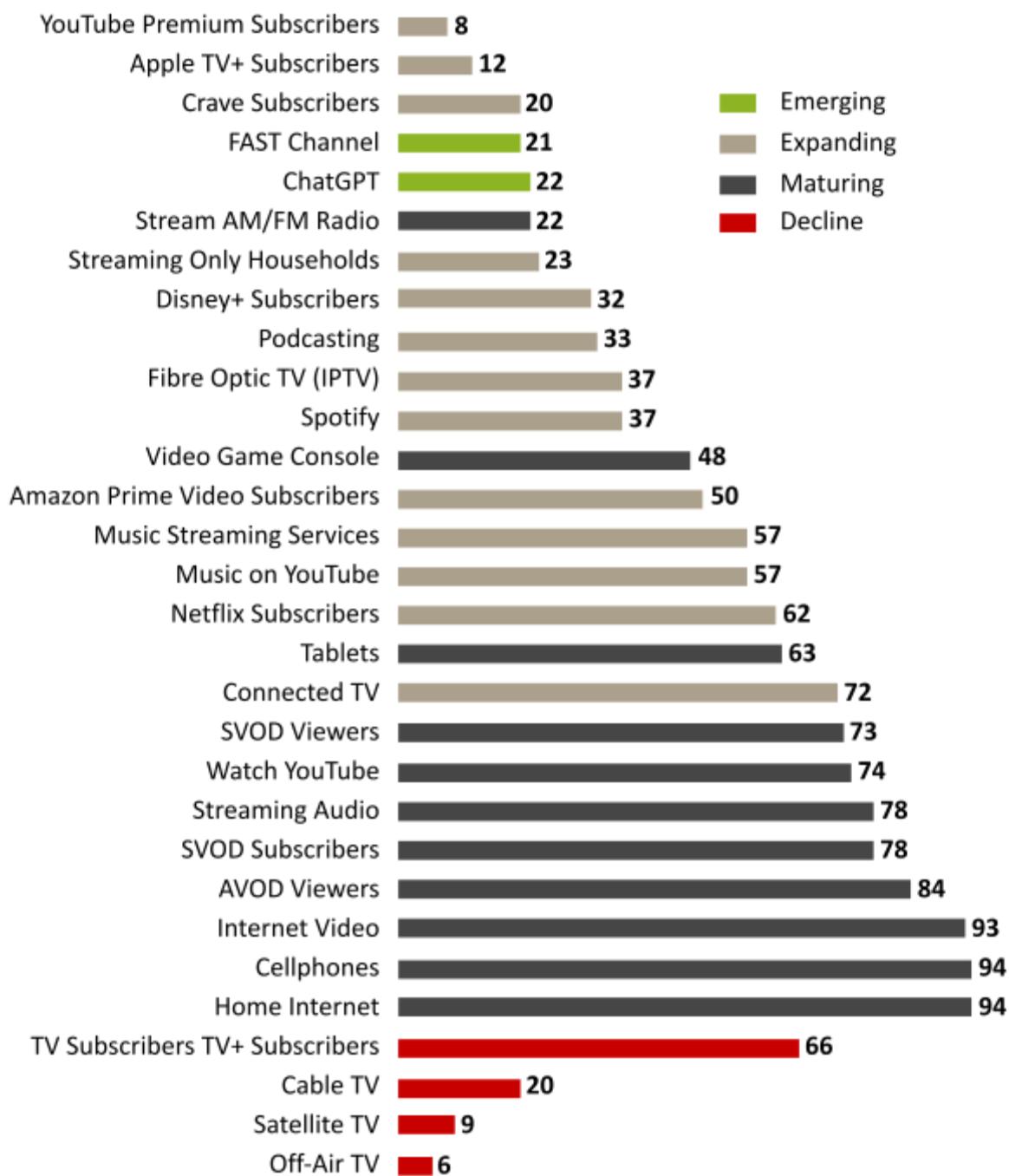


Wildfires, Chibougamau | Radio-Canada

The internet continues to create new platforms and services, and Canadians are spending more of their time on these digital platforms. As a result, high-speed broadband networks, social media, app stores, music streaming, gaming, connected TVs, subscription video on demand (SVOD), and smartphones have fragmented audiences, especially for traditional television and radio services.

The implication for CBC/Radio-Canada is profound. The chart below shows the penetration of technologies for Canadians 18+:

**Fig. 9. Penetration of Media Platforms and Delivery Technologies for Canadians 18+, Percentage of Population**



Source: Media Technology Monitor (MTM), "Adoption Cycle Charts," Fall 2023.



Imagine for a moment if CBC/Radio-Canada relied solely on its vast network of transmission towers. Only 6% of Canadians today regularly rely on over-the-air television signals. If CBC/Radio-Canada did not use other distribution platforms, those television signals would be invisible to 94% of Canadians.

Similarly, if CBC/Radio-Canada television stations and services were limited only to traditional cable, DTH satellite systems and advanced IPTV systems, it would still miss about one-third of all Canadians who use other platforms to meet their content needs.

And the situation continues to evolve. Despite an increase in the number of Canadian households, projections show that the number of Canadian TV subscribers will fall by well over a million between 2021 and 2025 (-11%). Over the same time frame, the number of non-subscribers is projected to increase by over two million households (+37%), while the number of streaming or over-the-top (OTT) households will also increase by about two million (+16%).<sup>99</sup>

Of course, most Canadians use a combination of traditional and online platforms. For many years, the Media Technology Monitor (MTM) has tracked usage of viewing platforms and segmented the audience into five distinct profiles.

**Table 1. Canadian Viewing Profiles, 2023**

Traditionals	Testers	Hybrids	Have It Alls	Online First
14%	17%	15%	21%	31%
90% or more of their viewing time is spent with traditional platforms	60% to 90% of their viewing time is spent with traditional platforms	Their viewing time is evenly split (40% to 60%) between traditional and new platforms	60% to 90% of their viewing time is spent with online platforms and SVOD services	90% or more of their viewing time is spent with online platforms and SVOD services

Source: Media Technology Monitor (MTM), "Canadian Viewing Profiles," November 2023.

As seen above, three out of every 10 Canadians hardly use television at all (the Online Firsts), and instead use online platforms and SVOD services to meet their viewing needs. If CBC/Radio-Canada did not offer its video content on digital platforms, it could never fulfil its legislated mandate to serve all Canadians.

<sup>99</sup> Convergence Research Group Limited, "The Battle for the Canadian Couch Potato: OTT and TV," May 2023, p. 8.



On the other hand, about 30% of Canadians still largely rely on television for most of their viewing (“Traditionals” plus “Testers”). For the next five to 10 years, abandoning traditional stations and services is also not an option.

The only way CBC/Radio-Canada can reach all Canadians, therefore, is to maintain traditional distribution methods and embrace all manner of new and emerging platforms and formats.

A further consideration, as seen below, is that there are material differences between the English- and French-language markets. This, too, must be accounted for in CBC/Radio-Canada’s content distribution plans and related marketing.

**Table 2. Anglophone Viewing Profiles, 2024**

Traditionals	Testers	Hybrids	Have It Alls	Online First
<b>11%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>34%</b>
90% or more of their viewing time is spent with traditional platforms	60% to 90% of their viewing time is spent with traditional platforms	Their viewing time is evenly split (40% to 60%) between traditional and new platforms	60% to 90% of their viewing time is spent with online platforms and SVOD services	90% or more of their viewing time is spent with online platforms and SVOD services

Source: Media Technology Monitor (MTM), “Anglophone Viewing Profiles,” January 2024.

**Table 3. Francophone Viewing Profiles, 2024**

Traditionals	Testers	Hybrids	Have It Alls	Online First
<b>23%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>22%</b>
90% or more of their viewing time is spent with traditional platforms	60% to 90% of their viewing time is spent with traditional platforms	Their viewing time is evenly split (40% to 60%) between traditional and new platforms	60% to 90% of their viewing time is spent with online platforms and SVOD services	90% or more of their viewing time is spent with online platforms and SVOD services

Source: Media Technology Monitor (MTM), “Francophone Viewing Profiles,” January 2024.



To meet its legislated mandate, CBC/Radio-Canada simply must be present on an ever-expanding suite of platforms and devices, including: over-the-air radio and television; cable, DTH satellite, and IPTV; owned-and-operated websites and apps; smartphones; social media; third-party audio streaming sites; third-party video sites; and connected TVs.

Moreover, CBC/Radio-Canada has to provide its content in multiple formats because manufacturers of large-screen televisions, smart speakers, computer screens, tablets and smartphones develop and promote different functionalities (including accessibility features), and all require a different content look and feel.

All of this increases operational complexity and costs. Journalists need to be trained to work across multiple content platforms. CBC/Radio-Canada needs to negotiate access to, and prominence within, dozens of audio and audio-visual platforms. Content decisions need to be made with platform usage in mind (some content formats or lengths work better on the small screen). Existing infrastructure needs to continue to be maintained and harmonized where possible, while new systems and processes need to be built and designed.

In the context of CBC/Radio-Canada's national mandate, it is also important to consider regional- and language-specific trends. People in the North, for example, rely more heavily on DTH satellite systems, radio (perhaps the best medium for emergency-related news and information), and social media (particularly Facebook and Tik Tok), while internet-connected televisions and SVOD are far less common.<sup>100</sup> Francophones are more likely to subscribe to a television provider, but less likely to use podcasts, subscribe to Disney+, or use free-ad supported television (FAST) channels.<sup>101</sup> Historically, some Canadian communities near the U.S. border use over-the-air signals more given the number of available stations (e.g., Windsor, Ontario).

All of this means that serving Canadians is much more complicated and costly than in years past. CBC/Radio-Canada cannot rely on a small number of content distribution platforms to meet its mandate; it has to consider regional differences in its planning; and it has to accept that many Canadians also use third-party platforms to access and share content.

---

<sup>100</sup> See Media Technology Monitor, "Media & Technology in the North," October 21, 2021 and Media Technology Monitor, "North Market: A Look at Media Technology Penetration and Usage," February 8, 2024. Both reports are available at <https://mtm-otm.ca/en/access/reports>.

<sup>101</sup> Media Technology Monitor, "Adoption Cycle Charts," Fall 2023.



## CBC/Radio-Canada's Physical Presence

CBC/Radio-Canada currently has the largest physical presence across the country, by far, of any Canadian media organization. This is crucial to serve Canadians in their communities.

### *Over-the-Air Signal Transmission*

CBC/Radio-Canada operates one of the largest broadcast transmission networks in the world: over 750 transmitters at over 520 sites, 24 hours a day, six time zones, 365 days a year, across the world's second largest landmass, in every type of terrain, operating in all types of weather.



Regina, FM & TV transmission tower | CBC/Radio-Canada



Over-the-air radio and television signals can travel long distances in difficult terrain — including the Far North — and provide critical news and emergency information in English, French and eight (8) Indigenous languages. Access to over-the-air signals does not require a cable or direct-to-home satellite subscription, or a payment to an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

The annual cost to operate and maintain CBC/Radio-Canada's transmission network is \$25-30 million — and it requires an additional capital investment of \$8-10 million each year.

The use of over-the-air signals has fallen significantly as new technologies have been introduced. However, they are most useful during a crisis, such as a natural disaster or civic emergency when other means of communication are not available.

In Australia, the federal budget allocates separate funding for the transmission and distribution services of AM and FM radio, digital audio (DAB+), and television signals to address the costs of maintaining this infrastructure.

In an environment of increasing climate-related emergencies, Canadians will increasingly need and depend on trusted emergency-related news and information.

**Fig. 10. CBC/Radio-Canada Transmission Coverage**



Source: CBC/Radio-Canada transmission sites.



