



Canadian Media Guild
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Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review
Response to Panel's Call for Comments –
Canadian Media Guild (CMG) submission
January 2019

The Canadian Media Guild is a union comprised of over 5000 media workers at APTN, The Canadian Press, CBC/Radio-Canada, Thomson Reuters, TFO, TVO, Vice Media, and ZoomerMedia. We work across all available media platforms including digital and online spaces.

In terms of this federal Review of the Canadian Communications Legislative Framework, CMG advocates for the following principles and objectives:

- ✓ **Rebuilding and Expanding CBC/Radio-Canada – Mandate Enhancement**
 - Supporting in-house production and a culture of creativity and innovation
 - Reliable and increased public funding for the national public broadcaster
- ✓ **Securing key components of the Broadcasting Act**, including the following:
 - The special role of CBC/Radio-Canada
 - Protecting CBC/Radio-Canada's independence
 - Support for Canadian Content
 - Mandatory carriage of Indigenous and community media
 - The value of local news as a vital public service
 - Quality jobs for media and cultural workers
- ✓ **Advancing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission** - Media and Reconciliation, as well as Language Preservation
- ✓ **Advancing local news and information programming** - Public Service Media Fund proposal



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✓ **Rebuilding and Expanding CBC/Radio-Canada – Mandate Enhancement**

The 1991 [Broadcasting Act](#)¹ states that...

...the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;

...the programming provided by the Corporation should:

- i. be predominantly and distinctively Canadian, reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,
- ii. actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,
- iii. be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,
- iv. strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French,
- v. contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,
- vi. be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and
- vii. reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.

Canada's need for a strong and properly resourced national public broadcaster has never been greater as CBC/Radio-Canada operates across a wide number of platforms and Canada's population continues to increase and diversify. Certainly, in view of Canada's posture within the wider world, within an international context, CBC/Radio-Canada counts as vital publicly-owned cultural and communications infrastructure. Accordingly, the national public broadcaster needs to be properly maintained and enhanced over time. We also enjoy and know the value of such investments, as we reflect on CBC/Radio-Canada's history to-date as an unrivalled champion and repository of Canadian culture.

¹ Web location: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/B-9.01/FullText.html>



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Supporting in-house production and a culture of creativity and innovation

While CBC/Radio-Canada has endured decades of cuts due to declining public funding in real terms, in 2016, the federal government committed an additional \$675-million over five years in order to rebuild the public broadcaster.

Historically and over time, cuts in staffing levels and programming at CBC/Radio-Canada have reduced the public broadcaster's in-house production capacity and also corresponded with increased outsourcing.

Externally produced programs have been staged at the expense of internal production capacity at CBC/Radio-Canada. This amounts to an erosion of the public broadcaster.

Rebuilding CBC's in-house production capacity supports one of the vital roles of CBC/Radio-Canada in our media system and under the Broadcasting Act.

The public broadcaster is meant to function as Canada's lead content producer and programmer -- a standard-setter for high-quality and innovative programming, a principal incubator of Canadian talent.

Former CBC President and Canadian cultural icon **Pierre Juneau** described how in-house production at a public broadcaster supports innovation, the development of expertise, and encourages a culture of creativity particular to public broadcasting:

Public television cannot merely be a programmer. The particular ethics of public broadcasting demand that programs be designed with particular care [...] While public broadcasters may buy or commission some programs, in-house production not only guarantees that programs will adequately meet the purpose of the broadcaster, but also ensures the perennality of expertise—some would say a “culture” of creativity — particular to the public broadcaster.

The need for CBC/Radio-Canada to function in this way continues to this day.



