

The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Society

Canada

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Book Title: The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Society Chapter Title: "Canada"

Pub. Date: 2020

Access Date: December 13, 2019

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Inc.

City: Thousand Oaks,

Print ISBN: 9781483375533

Online ISBN: 9781483375519

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483375519.n100>

Print pages: 250-255

As a country and a culture, Canada is both vast and complex. Its media system is, not surprisingly, equally big and complicated. Shaped by its enormous geography, distinct history, and multicultural makeup, Canada is a democratic federal state, with two official languages—French and English—and an indigenous population that maintains its sovereignty (i.e., the right to self-government). Along with its advanced economy and ethnically diverse population, the country's media system is modern and sophisticated. Canada's media, a product of the country's history, culture, and expansive northern landmass, play a vital role in meaning making and cultural production. The imprint and importance of media are particularly evident in the evolution of Canada and its deliberate nation-building efforts. Indeed, communication and media have played a crucial structural role in Canada's development as a nation and the formation of a Canadian identity or what Benedict Anderson called an *imagined community*. This entry provides an overview of media in Canada, exploring the country's history and its important shaping factors in the modern era, the relationship between nation building and public broadcasting, various media companies (both traditional and digital), and the decline of newspapers.

History and Place Defining Canada's Media System

Geography and its shared border with the world's media superpower have profoundly shaped Canada's media systems. The enormity and diversity of Canada's landmass, combined with its small population, relative to its neighbor the United States, have been—and remain—defining features of the country's media. Despite the success of Canadian music superstars such as Justin Bieber, Celine Dion, and Bryan Adams on the world stage, Canada's 1991 *Broadcasting Act* still requires many radio stations to devote a considerable percent- age of their content to Canadian music. The so-called CanCon, or Canadian Content, rules flow from a real and perceived concern about the overwhelming influence of American music on Canada.

Canada's national ambition to build a transcontinental railway in the early years of confederation was also, in fact, aimed at overcoming the communication limits posed by the massive land expanse between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's National Policy in 1879, which included building the Canadian Pacific Railway, aimed to unite Canada along an east-west axis, instead of the potentially more powerful north-south draw of established trade and communication links. The goal was simple: to shield Canada against the strong economic and cultural influence of the United States.

In addition to the railway, Canadian governments have invested significant efforts and money in building communication, transmission, and media systems to connect Canadians. Like the railway, the development of Canada's broadcasting and telecommunication system was envisioned as creating bulwarks against the powerful omnipresence of the United States. In 1939, for instance, Canada created the National Film Board to produce documentaries about the Canadian experience. The impetus behind much of Canada's media system often flows from a desire to blunt the ubiquitous power of U.S. media. Early on in Canada's history, preserving and fostering a distinctly Canadian voice became inexorably linked to national sovereignty, requiring significant government intervention.

Nation Building and Public Broadcasting

Information that once moved with the speed of rivers along fur trader routes in the 1800s flows much more quickly across Canada's nearly 10 million square kilometers in the modern era. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, American radio signals inundated Canada. Concerned by the penetrating signal of U.S. media on Canada, a Royal Commission charged with studying radio broadcasting concluded in 1929 that Canada needed a public broadcaster akin to the UK's British Broadcasting Corporation. Commonly known as the Aird Report, the commission's findings were championed by the Canadian Radio League, a group dedicated to public broadcasting. The Canadian Radio League's Graham Spry expressed it starkly in 1932, suggesting that the future of broadcasting in Canada boiled down to a question of *the State or the United States*. Later that year, the federal government created the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission.

At the time of its formation, Prime Minister R. B. Bennett stressed that Canada's broadcasting system needed to be free of foreign interference and influence. Additionally, Bennett expressed a real desire for Canadian-controlled broadcasting to be a public sphere, of sorts, for national thoughts and ideals. The Conservative leader hoped that a Canadian public broadcaster would foster a national identity and unity. In 1936, new federal legislation established the country's public broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Radio—and later television—has been a unifying force, arguably, in Canada. The 1932 Broadcasting Act enshrined public interest values in Canadian media. Despite the growing importance of digital media, the Broadcasting Act (1991) remains a defining feature of Canadian media. Amended numerous times since its inception, the law establishes the country's broadcasting regulatory regime.

In 2018, the federal government, citing new technology and a need to modernize, launched a review of both the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act. The 1991 Broadcasting Act, in line with notions of nation building that drove early media policy in Canada, continues to boost and protect Canadian culture. The law guides media policy, outlines the regulatory power of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and sets out how the CBC, the country's public broadcaster, is governed. In line with early concerns about Canadian sovereignty and the omnipresence of U.S. media, Canada's telecommunication industry is one of the most protected in the world. Foreign ownership cannot exceed 46.7%. On

top of that, 80% of Canadian telecommunication companies' board members are required to be Canadian citizens. Critics, however, complain this protection from foreign competition comes with high rates for Canadian consumers.

The Broadcasting Act also requires Canadian media companies to tell Canadians stories. The law, in fact, requires media organizations to “safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada.” The *Act* also requires Canada’s media to *serve the needs and interests* of Canadians. As noted previously, the law also details how the country’s public broadcaster works.