## *Over-the-Air Networks and Stations*

CBC/Radio-Canada operates 27 television stations (and one digital-only station) and 88 radio stations throughout Canada. The over-the-air broadcast portfolio includes:

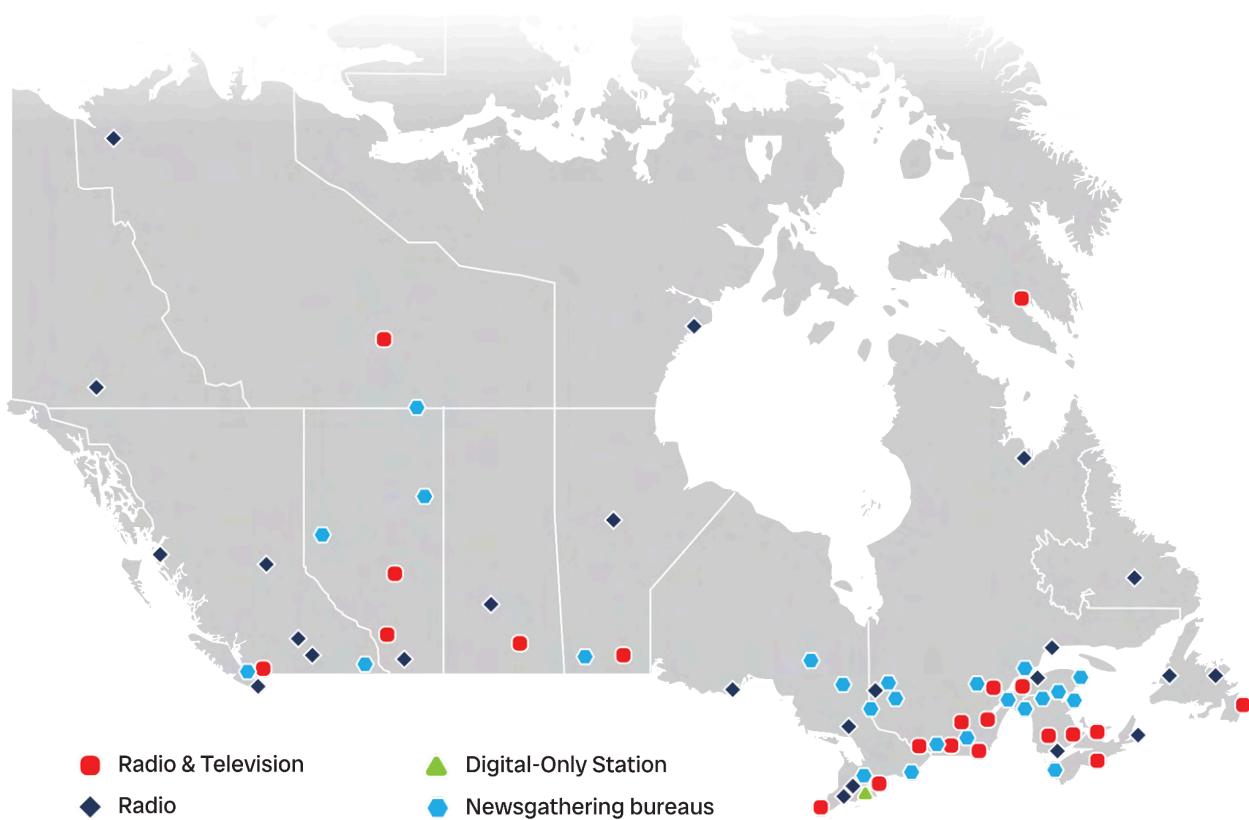
- Two distinct television networks:
  - CBC Television: An English-language television network with licensed stations in 14 distinct markets across the country (St. John's; Charlottetown; Halifax; Fredericton; Montreal; Ottawa; Toronto; Windsor; Winnipeg; Regina; Calgary; Edmonton; Vancouver; and Yellowknife) — plus a digital television station in Hamilton, Ontario; and
  - ICI TÉLÉ: A French-language television network with licensed stations in 13 distinct markets across the country (Moncton; Saguenay/Chicoutimi; Trois-Rivières; Sherbrooke; Rimouski; Quebec City; Montreal; Ottawa; Toronto; Winnipeg; Regina; Edmonton; and Vancouver).
- Two distinct ad-free radio networks focused on local, national and international news and current affairs, documentaries, and the arts: Radio One and ICI PREMIÈRE; and
- Two distinct ad-free radio networks focused on Canadian music and new and emerging domestic talent: CBC Music and ICI MUSIQUE.



Wildinette Paul, Journalist | Radio-Canada

The map below shows the physical and permanent locations of CBC/Radio-Canada's over-the-air stations and domestic bureaus.

**Fig. 11. Location of CBC/Radio-Canada's domestic stations and bureaus, as of January 2024<sup>102</sup>**



Two-thirds of CBC/Radio-Canada full-time employees are based in the two largest production centres, Toronto and Montreal. However, CBC/Radio-Canada employs news professionals on the ground in every province and territory, including the Far North.

<sup>102</sup> This map shows the locations of CBC/Radio-Canada's licensed television and radio stations (as well as one stand-alone digital station) and domestic bureaus, as at January 2024. The map does not include temporary "community engagement" bureaus, or the permanent foreign news bureaus in London, Paris, New York City, Washington, Istanbul, and Mumbai, or the temporary news bureau established in Taiwan after CBC/Radio-Canada could no longer report from Beijing.

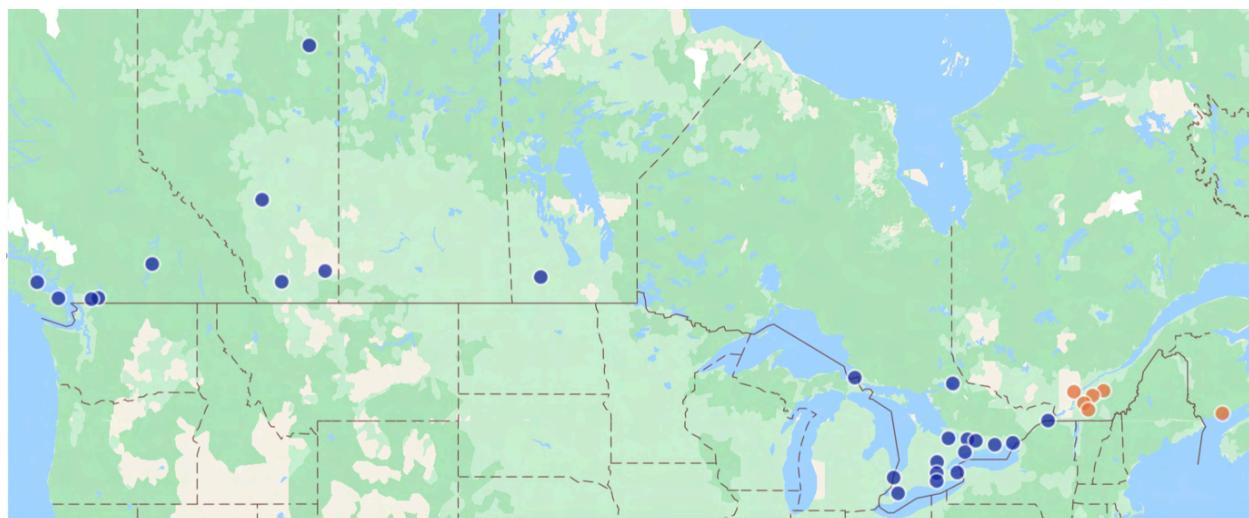


Where a permanent presence is not economically realistic or feasible, and as an event or the news may dictate, CBC/Radio-Canada has also established a temporary presence in smaller markets such as Canmore, Alberta and Salmon Arm, British Columbia, which have populations below 20,000. In an effort to increase regional representation, CBC recently established small domestic news bureaus in Kingston, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Cranbrook and Nanaimo.

### *Gaps in Presence and Service*

Despite a broad geographic presence, there are still 26 English-speaking markets in Canada with a population over 50,000 with little or no permanent CBC presence. There are also five French-speaking markets in Quebec and one bilingual market in New Brunswick with a population greater than 50,000 with no permanent Radio-Canada presence.

**Fig. 12. CBC/Radio-Canada Physical Presence Gaps as of Q3 2023-2024 with Population over 50,000**



Source: CBC/Radio-Canada (internal analysis).

Combined, these markets represent about 4 million Canadians, or about 10% of the Canadian population. These presence gaps are particularly concerning given that private media have disappeared from many markets.

Moreover, CBC/Radio-Canada research indicates that physical distance from a station — proximity — is correlated to trust levels, especially among anglophones.



**Table 4. Canadians Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing “CBC/Radio-Canada is a Trusted Source of Information,” by Distance from CBC/Radio-Canada Station**

	Under 25 km	25-50 km	50-100 km	Over 100 km
<b>CBC</b>	<b>73%</b>	71%	71%	<b>63%</b>
<b>RADIO-CANADA</b>	<b>86%</b>	87%	81%	<b>81%</b>

Source: Mandate and Vision Perception Survey, 2022/2023, Leger panel.

Given the dominance of global digital giants, many public service media have responded by refocusing their resources on proximity to audiences and their regional footprint. After all, presence in communities and close relationships with the public are competitive strengths of public service broadcasters.

When ABC Australia received additional funding from Google and Meta, the dollars were directed to regional journalism.

Swedish public service broadcaster Sveriges Television (SVT) has emphasized a greater physical journalistic presence in the regions, increasing its physical presence to 48 locations, with a goal to exceed 50.<sup>103</sup>

France Télévisions recently established proximity as a key strategic pillar, with enhancements to its local and regional content offerings.<sup>104</sup>

And the BBC launched its “BBC Across the UK” initiative,<sup>105</sup> an aggressive six-year plan to move more people, divisions, and decision-making out of London and into the regions. This initiative supports a much larger overarching “levelling up” UK initiative — a national effort to improve the economic prospects of struggling areas outside of London.<sup>106</sup>

With 72% of Canadians being concerned about the disappearance of local news outlets in Canada, and with seniors the most concerned (83%),<sup>107</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada considers the

<sup>103</sup> SVT, [SVT förstärker bevakningen i norra Sverige](#), February 8, 2022.

<sup>104</sup> The French government increased the combined budgets of France Télévisions, Radio France, France Médias Monde, ARTE, l'INA and TV5MONDE by close to €230 million (about CDN \$335 million), taking their total budget to €4.0 billion (nearly CDN \$6.0 billion) for a country delivering national services in a single language across one time zone.

<sup>105</sup> See Rhodri Talfan Davies (speech), “[The BBC's Across the UK plan: Driving creative growth across the country](#),” July 4, 2023; and Tim Davie (speech), “[BBC to meet future challenges with rigorous focus on three essential roles](#),” March 26, 2024.

<sup>106</sup> See Anthony Reuben, “[What is levelling up and who is it helping?](#),” BBC News, March 2024.

<sup>107</sup> Pollara, [Trust in Media - How Canadians feel about news outlet](#), July 2024.



regionalization of its service and ensuring close proximity to Canadian communities critical factors in keeping trust.

For the past five years, one of the key pillars of CBC/Radio-Canada's strategic plan has been to emphasize proximity and increase local and regional reflection. CBC/Radio-Canada has privileged staff in the regions when facing financial pressures and workforce reductions. Shifting resources to the regions has enabled locally produced podcasts<sup>108</sup> and radio shows like *What On Earth* (Vancouver) and *Cost of Living* (Calgary).

CBC has innovated with the launch of local news on free advertising supported television (FAST) channels and short-form news delivery for mobile phones. And CBC/Radio-Canada continues to identify and train the next generation of journalists, diverse and Indigenous, from across the country in programs such as *Pathways* (CBC, Winnipeg) and *Reporters multiplataformes* (Radio-Canada, Regina).

### *Regional investment in cultural content production*

CBC/Radio-Canada spends more on the commissioning of independent Canadian content than any other domestic broadcaster — particularly on key programming genres such as dramas, comedies, documentaries and variety programs.



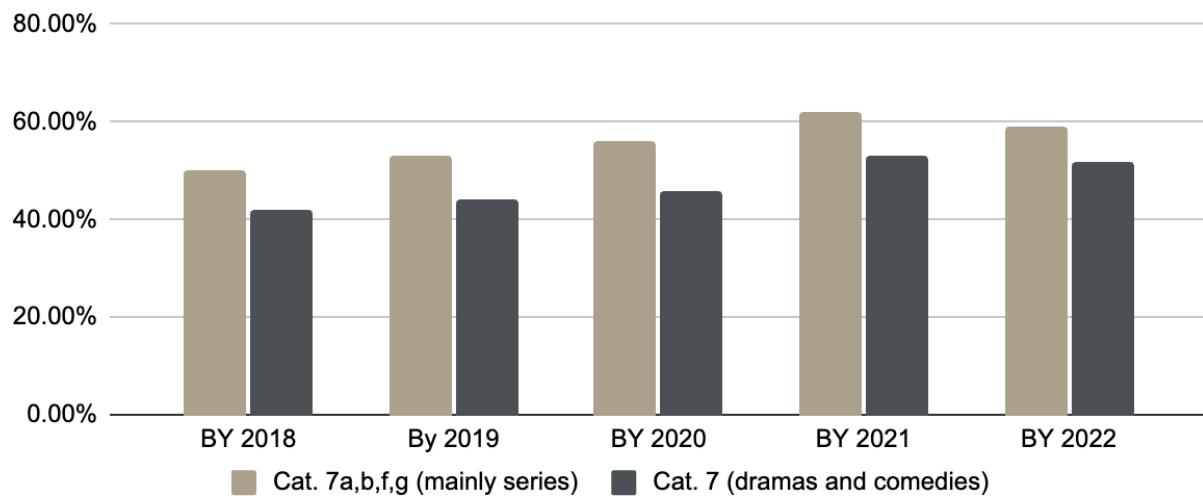
*Heartland* | CBC

---

<sup>108</sup> CBC, "[CBC News Launches Seven Local Podcasts Across Canada](#)," January 29, 2024.

**Fig. 13. CBC/Radio-Canada Share of Broadcast Spending (%)**

Independently-produced scripted programs



Source: CRTC Aggregate Annual Returns — Broadcast Year 2018-2022, inclusive.

However, while television production is typically centralized for greater efficiencies and talent pooling — consider the cultural output for Hollywood or Bollywood for example — CBC/Radio-Canada also supports independent producers in the regions across a wide variety of programming genres (including children and youth programming).

Over the past three years, for example, CBC has supported about 150 projects from independent producers outside of Ontario, while Radio-Canada has supported 70 regional productions outside of the Greater Montreal Area. CBC/Radio-Canada continues to deepen its commitment to regional productions to great success. Recent examples include *Allegiance*, *Wild Cards* and *Son of a Critch* from CBC, and *El Toro*, *Pour toi Flora*, *Mont-Rouge* and *Le monde de Gabrielle Roy* from Radio-Canada.