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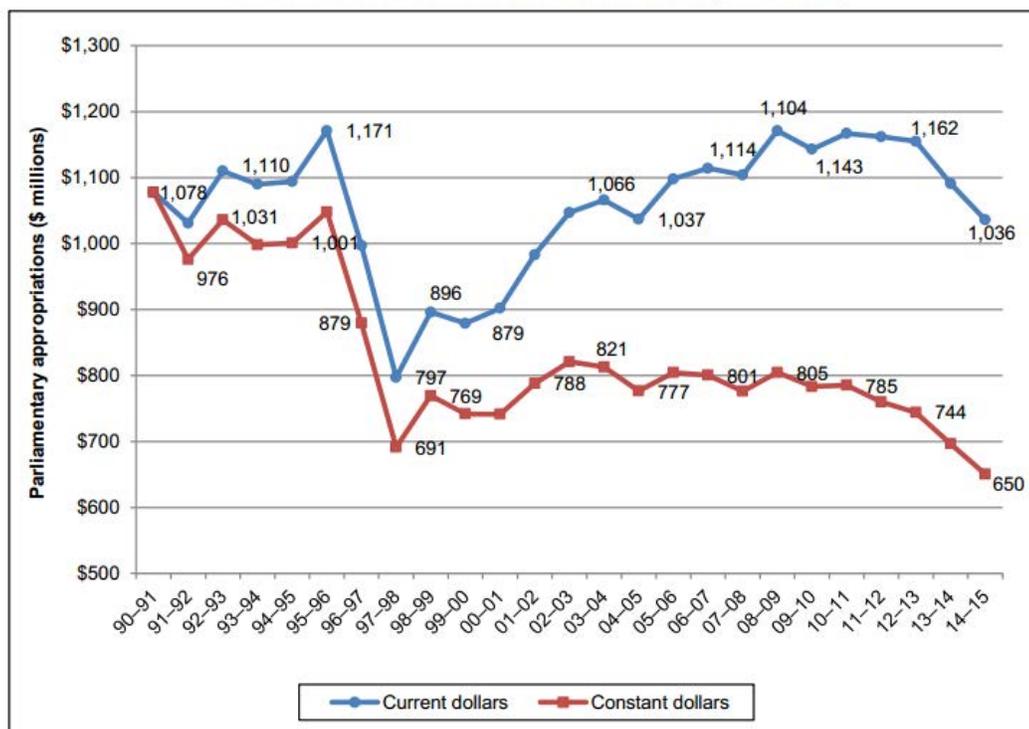
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Reliable and increased funding for the national public broadcaster

In order to fully meet its mandate as Canada’s public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada requires **reliable and increased public funding**.

A Library of Parliament background paper prepared in October 2013, and revised in February 2016, “CBC/Radio-Canada: Overview and Key Issues”, documents how **the level of public funding for CBC/Radio-Canada has significantly declined in constant dollars, over the last 25 years**. Between 1990-91 and 2014-2015, the level of the public broadcaster’s parliamentary appropriation, measured in constant dollars, has dropped from \$1,078 million to \$ 650 million.

Figure 1 - Change in CBC/Radio-Canada Parliamentary Appropriations, in Current and Constant Dollars, 1990-2015 (1990 = 100)



Note: Parliamentary appropriations are provided for operating expenditures, working capital and the amortization of deferred capital funding.

Source: Figure prepared by the author using data obtained from CBC/Radio-Canada annual reports (corresponding years).



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This decline in the parliamentary appropriation to the public broadcaster is happening while more is also expected of CBC/Radio-Canada, as it operates across a wider number of platforms and the country's population has increased and diversified significantly at the same time. In view of this, CBC/Radio-Canada is vital public communications and cultural infrastructure that needs to be maintained and enhanced over time.

With respect to public funding, according to the [Library of Parliament report, "CBC/Radio-Canada: Overview and Key Issues"](#)²:

The appropriations approved by Parliament each year represent the largest source of the Corporation's revenue. In 2014-2015, parliamentary appropriations for operating activities, fixed assets and working capital requirements amounted to \$1.04 billion, or 57% of the Corporation's total budget.