In its 2022 licence renewal decision, the CRTC set new and more ambitious requirements for CBC/Radio-Canada with respect to its spending on producers from Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) and Indigenous communities, and for productions from other under-represented groups.



**Table 5. Licence spending requirements for CBC**

<b>EXPENDITURES ON PRODUCERS* (AUDIO VISUAL)</b>	<b>BY 2022-23</b>	<b>BY 2023-24</b>	<b>BY 2024-25</b>	<b>BY 2025-26</b>	<b>BY 2026-27</b>
<b>OLMC</b>	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%
<b>INDIGENOUS</b>	n/a	6.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%
<b>OVERARCHING REQUIREMENT</b>					
OLMC + Indigenous + Persons with Disabilities + Racialized + LGBTQ2+	n/a	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%

\*Expressed as a percentage of total independent programming expenditures.

**Table 6. Licence spending requirements for Radio-Canada**

<b>EXPENDITURES ON PRODUCERS* (AUDIO VISUAL)</b>	<b>BY 2022-23</b>	<b>BY 2023-24</b>	<b>BY 2024-25</b>	<b>BY 2025-26</b>	<b>BY 2026-27</b>
<b>OLMC</b>	3.0%	3.5%	4.0%	5.0%	6.0%
<b>INDIGENOUS</b>	n/a	1.0%	1.0%	1.8%	1.8%
<b>OVERARCHING REQUIREMENT</b>					
OLMC + Indigenous + Persons with Disabilities + Racialized + LGBTQ2+	n/a	6.7%	9.0%	12.3%	15.0%

\*Expressed as a percentage of total independent programming expenditures.

## Special Regional Projects and Partnerships

Beyond physical proximity in terms of transmitters, stations and bureaus, employees and regional investment in cultural programming, it is worth considering the meaningful contributions that CBC/Radio-Canada makes to the social, charitable and artistic fabric of local communities.

CBC and Radio-Canada's stations outside of Toronto and Montreal dedicate time and resources to be close to the communities they serve. At CBC, the Creator Network works with emerging filmmakers on projects that are ultimately made available as part of the *Absolutely Canadian* series on CBC Gem. Radio-Canada actively participates in and promotes local cultural gatherings and festivals in local communities around the country, such as the *Festival international du cinéma francophone en Acadie* in New Brunswick, the *Francofest* in Nova Scotia, and the 100th anniversary of Manitoba's Théâtre Cercle Molière, Canada's oldest theatre company, to name just a few.

And each year, both CBC and Radio-Canada operate holiday-season charity drives across the country. In 2023, over \$9 million was raised for a variety of causes in local communities.



CBC Food Bank Day at CBC studios in Vancouver, British Columbia | CBC



Every December, employees raise funds for food banks as part of *La guignolée des médias* | Radio-Canada

# 5



The 39th Gémeaux Awards Gala, hosted by Pierre-Yves Lords | Radio-Canada  
Photo credit Éric Myre



## SECTION 5

### Sustainable Funding

The funding of CBC/Radio-Canada has been the subject of much debate over the past decade. For additional perspective, it is helpful to look at funding models in place for other public service broadcasters, as well as current and historical funding levels for CBC/Radio-Canada.

#### Diversified Funding Model

CBC/Radio-Canada has a diversified or hybrid revenue model — a combination of parliamentary appropriation and self-generated or earned revenues with an approximate split of 70% public funding and 30% commercial revenue. This diversified model is common among public service media (PSM) organizations globally, though the mix can be different, as can be the types of commercial revenue. As Nordicity has noted, “numerous public broadcasters around the world have embraced the benefits of revenue diversification and pursued mixed revenue models that combine public subsidy with commercial sources.”<sup>109</sup>

A comparative analysis of 18 public service media organizations in Europe, Asia and North America commissioned by CBC/Radio-Canada found that each broadcaster generated some form of commercial revenue, which represented about one-fifth of their revenue in aggregate.

An update of the same study in 2024 found that commercial revenues had increased to 23% of total revenues.<sup>110</sup> Half of the broadcasters had commercial revenue levels over 20%, and seven were over 30%.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, commercial revenues account for about 21% of total income among 65 public service media organizations in 48 mainly European markets, representing €8.1 billion.<sup>112</sup>

The nature and mix of commercial revenues vary by broadcaster. Some, like ZDF (Germany), TVNZ (New Zealand), KBS (South Korea) and SRG-SSR (Switzerland), rely on advertising to complement public funding. Each of these organizations generated more than CDN \$200 million in advertising revenues in 2022.<sup>113</sup> RTÉ Ireland generates 31% of its overall funding from advertising, while TVNZ New Zealand relies on advertising for 94% of its total income.

<sup>109</sup> Nordicity, “The Case for Advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada,” December 2019, p. 18 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).

<sup>110</sup> Drisdell Consulting, “International Commercial Practices of Public Service Broadcasters: 2024 Financial Update,” March 31, 2024 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> EBU Media Intelligence Service, “Funding of Public Service Media,” March 2024, slides 51-52.

<sup>113</sup> Drisdell Consulting, “International Commercial Practices of Public Service Broadcasters: 2024 Financial Update,” March 31, 2024 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).



Other PSM are restricted in their advertising activities, but have other commercial revenue sources.<sup>114</sup> For example, the BBC is not allowed to source domestic advertising revenues, but has nevertheless designated “growing commercial activity” as one of its four strategic imperatives<sup>115</sup> primarily drawn from the international exploitation of program rights and advertising and subscription revenues earned outside of the U.K.

In fact, the proportion of commercial revenue at the BBC actually exceeds that of CBC/Radio-Canada. BBC’s licence fee only represents about 65% of total BBC funding, while “other income” makes up the rest (this includes advertising outside of the U.K.). It has aggressive international growth plans for BBC Studios, intending to generate £3.2 billion in revenues by 2027-2028.<sup>116</sup>

CBC/Radio-Canada is *not* permitted to exploit world markets in the same way. In Canada, independent producers retain international distribution rights and domestic broadcasters, therefore, are prevented from monetizing program investments. The Corporation’s commercial revenues are therefore largely limited to advertising and, to a lesser extent, domestic subscription revenues.

Similar to what CBC and Radio-Canada did with Gem Premium and ICI TOU.TV EXTRA, respectively, other PSM organizations have also introduced paid digital subscriptions to increase their commercial revenue. For example, in 2020, the Institut national de l’audiovisuel (INA) in France launched its [madelen](#) service, giving French audiences access to tens of thousands of hours of content from the national radio and television archives. The same year, Belgium’s RTBF followed suit with the addition of a new premium streaming service, Sooner, devoted to independent film. Other European broadcasters have targeted international markets to generate revenue, including the BBC, through paid subscriptions to BritBox and BBC Select, and RTVE in Spain, with its RTVE Play+ service. As the industry’s digital shift narrows the commercial revenue base available to public broadcasters, paid digital subscriptions are proving a rare source of revenue growth.

Regardless, the underlying rationale for some level of commercial revenues remains the same: commercial revenues reduce the amount of public funding required to meet challenging public service mandates, rising costs and accelerating demands for investment in digital services to remain relevant to younger audiences. Moreover, some attention to commercial revenues ensures that public service media are attentive to changing consumer preferences and needs.

---

<sup>114</sup> The EBU has published a report that gathers and outlines some of these restrictions. See: EBU - Media Intelligence Service, “Advertising in Europe: An Overview for PSM,” March 2023. Note: This resource is only available to EBU members and associate members.

<sup>115</sup> See [BBC publishes ambitious plan to deliver greater value to audiences in the coming year - Media Centre](#).

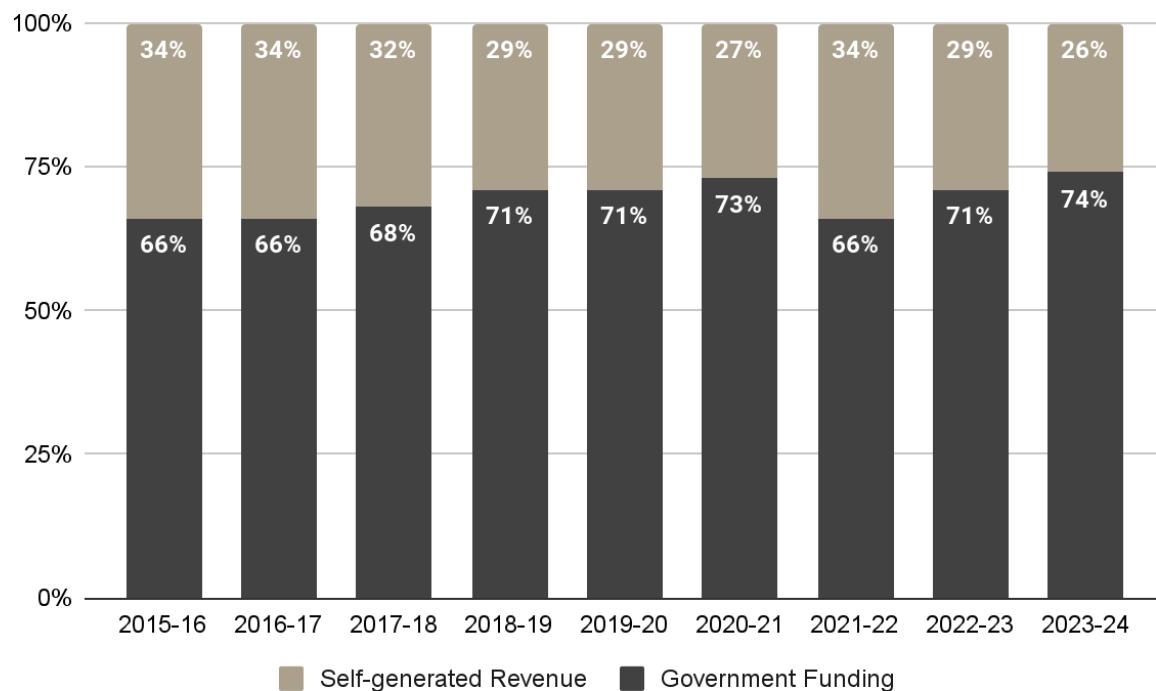
<sup>116</sup> See [A BBC For The Future](#).



## Funding Mix at CBC/Radio-Canada

Over the past decade, the parliamentary appropriation has been responsible for 67% of CBC/Radio-Canada's total sources of funds, and self-generated revenues have made up the remaining 33%.

**Fig. 14. CBC/Radio-Canada Self-Generated Revenue vs Government Funding, 2015-2024**  
Includes Olympics



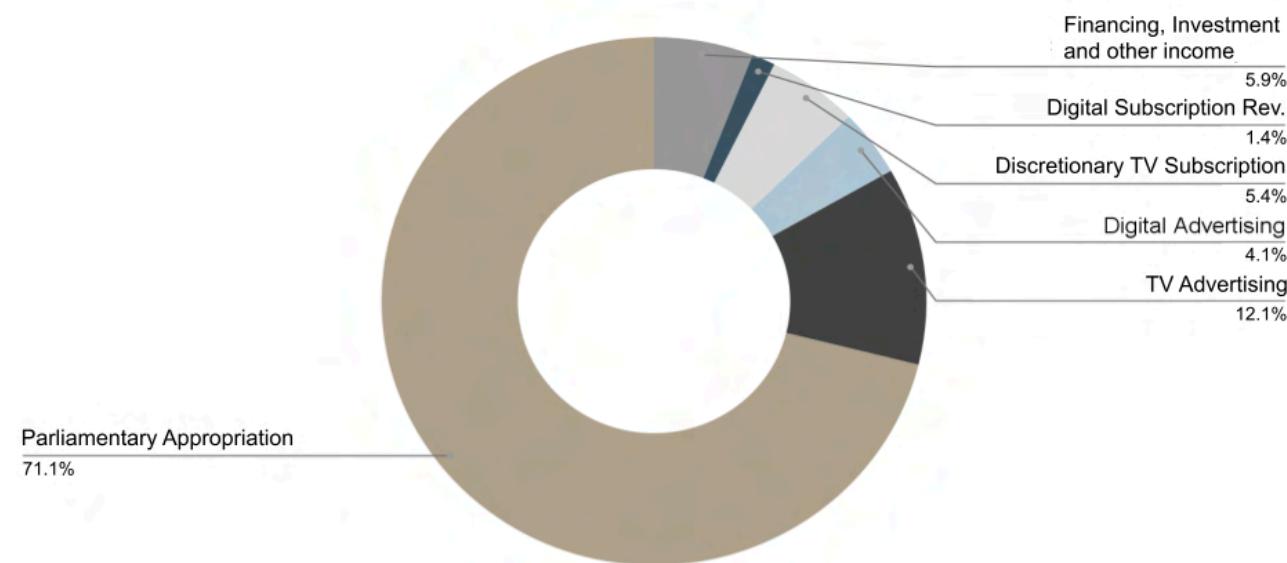
Source: CBC/Radio-Canada Annual Reports (2023/24 projected).

The Olympics impacts the funding mix due to its ability to attract advertising dollars. In an anomaly due to the pandemic, the fiscal 2021-2022 year held both the Tokyo and Beijing games. CBC/Radio-Canada holds the broadcasting rights to the Olympics until 2032, so some limited annual fluctuations are expected.



The chart below shows the CBC/Radio-Canada's sources of funds for a single fiscal year, 2022-2023.

**Fig. 15. CBC/Radio-Canada Sources of Funds, 2022-2023**



Source: CBC/Radio-Canada Annual Report 2022-2023.

The parliamentary appropriation is the single largest source of funds. Advertising and subscription revenues are made up of traditional and digital elements. While digital revenues are growing, traditional sources of commercial revenue linked to legacy services (which are in decline), still represent the lion's share of CBC/Radio-Canada's overall commercial revenues.

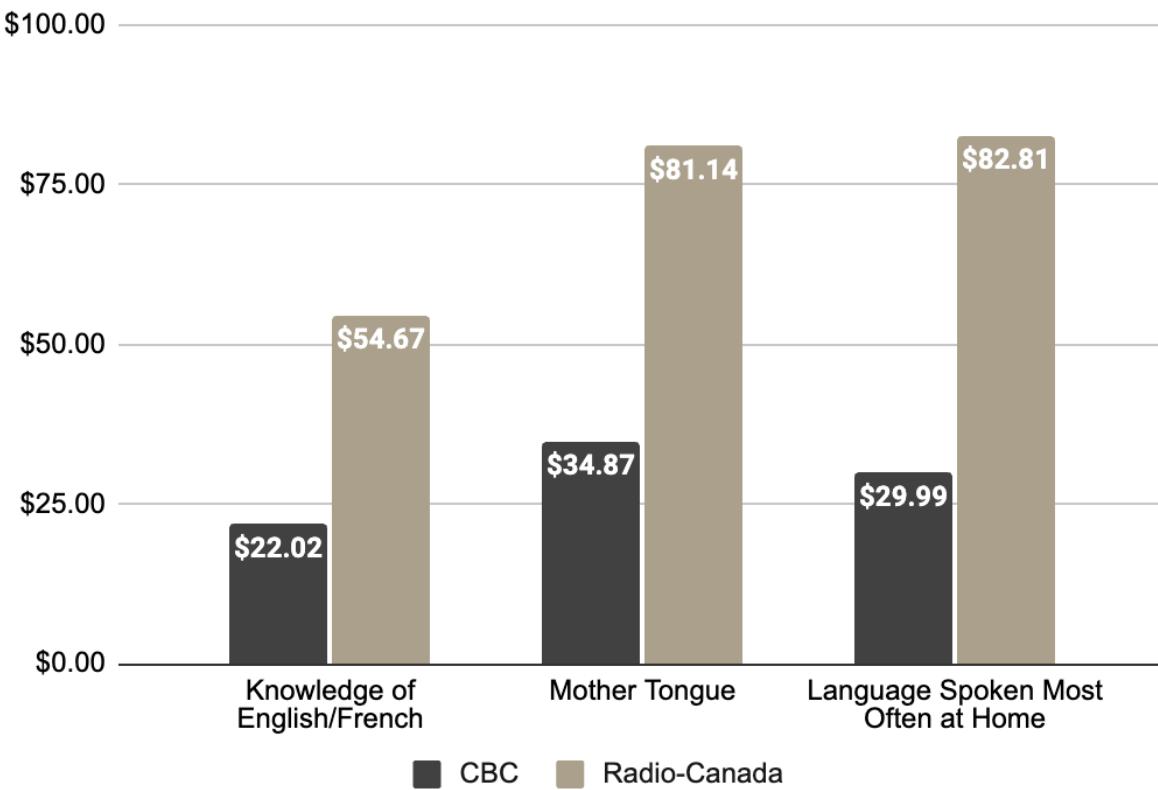
In this regard, the structural deficit at CBC/Radio-Canada is related to downward pressure on revenue tied to traditional services that are shrinking — a phenomenon experienced by all broadcasters today. Digital revenues are not fully offsetting these structural declines.

The allocation of total funding between CBC and Radio-Canada results in very different funding levels on a per-capita official language basis. For 2022-2023, here is how the funding levels broke down across three distinct language metrics:



**Fig. 16. CBC and Radio-Canada Per Capita Funding, 2022-2023**

Appropriation (recurring portion) plus commercial revenue, annual



Source Data: Appropriation and commercial revenues from internal CBC/Radio-Canada data; size of market by language from 2021 Census. Note: For “Knowledge of English/French,” persons with knowledge of both official languages are allocated to both English and French Services.

Under any of the above metrics, the *per capita funding for Radio-Canada is 2.3 to 2.8 times greater than the per capita funding for CBC*. If commercial revenue is excluded and only parliamentary appropriation is counted, Radio-Canada’s per capita funding is 2.1 to 2.4 times greater than that of CBC.



## Parliamentary appropriation

As seen above, CBC/Radio-Canada is largely funded by an annual parliamentary appropriation (roughly 70%). This model — a type of direct funding from a state or federal budget — is a common approach internationally. In fact, it is *more* common than the oft-referenced “licence fee model” where households with a television pay an annual prescribed fee. According to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), 60% of public service media in European markets are primarily supported by public funding, while 40% depend primarily on licence fees and other funding from non-public sources.<sup>117</sup>

Over time, direct funding from a state budget has become more popular, and numerous European countries, including Denmark, France and Slovakia, have dropped licence fees, usually replacing these fees with a direct state allocation.<sup>118</sup>

Note that in pure *monetary* terms, the licence fee is still the largest source of funding for PSM in Europe — largely because highly populated countries such as Germany, the U.K. and Italy still employ that model. However, the fee is challenging to administer and collect, subject to high evasion levels, and declining as consumers adopt different content-receiving technologies and platforms. All told, over the last decade, the licence fee in the total PSM funding mix has declined from 65% in 2013 to 51% in 2022, a historic low.<sup>119</sup>

Some countries have tied public funding of PSM to macro-economic indicators, such as a fixed proportion of a state budget or a proportion of a country’s GDP. According to the EBU, the goal of this model is:

- Improving funding stability, by linking the PSM budget to broader economic variables that might be fairly stable over time;
- Avoiding the relative erosion in PSM funding that can happen whenever funding is frozen; and
- Providing PSM with increased independence from the political sphere, by setting a transparent and objective framework for budgetary negotiations.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> EBU — Media Intelligence Service, “Funding of Public Service Media,” March 2024, slide 55. Note: This resource is only available to EBU members and associate members. The EBU publishes a shorter public version, but it is not as comprehensive.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, slide 78.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, slide 52.

<sup>120</sup> EBU — Media Intelligence Service, “Funding of Public Service Media,” March 2024, slide 63.



Many countries — including ones with similar parliamentary structures such as Australia, the U.K. and France — have developed funding structures for PSM that contemplate pluriannual funding.<sup>121</sup> Multi-year budget certainty allows for, and even encourages, programming innovation, risk-taking and projects and initiatives that require medium- or long-term investments. Under an annual funding model, it is more difficult for CBC/Radio-Canada to plan for multi-year initiatives and investments. Productions can take years of development; programming commitments cross over fiscal years; and capital-intensive projects typically span multiple years, ranging from the design to implementation phases.

### *Level of Support*

As stated, it is not the model of funding, but rather the level of funding relative to the mandate that determines how well a public broadcaster can serve its citizens.<sup>122</sup>

While outlining key public funding principles for public service media, Dr. Richard Burnley, EBU Legal Director, made a similar point:

The crucial democratic, cultural and social role PSM plays in the dual broadcasting system has been recognised in many international texts and court judgments.

However, for PSM to be able to play this role in society, it is imperative that it receives stable and adequate funding. Without sufficient means to fulfil its public interest service, PSM is critically weakened: it is unable to produce quality content or provide quality journalism; it cannot innovate and compete in the global market; its audience becomes disillusioned and it can face a downward spiral of less funding and less relevance. Democracy and the social and cultural fabric of society suffer.<sup>123</sup>

Among its peers, on a per capita basis, Canada has one of the lowest levels of public funding in the world. Updating for population growth, the actual per capita funding level is approximately \$32 (nine cents per Canadian per day).<sup>124</sup> As shown below, the *average* PSM per capita funding level is nearly 2.5 times higher than for Canada.

---

<sup>121</sup> Drisdell Consulting, “Public Service Media Governance Structures,” March 31, 2024, p. 12 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).

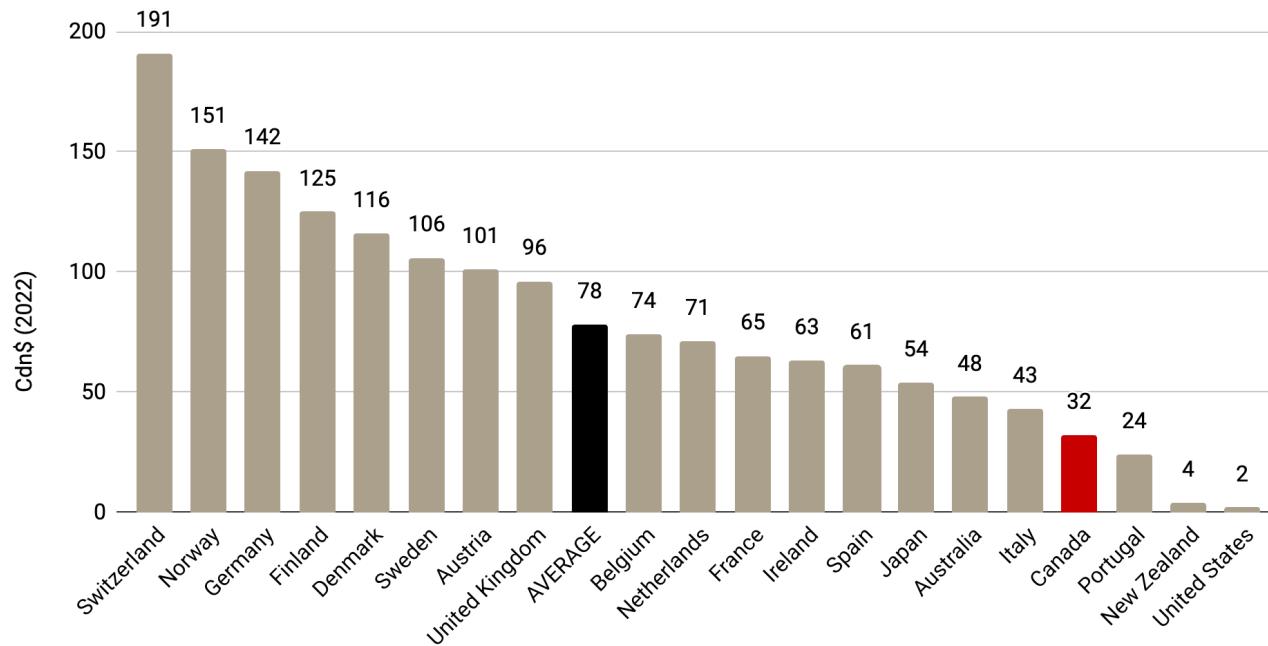
<sup>122</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Our Culture, Our Democracy: Canada in the Digital World](#), p. 20.

<sup>123</sup> Dr. Richard Burnley (EBU), [Legal Focus: Public funding principles for public service media](#).

<sup>124</sup> Nordicity, “The Case for Advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada,” July 2024, p. 55, using 2022 data and as expressed in Canadian dollars (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).



Fig. 17. Public Service Media Per Capita Public Funding, Cdn\$, 2022



Source Data: Nordicity, September 2024, via analysis of annual reports. Excludes any revenue from commercial sources, and excludes provincial educational broadcasters.

Only PSMs in Portugal, New Zealand and the U.S. had lower per capita levels of government support than CBC/Radio-Canada. Eleven countries had a per capita level *double* that of Canada (seven countries actually have a per capita level more than three times greater).

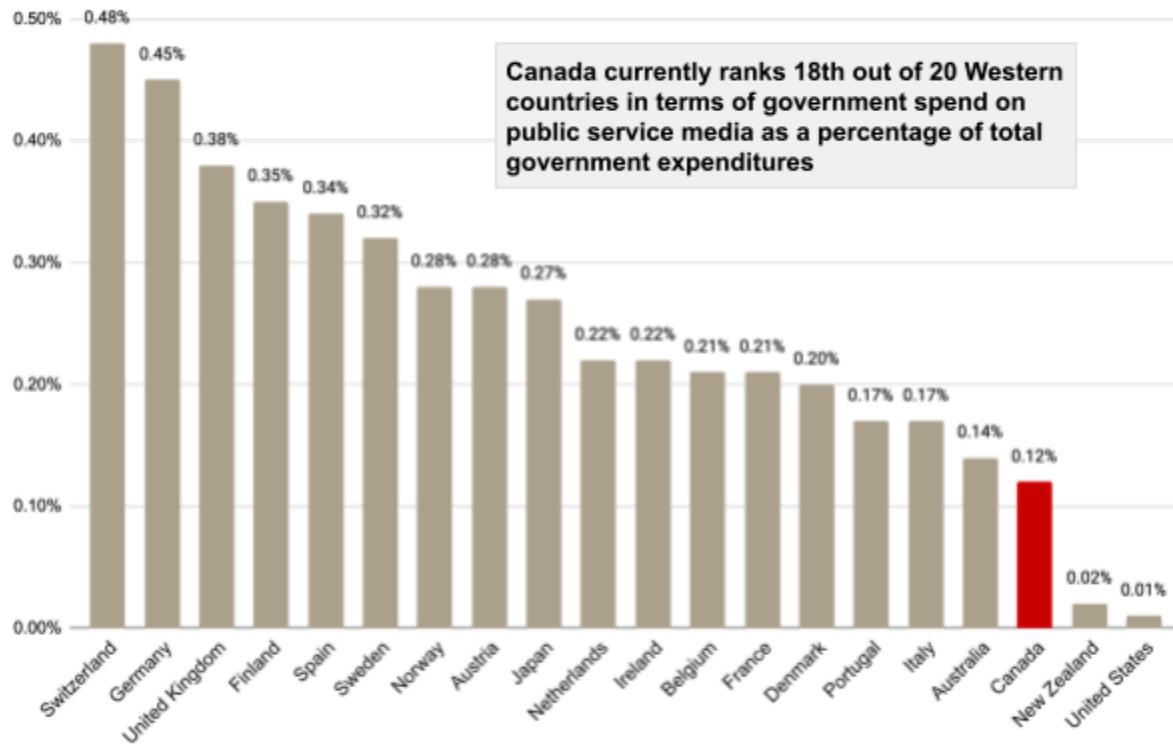


Solar eclipse 2024 | CBC



The story is similar when looking at funding of PSM in relation to *total* government spending.