Figure 1 [previous page] shows the change in parliamentary appropriations since 1990. Since 1995-1996, parliamentary appropriations in current dollars have decreased from \$1,171 million to \$1,036 million, a 12% reduction. In constant dollars, this decline is even more significant, amounting to a 38% reduction. (page 6)

The research firm Nordicity has produced its own comparative summary of the situation, "[Analysis of Government Support for Public Broadcasting](#)."³

In its international comparison of the public funding available to public broadcasters, Nordicity reports that, "Canada continued to display one of the lowest levels of public funding for public broadcasting in 2014 (Figure 2). **Among 18 major Western countries, Canada was third lowest in terms of the level of per capita public funding for public broadcasting in 2014.**" [See chart, next page.]

² Web location:

<https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/BackgroundPapers/PDF/2013-92-e.pdf>

³ Web location: <http://www.nordicity.com/de/cache/work/99/CBC-Public%20Broadcaster%20Comparison%202016.pdf>



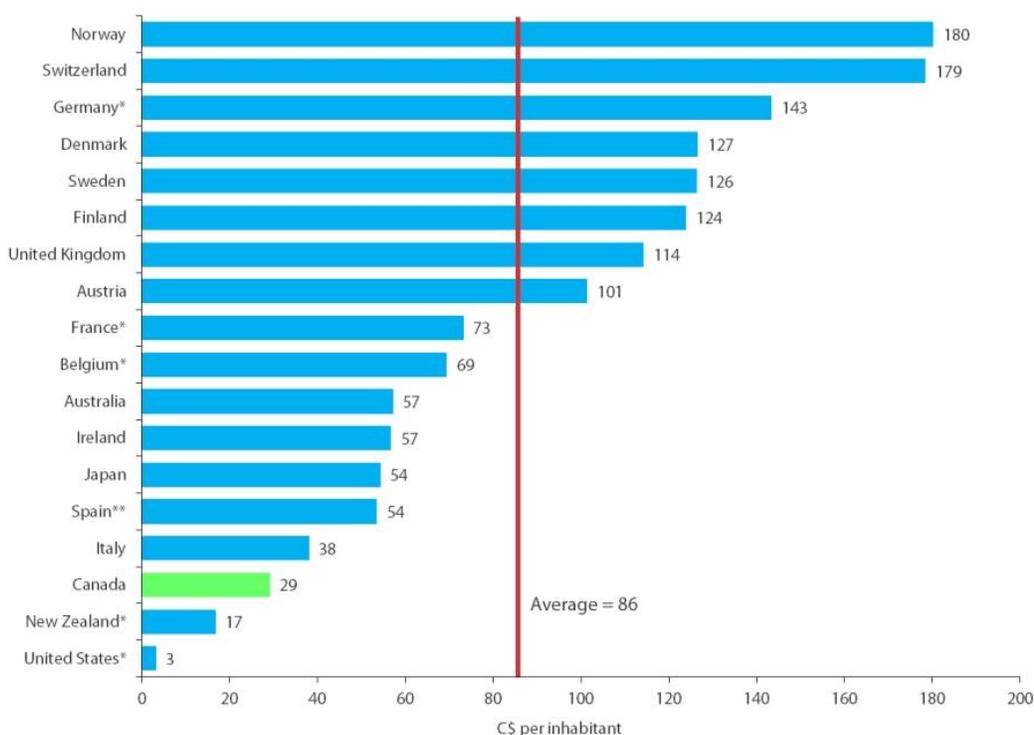
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Again, quoting from Nordicity’s report, “Canada’s national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada, receives public funding by way of an annual parliamentary appropriation. In 2014, this parliamentary appropriation was just over \$1 billion, or equivalent to \$29 per capita (all amounts in Canadian dollars, unless indicated otherwise).”

Nordicity – Analysis of Government Support for Public Broadcasting, April 2016

Figure 2 Per capita public funding for public broadcasters, 2014[†]



Source: Nordicity analysis of annual reports of public broadcasters; see References and Data Sources and Appendix A for additional detail.
[†] Excludes any commercial revenue earned by public broadcasters.
 * Includes certain data for 2013 fiscal year due to unavailability of data for 2014.
 ** Statistics for Spain are for 2013 fiscal year and include autonomous region public broadcasters.