**Fig. 18. Public Service Broadcaster Share of Government Expenditures, 2022**

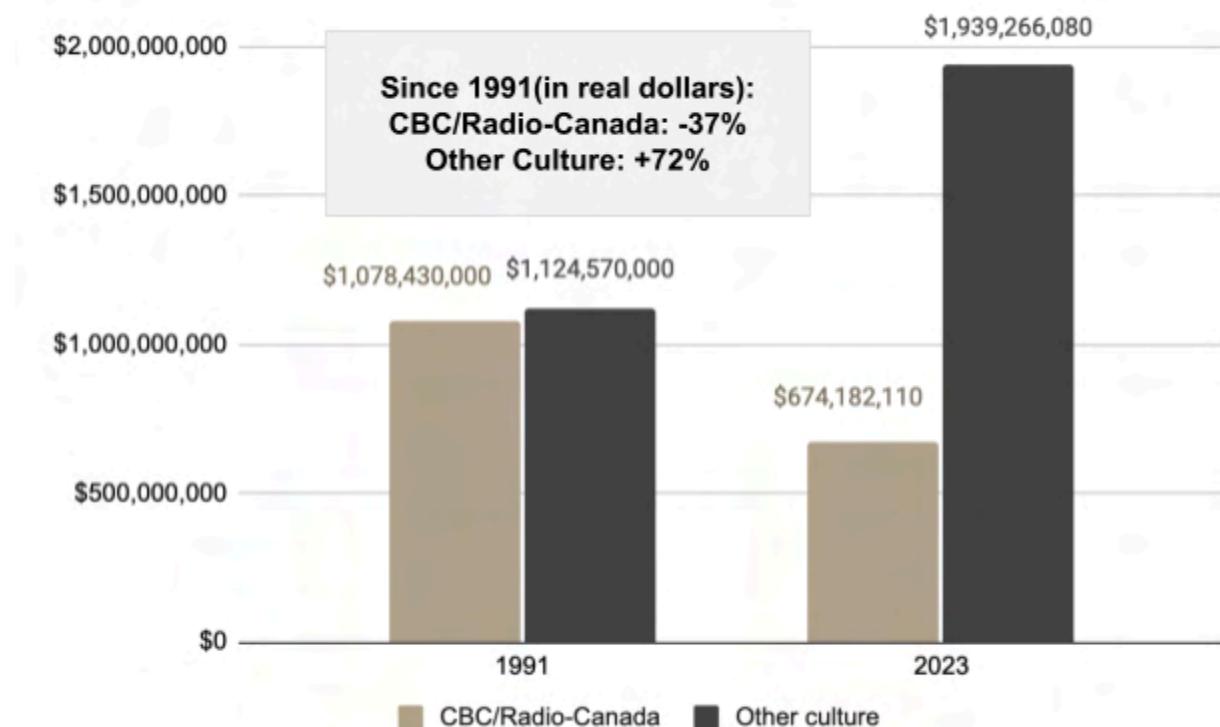


Source: Nordicity, September 2024, analysis of data from annual reports of public broadcasters, Eurostat, OECD, and national statistical agencies.

By this measure, Canada ranks ahead of only New Zealand and the U.S. Three countries were at least *triple* Canada's level of funding (Switzerland, Germany, and the U.K.).

The low level of public investment in CBC/Radio-Canada is particularly striking when compared to the government's investments in other cultural activities and when taking inflation into account. The following chart shows what happened to funding levels in real dollars between the 1991 and 2023 Broadcasting Acts.

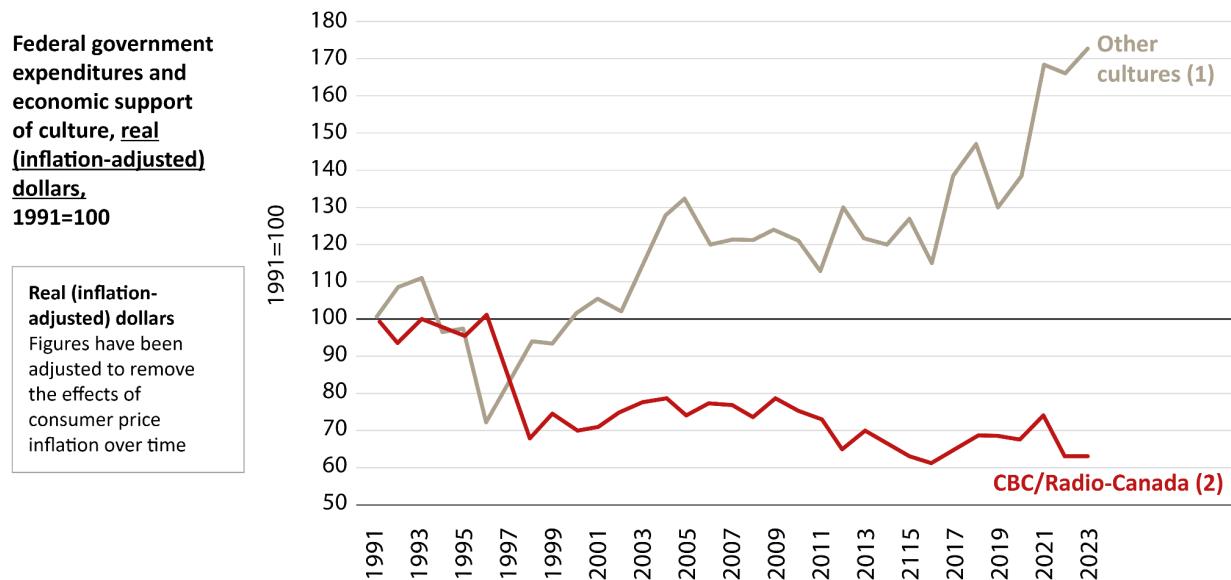
Fig. 19. Federal Government Spending on Culture, Real Dollars, 1991 and 2023



Source Data: Nordicity, based on CBC/Radio-Canada data and estimates from Public Accounts of Canada (Total federal culture spend less CBC/Radio-Canada appropriation) as adjusted for inflation.

Here is another perspective on the same data. In the chart below, we see that federal funding for CBC/Radio-Canada and “other culture” started at roughly the same level in 1991, but the gap widened significantly over the past three decades or so.

**Fig. 20. Federal Government Culture Expenditures versus  
CBC/Radio-Canada Parliamentary Appropriation Funding, 1991-2023, Constant Dollars**



Source: Nordicity, September 2024. Estimates based on data from Statistics Canada, Public Accounts of Canada, and CBC/Radio-Canada. (1) “Other culture” includes all federal government expenditures on culture and broadcasting, excluding payments to CBC/Radio-Canada. (2) CBC/Radio-Canada includes annual parliamentary appropriation.

Since 1991, in real dollars, CBC/Radio-Canada’s share of cultural spend fell from 49% to 26%, while the share of “other culture” grew from 51% to 74%. In this regard, successive governments and parliaments have privileged spending on cultural grant programs over investments in news infrastructure and the media services from CBC/Radio-Canada.

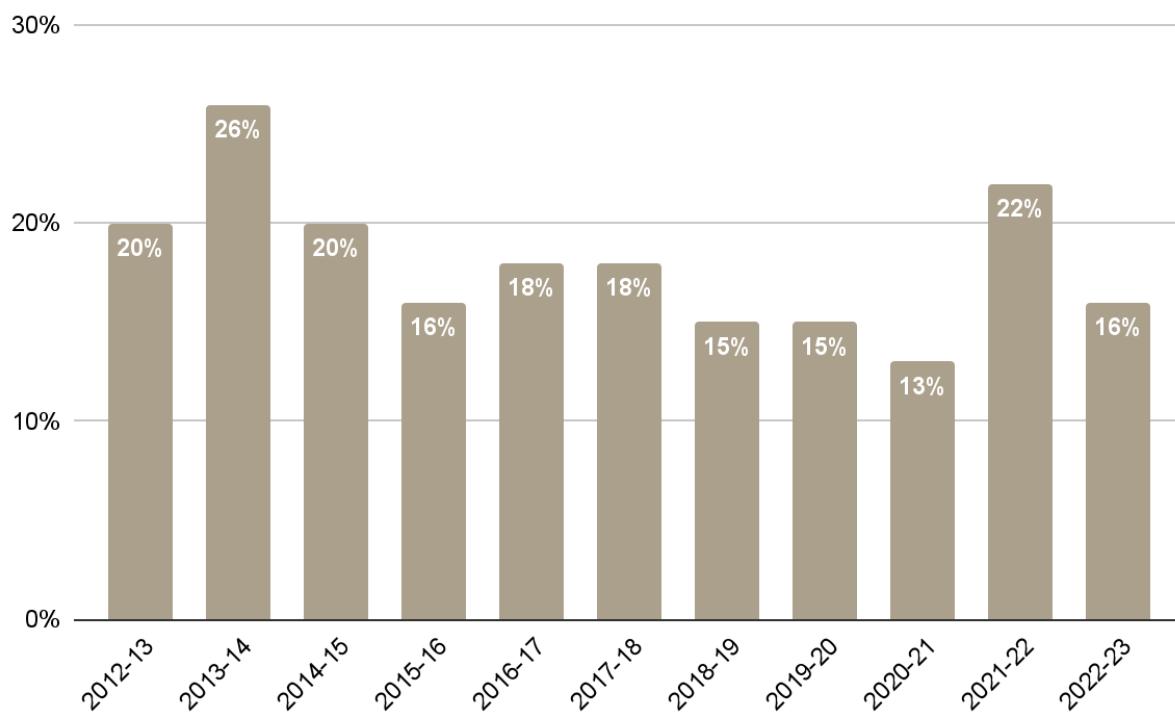
In summary, over many years, financial support for CBC/Radio-Canada from Parliament has eroded across multiple dimensions: in terms of total and per capita funding in real dollars; as a share of government expenditures; in comparison to its international peer group; and in comparison to investments in culture programs overall.

Moreover, the decline in parliamentary appropriation for CBC/Radio-Canada has occurred despite increased regulatory obligations, a 47% increase in population, hyperinflation of production costs, an evolving media sector that requires more investment across multiple platforms and devices, pressures on self-generated revenues, an expanding competitive set that now includes foreign digital giants, and higher consumer expectations.

## Advertising revenues

While advertising revenues vary due to economic conditions and events such as the Olympics and federal and provincial elections, they typically represent 15-20% of CBC/Radio-Canada's total sources of funds. This range is at or below the advertising levels at other PSM, including: RTBF Belgium (16%), RTÉ Ireland (31%), TVNZ New Zealand (94%) and KBS South Korea (18%).<sup>125</sup>

**Fig. 21. CBC/Radio-Canada Advertising Revenue, % of Overall Funding, 2012-2023**

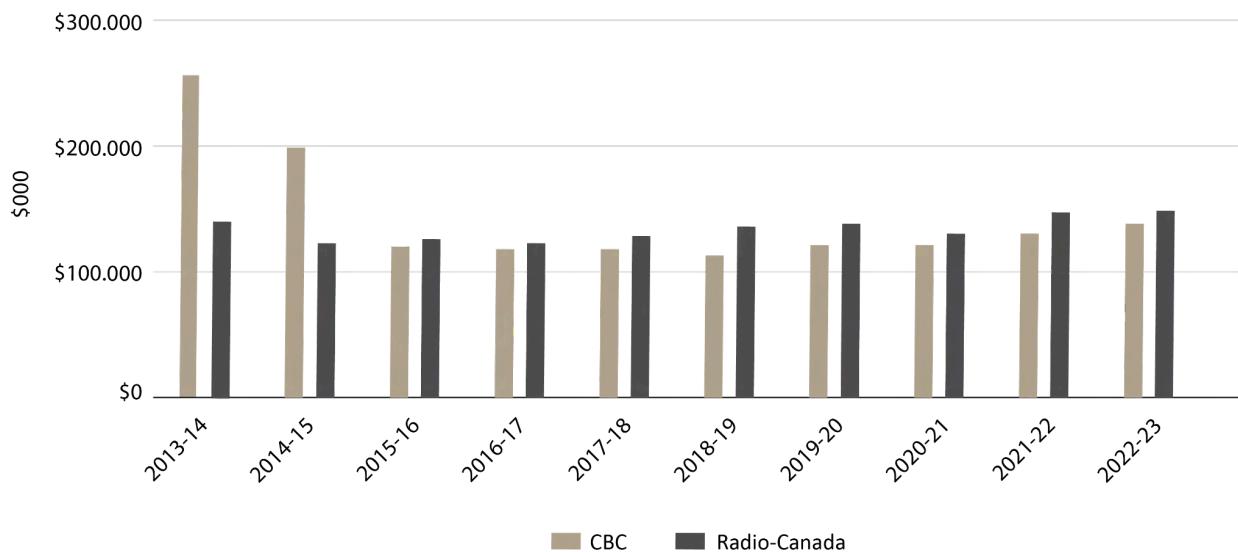


Source: CBC/Radio-Canada Annual Reports.

In 2022-23, sales of advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada's conventional television stations, discretionary television services, and digital platforms was just under \$289 million (CBC/Radio-Canada does not solicit or accept any advertising on its linear radio services). Traditional television advertising represented 75% of that amount (\$216 million), while digital advertising generated the rest (\$73 million).

<sup>125</sup> Drisdell Consulting, "International Commercial Practices of Public Service Media organizations: 2024 Financial Update," March 31, 2024 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study). Note that these percentages are based on 2022 financials. In that year, CBC/Radio-Canada advertising revenues were higher (22%) as a result of two Olympics being held in a single fiscal year due to the pandemic.

**Fig. 22. CBC and Radio-Canada Advertising Revenue, 2013-2023**



Source: Internal CBC/Radio-Canada data.

Commercial revenues are not pooled across the Corporation, and CBC and Radio-Canada each retain the commercial revenues for their respective operations.

### *Traditional Television Advertising*

In 2022-23, traditional television advertising represented 12% of CBC/Radio-Canada's overall sources of funding.

As new foreign online offerings have flooded and penetrated the Canadian market, traditional television advertising revenues have stagnated and then declined. According to Convergence Research, traditional Canadian TV advertising reached its peak in 2011, and has been declining ever since.

CRTC Financial Summaries for 2018-2022 also show continued erosion.<sup>126</sup> For television, declines are generally seen in local times sales, national time sales and infomercials. Where growth has occurred, it has been minimal (under 2% annually).<sup>127</sup> Globally, advertising expenditure on linear television is expected to decrease, and online advertising is not expected to make up for this decline.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> CRTC, [Financial Summaries for Broadcasting Sector](#).

<sup>127</sup> Private radio has been particularly hit hard, but it is not a focus here since CBC/Radio-Canada's radio stations do not solicit or accept any advertising.

<sup>128</sup> Zenith, "Advertising Expenditure Forecasts," June 2023, pp. 12 and 22.



While some have argued that advertising dilutes the quality of the public broadcasting experience, CBC/Radio-Canada's parliamentary appropriation alone is insufficient to finance the Corporation's current level of programs and services. Removing commercial revenues would create an annual funding gap of \$200-300 million, requiring either a greater parliamentary appropriation or dramatic cuts to existing programming and production.

Removing advertising would not benefit Canadian industry, protect Canadian jobs or improve Canada's GDP. Nordicity estimates that 70% of "freed-up" advertising dollars would simply be diverted or leak to foreign digital giants, notably Google and Meta/Facebook.<sup>129</sup> Given CBC/Radio-Canada's extraordinarily high investment levels in Canadian content,<sup>130</sup> this would effectively result in a \$205 million decline in Canadian programming expenditures (CPE) each year and, in turn, the drop in CPE would translate into an annual \$498 million reduction in *total* television production in Canada (representing about 11% of the total Canadian television production market).<sup>131</sup>

Impact would be felt up and down the content value chain — particularly by Canadian independent producers and in local communities where productions are made. Consider that CBC/Radio-Canada spends more on Canadian dramas and comedies than all of the other broadcasters combined.<sup>132</sup> Without advertising revenues, there would be less money to spend on that content and the producers who create it.

Advertising associations also want CBC/Radio-Canada to maintain access to advertising. As a bilingual and national PSM organization with strength in both French- and English-language markets, CBC/Radio-Canada offers marketers effective ways to reach Canadians in both official languages. This is a requirement for all federally regulated organizations, and key to many other industries (e.g., telecommunications, airlines, banks).

Some parties have suggested that CBC/Radio-Canada's access to advertising revenues — which again only represent 15-20% of overall funding — impacts programming decisions. But there is simply no evidence to suggest that advertising is affecting CBC/Radio-Canada's ability or willingness to meet its public service mandate, adhere to its CRTC licences *or* take creative risks.

---

<sup>129</sup> Nordicity, "Economic Impact of Advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada," July 2024, pp. iii and 42.

<sup>130</sup> Almost all (96%) of CBC/Radio-Canada's content spend is on domestic content. Source: CBC/Radio-Canada, CRTC Aggregate Annual Returns.

<sup>131</sup> Nordicity, "Economic Impact of Advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada," July 2024, pp. iii and 57.

<sup>132</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada analysis of CRTC, [Aggregate Annual Returns 2018-2022](#), Programming Category 7.



## Digital Advertising

In 2022-23, advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada's digital platforms represented about 4% of its total sources of funds (\$73 million), representing a small but growing source of revenue. Online video generates about 60% of this amount.

But digital advertising is dominated by a pair of American-based juggernauts: Google and Meta/Facebook. In 2021, Google and Meta/Facebook collected nearly 80% of *all* Internet advertising revenues in Canada and the market had grown to \$12.3 billion.<sup>133</sup>

In the digital advertising landscape, CBC/Radio-Canada is too small to have any market-shaping powers. *In fact, the entire Canadian media sector represents less than 6%*. Nearly all digital advertising revenues are flowing out of Canada to Silicon Valley.

Convergence Research more narrowly assessed the size of Canadian broadcasters in the digital advertising market and concluded that *altogether* they represent 2.3% of the overall category. CBC/Radio-Canada represents a slice of that very small fraction (about 0.8%).

Online video is the fastest growing segment of online advertising<sup>134</sup> — and notionally, it seems a good fit for those with broadcasting experience. But it is difficult to see how Canadian media could aggressively compete in this arena given the global scale and scope of the international content players and platforms.

If the digital advertising segment were a small proportion of the overall advertising category, a concentration of foreign market powers may be less concerning. But Internet advertising is Canada's largest advertising segment by revenue.<sup>135</sup> In 2023, online advertising was a \$15.1 billion business in Canada and, driven by mobile internet advertising revenue, it is expected to grow to \$18.0 billion by 2025.<sup>136</sup> Globally, online is already the largest channel for advertisers — with Zenith predicting that online will represent 59% of overall advertising spend by 2025.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> See [Canadian Media Concentration Research Project \(CMCR\)](#); Winseck, Dwayne, 2022, "[Media and Internet Concentration in Canada, 1984–2021](#)," (Figure 20: Internet Advertising: Revenue, Market Shares and Concentration Scores (based on \$), 2014-2021).

<sup>134</sup> CBC Audience Research, analysis based on data from PwC, Entertainment & Media Outlook 2023, June 2023 (internal to CBC/Radio-Canada). PwC is projecting a 9.3% compound annual growth rate for video internet advertising between 2018 and 2027, inclusive.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> The Convergence Research Group, "The Battle for the Canadian Couch Potato: OTT and TV," May 2023, p. 19.

<sup>137</sup> Zenith, "Advertising Expenditure Forecasts," June 2023, p. 9.



However, Canadian media companies, and CBC/Radio-Canada in particular, are not standing on the digital sidelines as traditional advertising revenues decline. CBC/Radio-Canada has, for example, launched new free ad-supported television (FAST) channels on connected TV platforms — including CBC News Explore, CBC Comedy, CBC News BC, CBC News Toronto, Radio-Canada Info, Heartland and Murdoch Mysteries — and recently announced the pending launch of 12 additional new local FAST channels. FAST channels are expected to see double-digit growth rates through 2025.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, advertising video on demand (AVOD) and regional online initiatives offer new opportunities for some additional revenues. But given a crowded market and challenges in consumers accessing and discovering these services on certain third-party platforms and devices, it is difficult to see how prior levels of advertising revenue will be met or surpassed.



Andrew Chang, *About That* | CBC News Explore

---

<sup>138</sup> Zenith, "Advertising Expenditure Forecasts," June 2023, p. 22.

## Subscription Revenues

Subscription revenues have been a more stable, projectable and consistent source of commercial revenue for broadcasters, but the continued decline in the number of Canadians paying for subscriptions has eroded this source of revenue for both public and private broadcasters.

In 2022-23, subscription revenue represented about 7% of CBC/Radio-Canada's total sources of funds (\$122 million). In nominal dollars, that total is about 10% lower than a decade earlier (\$136 million), but it has stabilized over the past few years. CBC/Radio-Canada has introduced new digital subscription offerings to offset some of the decline on more traditional assets (see below).

Canadian over-the-air broadcasters are not permitted to charge broadcasting distribution systems a fee for carriage. So roughly 80% of CBC/Radio-Canada's subscription revenues are generated by a small portfolio of discretionary television services.<sup>139</sup>

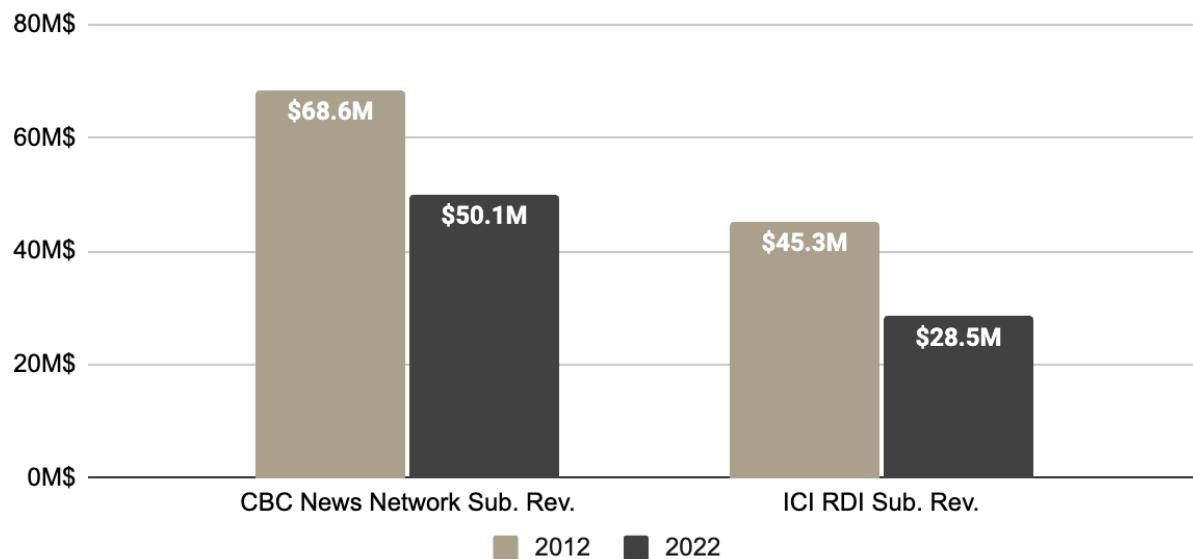
CBC/Radio-Canada's two all-news specialty services generate most of the subscription revenue, but subscriptions to both have declined. Over the past decade, CBC News Network's subscription revenues have declined by 27%, while ICI RDI has experienced a 37% drop.



ICI RDI | Radio-Canada

<sup>139</sup> This portfolio consists of: CBC News Network; ICI RDI; ICI ARTV; ICI EXPLORA; and *documentary* Channel.

**Fig. 23. Subscription Revenue – CBC News Network and ICI RDI**



Source: CRTC Individual Discretionary and On-Demand Statistical and Financial Summaries

A major reason for this decline is the long-term erosion of TV subscribers, especially cable and direct-to-home satellite users. Between 2012 and 2022, the number of TV subscribers in Canada fell by 2.1 million (-18%) despite a 12% increase in overall households.<sup>140</sup> Over the same time frame, the number of cord-cutter and cord-never households increased by 3.7 million (+144%).<sup>141</sup> The decline in the number of TV subscribers will likely continue.

### *Digital Subscription*

The rise of global over-the-top (OTT) content distributors — Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Discovery+, Paramount+, etc — is well documented. By 2025, 14 million Canadian households will subscribe to at least one OTT service — compared to only 8.8 million TV subscribers.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> The Convergence Research Group, “The Battle for the Canadian Couch Potato: Bundling, Television, Internet, Telephone, Wireless,” May 2023, p. 12.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* “Cord-cutting” refers to former cable or direct-to-home satellite subscribers who chose to leave those platforms, typically to pursue newer online content offerings, such as subscription video on demand services (SVODs) or advertising on demand services (AVOD). “Cord-nevers” refers to households that were never cable or direct-to-home satellite subscribers. “Cord-shavers” refers to households that maintain subscriptions to cable or direct-to-home satellite providers, but have removed individual programming services or content packages to lower their monthly bills (these may be supplemented with online content offerings). One factor contributing to subscriber decline is a change in regulatory policy to foster more consumer choice. The CRTC’s “Let’s Talk TV” policy decision in 2015 obligated broadcasters to offer a “skinny basic” package. Most channels, including CBC News Network in English-speaking markets and ICI RDI in French-speaking markets, could no longer be offered in the entry-level package. Moreover, discretionary services had to be sold on an individual basis in addition to small fixed or design-your-own packages. All of this weakened packaging protections and encouraged cord-shaving.