If CBC/Radio-Canada were to be funded presently at a level comparable to 1990-91 (\$1,078 million) in constant (inflation-adjusted) dollars, the parliamentary appropriation to public broadcaster in 2018 would have amounted to approximately \$1,800 million.



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Instead, the amount of the [parliamentary appropriation to CBC/Radio-Canada in 2018](#)⁴ was actually closer to \$1,200 million, rather than \$1,800 million, a gap of approximately 600 million dollars.

If Canada's parliamentary appropriation were to rise to \$1,800 million, the per capita public funding rate would still be less than \$50 per person/year, accounting for the Canada's population in 2018 (of approximately 37 million).

A funding level of approximately \$49 per person/year would move Canada up two spots in Nordicity's ranking, placing Canada between Italy and Spain, still ranking behind 14 other countries.

Because public funding for the public broadcaster has declined so drastically in real terms over the last 25 years, there is a need to remedy the situation.

Accordingly, CMG proposes that public funding to CBC/Radio-Canada, at minimum, be immediately returned in real terms (constant dollars) to the levels comparable to 1990-91.

Better still, in recognition of Canada's growing population and diversity, and the need for ongoing innovation across a wider number of platforms, public funding to the public broadcaster should double over the next 10 year from \$1,200 million to \$2,400 million in real inflation-adjusted terms.

⁴ Web location: <http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/site/annual-reports/2017-2018/financial-sustainability/year-in-review-our-results-government-funding-en.html>



✓ **Securing key components of the Broadcasting Act**

The special role of CBC/Radio-Canada

The Broadcasting Act identifies CBC/Radio-Canada as the national public broadcaster and highlights its role as an unparalleled public asset and public service dedicated to informing, enlightening and entertaining people across the country and around the world.

The Act also highlights CBC's role in protecting Canadian culture and identity and reflecting the views, values and interests of Canadians. Public broadcasting benefits a population, providing educational, cultural, employment, and social networking benefits, building citizenship and shared cultural identities. CBC/Radio-Canada provides vital services to the Canadian public and its continued protection under the Act remains crucial.

Protecting CBC/Radio-Canada's independence and governance

The Broadcasting Act protects the independence of the CBC in pursuing its creative and programming objectives. It also explicitly protects the journalistic independence and freedom of the public broadcaster. This is a core function of the Act that remains important and highly relevant.

Support for Canadian Content

The Broadcasting Act currently emphasizes the value of supporting and promoting the creation of Canadian content. The Act's foundational position is that Canadian content helps build and support Canadian identities that reflect Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas and values.

Since its inception in 1936, the Act has protected the ability of Canadians to tell our own stories and to sustain a thriving industry from it. This principle, embedded within the Broadcasting Act, is still important and relevant in the current environment.



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Canadian stories still need to cross borders and boundaries, both within Canada and internationally; they need to find homes across multiple platforms and be available through both private and public media.

This principle is aligned with the public interest. The ability of people to connect and share understandings, or to discover and acknowledge real differences, is at the heart of any dynamic and ongoing process of community formation. These processes lie at the centre of any national cultural project.

Accordingly, our union supports measures to increase the creation, production, and exhibition of a full diversity of Canadian content across all platforms. A commitment to Canadian content is no less important now that it was in 1936.

Mandatory carriage of Indigenous and community media

The Broadcasting Act currently has a special provision that allows for local, regional, Indigenous or community-based broadcasters to receive mandatory carriage status. Given the significance and importance of local, regional, and community-based media, mandatory carriage provisions remain a relevant part of the Broadcasting Act.

The value and relevance of local news as a vital public service

The Broadcasting Act also protects and highlights the value of local news. High-quality local news is an essential public service. Benefits include more engaged and informed citizens, as well as greater accountability among governments and other community actors.

Quality jobs for media and cultural workers

Canada's cultural policies must emphasize quality jobs as part of healthy creative industries.