<sup>142</sup> The Convergence Research Group, “The Battle for the Canadian Couch Potato: OTT and TV,” May 2023, p. 8.

With such high market penetration, attention is now focused on the number of OTT products a given household will pay for (often referred to as a “stacking”). Convergence Research projects over 40 million Canadian OTT subscriber accounts by 2025, roughly three services per household.<sup>143</sup> This is becoming expensive for consumers, as subscription costs can approach previous cable and direct-to-home satellite costs.

To address this costing problem, OTT players are rapidly introducing advertising-based models that obviate or reduce subscription fees. So-called AVOD offerings are seeing good traction. However, at this time, the largest part of the OTT segment, by far, is still SVOD.

OTT has ushered in a new era of content distribution and consumer behaviour, but most of the revenues flow to foreign players. Canadian TV access providers and programmers only have a 14% market share of this sector. Canadian services lag significantly.

For CBC/Radio-Canada, SVOD revenue opportunities at this time are fairly limited, but growing. Its two video streaming services — CBC Gem and ICI TOU.TV — have premium, ad-free options for an additional monthly charge.



*Son of a Critch* | CBC

---

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.



## *The State of Capital Expenditures (CAPEX)*

In 2023, total capital appropriations for CBC/Radio-Canada were about \$108 million, and the amortization of deferred capital funding was slightly under \$93 million.

Large projects — those with a forecast investment of greater than \$1 million — receive about 75% of the available capital budget. The transmission network requires a capital investment of \$8-10 million each year. CBC/Radio-Canada identified the difficulties of meeting these capital demands in its 2022-23 annual report:

Our capital funding envelope is insufficient to address all capital demands, such as large infrastructure projects, equipment refresh and leasehold improvements, resulting in the continual prioritizing of key projects and project timelines within our available capital budget.<sup>144</sup>

Pressures on the CAPEX budget include:

- *Rising inflation:* Vendors have adjusted their pricing to account for higher levels of inflation, which has resulted in higher project costs. Some large vendors are revising their pricing on a quarterly basis.
- *Shorter technology lifecycles:* Traditional broadcasting equipment typically has a lifespan of 12-15 years. Newer hardware and software solutions offer more flexibility, but usually require a refresh every six to eight years.
- *Project complexity and demand for talent:* The use of shared infrastructure and complex software solutions requires costly projects and installations. This, in turn, requires a high “in-demand” skill set that requires an understanding of the entire IT ecosystem, not just traditional broadcasting.

Additionally, the IT sector is increasingly moving to service-oriented or subscription-based solutions (e.g., annual subscriptions to editing tools). This puts new, additional pressures on already tight operating expenditure budgets — while CAPEX budgets are still stretched too thin.

In this environment, it is possible to centralize some of the equipment and functions and share technical resources, but this comes with added risks and complexities. An oversubscribed CAPEX budget and new IT-related operating expenditures require a harsh prioritization of large projects while also extending the life cycle of certain assets or otherwise putting off certain fixes or projects.

---

<sup>144</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [2022-2023 Annual Report](#), p. 40.

# 6



Toronto Raptors president Masai Ujiri with Adrienne Arsenault, *The National* | CBC



## SECTION 6

### Governance — Why Independence Matters

Public service media (PSM) is characterized by a unique governance structure. The origin of the model is British, with the BBC. It is based on creating an arms-length operation from the government and legislature to ensure independence in journalism and programming while still maintaining accountability to the public. The difference in governance rules among PSM organizations generally revolve around the *length* of the arm from government and legislatures.<sup>145</sup> However, they are all focused on independence in law and practice.

Independence from political authorities is what distinguishes “public” service media from “state” media. The latter act as instruments of government propaganda. The “arm's-length principle” exists to establish and maintain trust with citizens that their public media acts in the public interest, and not in the interest of a political party, faction or interest group.<sup>146</sup>

As such, the independence of PSM organizations is an output of investing in them. It is a public good to have a trusted source of news and information, a reputable and high-quality creator and distributor of content and programming. The value to citizens is their actual and perceived independence and autonomy.

There is sometimes a tension between an arm's-length independence from government and a public purpose. This is generally resolved by government setting broad policy objectives and directions for public service media, rather than directing daily operations or specific decisions. Other mechanisms to ensure independence include boards of directors, independent regulators, audience advisory boards, licence reviews, mandated regular consultations with audiences, and transparent editorial and journalism standards and ombudsmen, to name a few.

---

<sup>145</sup> See Briggs; Frank W. Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951*, University of Toronto Press, 1969, pp. 7-8, 86. For the current BBC Charter, see Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport by Command of Her Majesty, [Copy of Royal Charter for the continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation, December 2016](#), Sections 6-7.

<sup>146</sup> UNESCO, pp. 21-23; and Cabrera Blázquez F.J., Cappello M., Talavera Milla J., Valais S., [Governance and independence of public service media](#), IRIS Plus, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, February 2022.

The contemporary PSM model is typified by a legal structure based on three broad principles:

1. *Independence* in law and practice from political authorities;
2. *Accountability* to supervisory bodies and the public at large; and
3. *Transparency* and oversight of activities, with public reporting.<sup>147</sup>

In its responses to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel (Yale Panel), the Corporation proposed a number of legislative changes to strengthen its governance and independence.<sup>148</sup>



CBC/Radio-Canada's news services were the first Canadian broadcast media to be independently certified by Reporters Without Borders' Journalism Trust Initiative.

<sup>147</sup> EBU, [Legal Focus: Governance Principles for Public Service Media](#), December 2021, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Our Culture, Our Democracy: Canada in the Digital World](#), January 2019, p. 21 and Appendix A.



## Independence

There are three distinct elements of the independence or arm's-length principle as applied to CBC/Radio-Canada's operations.

First, CBC/Radio-Canada is a federal Crown Corporation, with explicit and unique guarantees of independence in law. The Broadcasting Act states that:

The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence.<sup>149</sup>

The Act further protects the Corporation from interference through oversight of its finances. It is exempt from many provisions of the Financial Administration Act, where these allow the Minister of Finance to direct the financial management and operations of a Crown. No minister, including the Minister of Finance, can direct the Corporation to provide information that "could reasonably be expected to compromise or constrain" or "limit" the Corporation's "journalistic, creative or programming independence." The Treasury Board approves the Corporation's capital budget but not its capital plans or daily activities.<sup>150</sup> Nor are CBC/Radio-Canada employees and management considered public servants. They are explicitly *not* officers or servants of His Majesty.<sup>151</sup> The Corporation is ultimately accountable, through the Minister, to the Parliament for the conduct of its affairs.<sup>152</sup>

For greater certainty, an interpretation clause was added in 1991 to reinforce the arm's-length principle. The clause compels government in all its dealings with the Corporation to act in such a manner that not just *protects* but also *enhances* the Corporation's independence in editorial and programming matters, and all the objects and powers related to such.<sup>153</sup>

The position of President and CEO is also unique in that the president serves "during good behaviour" for a set term, rather than "at pleasure," again as an added protection of the independence of the Corporation.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> Broadcasting Act, Section 46(5).

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, Section 52(1) and (2)(a)(b). This section was added in 1991.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, Section 44(3).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, Section 40.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, Section 35(2), which is the interpretation clause for Part III of the Act that deals with all government dealings with the Corporation. For history on this interpretation clause and the "arm's-length" principle, see Peter S. Grant, Grant Buchanan, Canadian Broadcasting Regulatory Handbook, 4th edition, McCarthy Tétrault LLP, 2017, p. 58.

<sup>154</sup> See Government of Canada, [Order in Council](#), PC Number 2023-0478, May 31, 2023.



Finally, the Corporation is protected by the Charter right to freedom of expression and a free press, a fundamental right for all media and explicitly referenced for all regulated media in the Broadcasting Act.<sup>155</sup>

The second major articulation of the arm's-length principle for operations concerns the board of directors of the Corporation. This supervisory authority of up to 12 directors, including a chair and the CEO, are appointed by the Governor in Council (i.e., Cabinet). Directors are appointed for a fixed term of five years, renewable for one additional term. Fixed terms are designed to protect directors from undue interference by government.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, directors must be independent of related private interests, with no management or financial links to private media.<sup>157</sup>

Overall, the board of directors is responsible for oversight of the management of the business of the Corporation. It approves the annual budget, corporate strategy and corporate plan, the Corporation's [Journalistic Standards and Practices](#), receives the annual report of each ombudsman, and approves the compensation of senior officers, among other matters.<sup>158</sup>

The third articulation is the role of the Parliament. The Corporation is responsible to Parliament, through a designated minister, currently the Minister of Canadian Heritage. The Minister receives the Corporation's corporate plan summary and annual report, and tables these in Parliament. The Minister does not approve these plans and reports. Parliament can deliberate over these materials, and call designated officers of the Corporation to appear before its committees. Over the past twenty years, over 50 officials from CBC/Radio-Canada have appeared on over 40 occasions before parliamentary committees, of both the House and Senate.<sup>159</sup>

Parliament has the power to amend the broadcaster's mandate through legislation. It also votes on the annual parliamentary appropriation available to fulfil that mandate. However, like a government, Parliament and its committees cannot interfere in the Corporation's day-to-day operations.

The importance of this independence has been consistently reinforced by Canadian courts. For example, in *Elliott v. CBC* (1994) Justice Montgomery of the Superior Court of Ontario noted:

---

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, Section 2(3). *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Section 2(b) which protects "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication."

<sup>156</sup> As opposed to "at pleasure" OIC appointments. Fixed term appointments can only be removed "for cause." Directors can be appointed only twice for five-year terms. *Ibid*, Section 36.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, Section 38.

<sup>158</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Board of Directors Governance Guide](#).

<sup>159</sup> Internal CBC/Radio-Canada records.

The legislature was careful in crafting the Broadcasting Act so that the CBC in its broadcasting capacity is not an agent of the party in power. Thus ministers do not have control over the CBC in its broadcasting aspect [...] Canadians in a free and democratic society enjoy a broadcasting media to broadcast events free of control of the government of the day and through the eyes of the government of the day.<sup>160</sup>

In sum, independence for the Corporation is essential to its very existence. It is a public trust and public good protected in law, custom and practice, and recognized by the courts.

Independence is the most important asset of a public broadcaster in a free democracy; it is what distinguishes the type from state broadcasting, a political tool for social control.<sup>161</sup>



Rosemary Barton and panelists (from left) Althia Raj, Andrew Coyne and Chantal Hébert, *At Issue* | CBC

<sup>160</sup> Elliott v. Canadian Broadcasting Corp., 1994 CanLII 10569 (ON SC).

<sup>161</sup> Cabrera Blázquez F.J., *et. al.* (2022), p. 4-8.



## Accountability

This independence of the Corporation comes with accountability. In 1968, the CRTC was created and given the role of oversight of the Corporation, and of the broadcasting system in general. The CRTC reviews and licenses regulated broadcasters in the country, which now include digital streamers,<sup>162</sup> and is responsible for ensuring CBC/Radio-Canada fulfils the conditions of its licences. Since 1968, the CRTC has conducted nine distinct and substantive licence renewal proceedings on CBC/Radio-Canada, resulting in the same number of licences, with conditions of performance.

As described earlier, in terms of its journalism, the Corporation employs two ombudsmen to respond to public complaints regarding perceived or real errors in news reporting. All PSM have methods for dealing with audience feedback or complaints and CBC/Radio-Canada's ombudsmen have played an important role in responding to and commenting on significant, divisive issues of the day as well as more specific questions of journalistic interpretation. Some PSM employ a public editor with a broader role on complaints, not restricted to journalism but including all programming decisions.

The Corporation files detailed reports to the CRTC on its performance, including spending on independent production and designated equity-seeking groups. These reports are made public.<sup>163</sup> The Corporation also files a version of its Mission Vision and Perception Studies (MVPS) each year, to better report on the public's perception of the value of its performance.

The CRTC is not the last stop on these matters of mandate and performance. Interested parties can appeal its decisions to federal court or the cabinet.<sup>164</sup> Cabinet also has the power to reverse CRTC decisions, or send these back for reconsideration.<sup>165</sup>

The Corporation is also accountable in law and policy for other policy priorities, notably the Official Languages Act, and by a wide range of non-programming-related legislations, including the Privacy Act and the Employment Equity Act, to name a few.

Finally, the Corporation's finances are audited yearly, reviewed and signed by the Auditor General, who reports its findings to Parliament. In addition, the Auditor General undertakes at regular intervals special examinations. Since 2002, it has conducted four of these special

---

<sup>162</sup> [Online Streaming Act](#) (S.C. 2023, c. 8).

<sup>163</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [CRTC Submissions](#). The annual filing reports have tripled since the previous licence period - 1,357 versus 475 pages.