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In order to perform at our best, media workers and creative workers of all ages, experience levels, and backgrounds require good working conditions as well as stable and secure employment. Not only should workers be treated fairly, Canada's cultural policies and its broadcast system ought to support employment opportunities that “serve the needs and interests” and “the circumstances and aspirations” of Canadians.

Among other commitments, Canada's *Broadcasting Act* specifies that:

“The Canadian broadcasting system should [...] **through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children,** including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society[...].”

These expectations for quality employment as well as for diversity within the Canadian broadcasting system should be both elaborated and strengthened.



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✓ **Advancing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Media and Reconciliation, as well as Language Preservation**

Our union supports the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as they pertain to Media and Reconciliation. We agree that the national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada, and the leading global Indigenous broadcaster, APTN, must be strengthened.

The [TRC's recommendations on CBC and APTN and Media and Reconciliation](#)⁵ are as follows:

84. We call upon the federal government to restore and increase funding to the **CBC/Radio-Canada**, to enable Canada's national public broadcaster to support reconciliation, and be properly reflective of the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to:

- i. Increasing Aboriginal programming, including Aboriginal-language speakers.
- ii. Increasing equitable access for Aboriginal peoples to jobs, leadership positions, and professional development opportunities within the organization.
- iii. Continuing to provide dedicated news coverage and online public information resources on issues of concern to Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians, including the history and legacy of residential schools and the reconciliation process.

85. We call upon the **Aboriginal Peoples Television Network [APTN]**, as an independent non-profit broadcaster with programming by, for, and about Aboriginal peoples, to support reconciliation, including but not limited to:

- i. Continuing to provide leadership in programming and organizational culture that reflects the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples.
- ii. Continuing to develop media initiatives that inform and educate the Canadian public, and connect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

⁵ Web source: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1524505692599/1524505752642https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1524505692599/1524505752642>



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We also support the TRC’s call to action on Indigenous language preservation. Recognizing that “Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them,” requires that Canada’s media and cultural policies include specific commitments and measures that preserve, enrich, and support Indigenous languages today and ensure conditions in which they may flourish for generations to come.

It should be noted that at this time, CBC North broadcasts radio programming in eight indigenous languages, across northern Canada. In Nunavut and Nunavik, CBC broadcasts much of the day in Inuktitut, from early in the morning until the evening. In the NWT, CBC/Radio-Canada broadcasts in 6 indigenous languages: Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, Tlicho, South Slavey, and Chipewyan. In nord Quebec, CBC/Radio-Canada broadcasts in Cree.

✓ **Funding for local news and programming in the public interest**

Quality and reliable journalism plays a central role in supporting Canada’s democracy.

Maintaining a diversity of editorial voices improves the relevance and value of news and information services across communities.

Alongside the other funding mechanisms that have been put forward for consideration, CMG has proposed that a *Public Service Media Fund* be created to fund local and regional news and information programming across all platforms, including in minority language communities.

Provincial educational broadcasters such as **TFO, TVO**, Knowledge Network, TéléQuébec, as well as other media ventures in a variety of languages, across all platforms, such as **The Canadian Press** and **APTN**, would all be eligible.

The importance of high-quality and reliable journalism within democracies, at every level - municipal, provincial and territorial, national -- and also internationally, has been underscored recently as malevolent actors have been demonstrated advancing disinformation and sowing discord within and among communities. There is a deep public interest served in pushing back against such currents.



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Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Canadian Media Guild,

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References:

Library of Parliament, Background Paper, “CBC/Radio-Canada: Overview and Key Issues”,
October 23, 2013 (Revised February 11, 2016) – Publication No. 2013-92-E

Author: *Marion Menard, Legal and Social Affairs Division, Parliamentary Information and
Research Service,*

Web location:

<https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/BackgroundPapers/PDF/2013-92-e.pdf>

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Web location: <http://www.nordicity.com/de/cache/work/99/CBC-Public%20Broadcaster%20Comparison%202016.pdf>