<sup>164</sup> As is the case now with regard to independent producers appealing to cabinet some aspects of the CRTC's decision on spending requirements. The federal cabinet has sent these decisions back for [consideration](#) by the Commission.

<sup>165</sup> See Section 28 of Broadcasting Act. For more details on the history of this section and further commentary, please see Peter S. Grant, Grant Buchanan, [2023 Broadcasting Act Commentary](#), pp. 72-73.

examinations. In each case, the Corporation was judged well governed, and any recommendations on improvements were made quickly and to the letter.<sup>166</sup>

In sum, the Corporation operates within a legal, regulatory and policy framework, which ensures its accountability to Parliament and the public while ensuring its independence from the government of the day.



National Acadian Day 2024 | Radio-Canada

---

<sup>166</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Auditor General's Reports](#).



## Transparency

A key aspect of accountability is transparency about the work that we do and the decisions we make. Transparency reinforces public trust in the Corporation as a whole.

According to statute and by its own practice, the Corporation discloses information about its operations, Journalistic Standards and Practices, finances, compensation and expenses of senior management,<sup>167</sup> and Board decisions.

In addition to CRTC submissions, the Corporation files annual reports on the implementation of various acts, including the Official Languages Act, the Employment Equity Act, the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act, to name a few. This is in addition to public reports on the

Corporation's Environmental Strategy, the National Indigenous Strategy, the National Accessibility Plan, and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan.<sup>168</sup>

The Corporation's financial quarterly and annual statements, once reviewed by the Auditor General, are tabled in Parliament and published on its website. The corporate plan summary and annual report are also public once they have been tabled in parliament by the Minister of Canadian Heritage.<sup>169</sup> The Corporation publishes its strategic plan and yearly key performance results in its financial reports and on its website.<sup>170</sup>

Since 2011, the Corporation proactively posts agendas, minutes and documents prepared for meetings of its board of directors.<sup>171</sup> The annual reports of each ombudsman, once presented to the board, are posted to the corporate website, as are the responses to those reports by each editor-in-chief at CBC and Radio-Canada. Each ombudsman keeps an active log of complaints and decisions, also posted to the website. Each editor-in-chief regularly writes blog posts explaining their work, and how they use the [Journalistic Standards and Practices](#), all of which are publicly available.<sup>172</sup>

The Corporation is subject to the federal Access to Information Act. It responds to over 150 requests per year and was awarded the Information Commissioner's Award in 2020.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>167</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Compensation Summary, Business Travel and Hospitality Expenses](#).

<sup>168</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Impact and Accountability](#).

<sup>169</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Corporate Plan](#).

<sup>170</sup> For the current plan, see CBC/Radio-Canada, [Your Stories, Taken to Heart: Our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan](#).

<sup>171</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Board of Directors Meetings](#).

<sup>172</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, ombudsman, [English](#), [French](#); and their reports with editor-in-chief responses, [French](#), [English](#).

<sup>173</sup> [Information Commissioner's Award](#).

Finally, in addition to ad hoc town halls in locations across the country, the Corporation holds annual public meetings, to explain its purpose and to hear from the public. These are recorded and available on demand.<sup>174</sup> In accordance with licence requirements, CBC and Radio-Canada are required to conduct regional consultations every two years with Indigenous Peoples, OLMCs, racialized persons, persons with disabilities, and persons who self-identify as 2SLGBTQ+. These consultations are held with: (1) community groups and (2) independent producers. Results from CBC/Radio-Canada's regular perception surveys are included in the annual report. CBC/Radio-Canada is also required to [file](#) with the Commission a report on the efforts taken to ensure that the needs of equity-deserving groups are being addressed in its programming choices.

In sum, the Corporation's accountability and transparency mechanisms are quite wide ranging and extensive, making CBC/Radio-Canada a leader among its peer public service media organizations around the world.



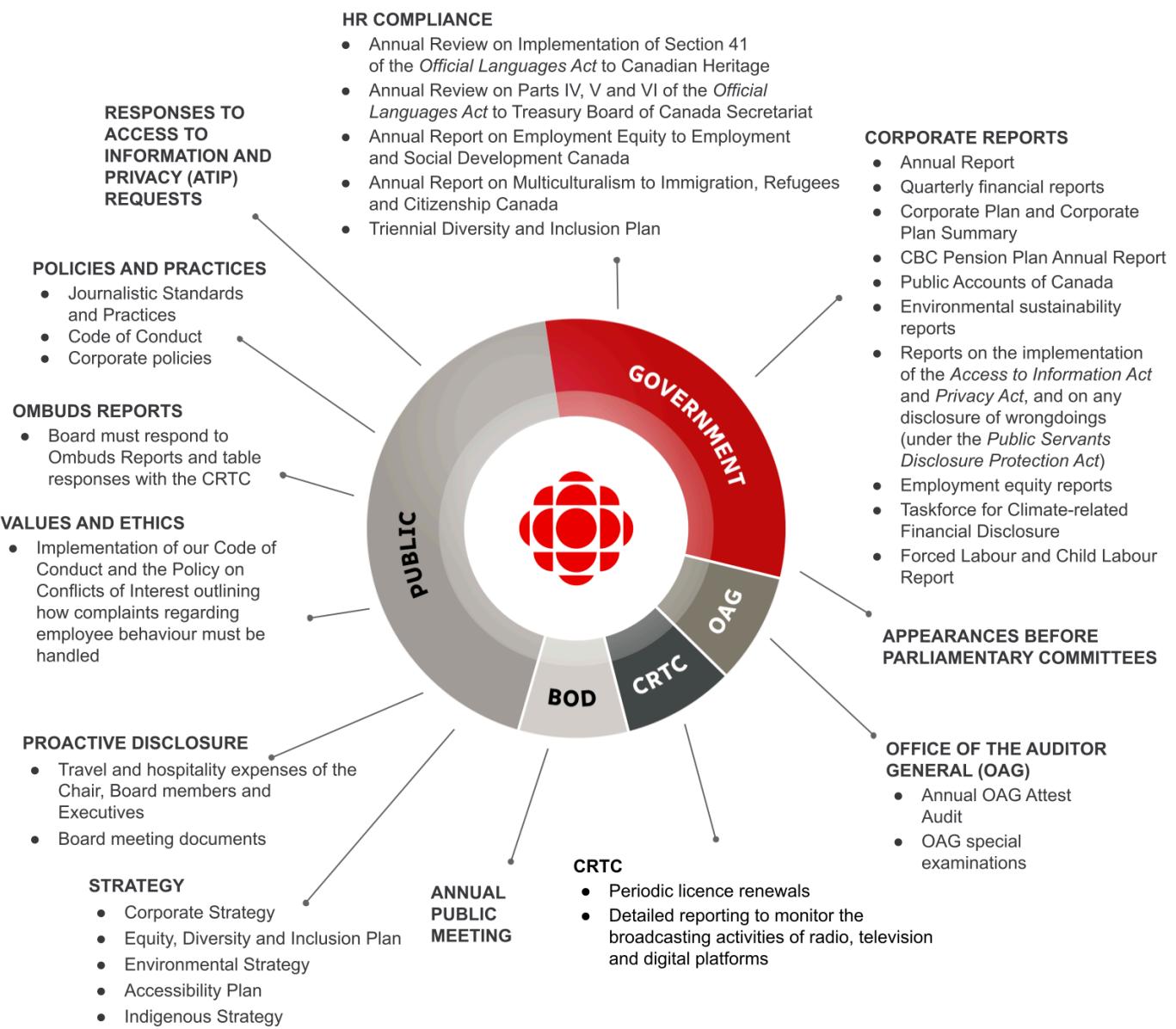
Faith Fundal, host, CBC Winnipeg

---

<sup>174</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada, [Annual Public Meetings](#).



**Fig. 24. CBC/Radio-Canada's Commitment to Transparency and Accountability**



Source: CBC/Radio-Canada.



## How CBC/Radio-Canada Differs from Other PSM on Governance

Earlier this year, CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned a report that reviewed the different financing and governance approaches and structures for 18 distinct public service media organizations.<sup>175</sup> The report also focuses on the legislative regimes for ABC Australia, YLE Finland, France Télévisions, RTÉ Ireland and the BBC, with particular regard to: annual versus pluriannual financing; indexation; nomination and appointment processes and responsibilities; organizational structures; editorial leadership; and audience councils. For ease of reference, we have included the report with these materials.

The report makes clear that while all share a common approach to independence, accountability and transparency, there are some notable differences in governance.

In order to strengthen independence, some PSM have adopted an arm's-length approach in the selection and appointment of the directors and CEO of the corporation. In particular, many boards of directors of public service broadcasters are responsible for the selection and hiring/firing of the CEO (e.g., ABC Australia; YLE Finland; the BBC).

Furthermore, in many PSM — such as the ABC, RTÉ, and the BBC — the chief executive has the added responsibility for news oversight.

Given the context of increasing polarization and accusations of bias at the public broadcaster, one solution is to foster a closer exchange with the public. Some PSM have instituted citizen advisory panels in addition to their board of directors to conduct regular programming advisory reviews and to advocate on behalf of citizens.

For example, in Australia, section 11 of the ABC Act requires ABC Australia's board to establish an audience council consisting of 12 members for two-year terms with "broad representation of the Australian community."<sup>176</sup> The stated function of the audience council is "either on its own initiative or at the request of the Board, to advise the Board on matters relating to the Corporation's broadcasting programs" — and its work is assisted by the ABC Company Secretary and Corporate Governance Legal Assistant. Members of the audience council serve as private individuals (i.e., not as organizations or associations) and are drawn from a wide range of geographies, backgrounds, and professions.<sup>177</sup> The board may also establish separate audience councils at the state, territory and regional levels.

---

<sup>175</sup> See Drisdel Consulting, "Public Service Media Governance Structures," March, 2024 (CBC/Radio-Canada commissioned study).

<sup>176</sup> See [Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 - Sect 11 Advisory Councils And Committees](#).

<sup>177</sup> For more information, please refer to: [The ABC Advisory Council - About the ABC](#).



Similarly, section 96 of the Ireland's Broadcasting Act 2009 requires the establishment of a 15-member audience council "to represent to the board of its corporation the views and interests of the general public with regard to public service broadcasting by the corporation."<sup>178</sup> There are specific considerations for the Irish language and persons with disabilities — and the audience council may request special surveys of children and youth and elderly audiences. There is a requirement for the director-general to meet with the audience council, and the audience council provides an annual report to the minister.

In previous years, the BBC Trust required special and distinct audience councils for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.<sup>179</sup> This regime featured a structure whereby regional councils would provide feedback to the various national councils.

---

<sup>178</sup> [Irish Broadcasting Act 2009](#).

<sup>179</sup> BBC Trust, [Audience Councils](#).



## Conclusion: From Public Broadcaster to Public Service Media

CBC/Radio-Canada is the country's largest cultural institution. Since its creation almost 90 years ago, the Corporation has transformed its programming and content, its operations, and its workforce to meet the changing needs of Canadians and the evolution of the media sector.

Born in the radio age, the Corporation has evolved into a multiplatform public service media organization. It operates a transmission network that is one of the largest in the world, for TV and radio, from coast to coast to coast. It has added digital streaming to its operations. Today, the Corporation distributes over 2.6 million hours of programming each year over its broadcasting and digital networks. And much of its programming is made available on major third-party platforms used by Canadians, such as Roku, Apple, Spotify, and YouTube. As CBC/Radio-Canada has transformed its services to meet the digital age, its purpose remains unchanged - rooted in service to all Canadians.

The current domestic media landscape, flooded by foreign content, poses significant challenges to the discoverability of Canadian content. The proliferation of disinformation and misinformation threatens civic discourse and the health of our democratic institutions. Facing these challenges, other democratic countries continue to fund public service media to protect and promote culture, and provide citizens with trusted news and information.

CBC/Radio-Canada is an anchor in the domestic media ecosystem, with a special mandate to "contribute to shared national consciousness and identity".<sup>180</sup> It remains a primary engine for Canada's cultural and creative industries. It ensures trusted news and information, and supports the exchange of opinions and perspectives. These things are essential components for the health of all free and democratic societies.

There will always be debate about the role public service media should play for citizens, or even if it should play one at all. That discussion is important and Canadians should have the facts. We believe strong public service media is a precious national asset, now more than ever.

---

<sup>180</sup> Broadcasting Act, Section 3 (1) (m) (vi).



## APPENDIX A

### Research Reports

1. [International Comparison of Public Funding for Public Service Broadcasting](#), Nordicity, 2024
2. [Case for Advertising on CBC/Radio-Canada](#), Nordicity, 2024
3. [Public Service Media — Governance Structures](#), Drisdell Consulting, 2024
4. Profiles of Viewers: [All Canadians](#), [Anglophones](#), [Francophones](#), Media Technology Monitor (MTM), 2023
5. [Indigenous Peoples and Their Use of Media and Technology From Region to Region](#), MTM, 2023
6. [Looking Ahead — Futures Report](#), MTM Junior, 2024
7. [Radio in Transition](#), analysis by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research, 2023
8. [Structural Decline of TV](#), analysis by CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research, 2024
9. [The Mandate and Vision Perception Survey, Summary Report](#), CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Research, 2023