CBC/Radio-Canada

The CBC (or Radio-Canada as it is officially known in French-speaking Canada) is Canada’s public broadcaster. Established in 1936, the public broadcaster’s goal is to inform, enlighten, and entertain Canadians. In the 1940s, the public broadcaster emerged as a considerable cultural force in the country. During the Second World War, the Crown corporation established its venerable news service. Dispatches from the battlefields of Europe by legendary journalists such as Mathew Halton and Marcel Ouimet distinguished the corporation as a reliable source of news. In 1952, the public broadcaster expanded its service to television with stations in Toronto and Montreal. By 1955, CBC/Radio-Canada stations served two thirds of Canada’s population. The public broadcaster grew—and then shrank—over the decades that followed.

The CBC has endured budget cuts in recent decades. According to research conducted by the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting in 2014, CBC/Radio-Canada is, on a per capita basis, one of the most poorly funded public broadcasters in the developed world. In addition to shrinking revenue, the public broadcaster, like other traditional broadcasters, has seen its audience share shrink in an increasingly fractured and segmented media landscape. Despite smaller budgets and audience shares, CBC/Radio-Canada remains a major public broadcaster with significant reach and impact. In an era marked by media abundance, the CBC/Radio-Canada continues to be a source of information and entertainment for millions of Canadians each day through its numerous radio, television, and digital services in French, English, and several indigenous languages. The public broadcaster also makes a significant contribution to Canada’s French/English duality, particularly in communities with language minorities. The Crown corporation’s digital services reached an average of 18 million individuals a month in 2017. In Quebec, ICI Radio-Canada Télé, the main television service, boasted that a prime-time audience share reached 20.9% in 2016/2017. The cumulative reach, for instance, of CBC/Radio-Canada’s Olympic coverage of the Rio Games in 2016 was 32 million Canadians.

CBC/Radio-Canada is, in large part, paid for by Canadian taxpayers. In 2017, government funding for the public broadcaster was \$1.1 billion. The public broadcaster also generates revenue from commercial ventures and selling advertising mainly on its television and digital services. In 2016, the Liberal government announced plans to invest \$675 million over 5 years to modernize and revitalize the public broadcaster for the digital era. Also in 2016, CBC/Radio-Canada’s leadership proposed ending advertising on all its services if the federal government allocated an additional \$318 million to replace the money the broadcaster would lose. CBC/Radio-Canada is governed by an independent, arm’s-length board of directors appointed by the federal government. The appointment process for the board was overhauled by the Liberal government in 2017.

Canada’s Traditional Media and the Digital Revolution

Despite the digital revolution, traditional or conventional media (i.e., TV, radio, and print newspapers) continue to play a large role in Canadians' media consumption. More than three quarters of Canadian households continue to subscribe to a broadcasting service. While Canadians are watching more Internet-based media, Canadians continued to watch 26.6 hours per week of traditional television in 2016, according to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. A vast majority of Canadians, according to a 2017 Reuters Institute survey, also continue to get their news from traditional media such as radio, television, and print each week. While also facing declining audiences particularly among young Canadians, traditional AM/ FM radio, in all its many formats from music to news and information, also remains a constant for millions of Canadians. Canadians spend about 14.5 hours each week tuned in to the country's 1,100 traditional analogue radio broadcasts. Yet, Canadians are increasingly turning to digital media. A 2017 Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission survey found that many people in the northern country would give up fast food, chocolate, alcohol, and coffee to keep their access to the Internet. Statistics Canada estimates that 9 in 10 Canadians older than 15 went online a few times a month in 2016.

Big Media, Big Prices for Canadians

Canada's radio and TV industry is marked by considerable consolidation. Much of Canada's media industry is controlled by a core of big companies, namely Rogers, Bell, Telus, Shaw, Corus, Post Media, Torstar, and Quebecor. Since the late 1980s, consolidation, convergence, and contraction have marked Canada's media industry. The Canadian Concentration Research Project estimated in 2017 that five companies—Bell, Rogers, Telus, Shaw, and Quebecor—control 71% of Canada's \$80 billion network media economy. These big media and communication companies, along with other smaller ones, allow Canadians to be some of the mostly highly connected people in the world. But Canadian consumers also pay some of the highest wireless rates in the world.

Bell Canada Enterprises

Bell Canada Enterprises is one of Canada's largest companies. Named after the inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell, Bell Canada Enterprises has grown into a major media and communications company, comprising two major subsidiaries, Bell Canada and Bell Media. Bell Canada owns telecommunication companies, including Bell Alliant, Bell Mobility, Virgin Mobile Canada, and Bell TV. More than 9 million Canadians used Bell wireless services in 2017. Bell Media is a powerhouse on the Canadian media landscape with television, radio, digital media, and advertising operations. In total, more than 22 million Canadians subscribed to Bell's wireless, Internet, television, and telephone services.

Bell Media is the parent company of the CTV Television Network, the dominant television operation in Canada. In 2016/2017, CTV and CTV Two reached an audience of 23 million Canadians each week. Bell Media owns 30 local television stations across Canada and 30 specialty channels including the sports broadcaster TSN and the French-language sports broadcaster Réseau des sports. The company has more than 100 radio stations across Canada, including Virgin Radio. Bell Media has expanded its digital service in recent years, offering hundreds of websites and apps, including the music streaming service iHeartRadio app and the video streaming service CraveTV.

Launched in 1961, CTV is the largest private TV network in Canada. It is consistently Canada's top-rated television network. CTV's network programming mainly consists of hit American series

and Canadian shows. The network also offers popular national and local news and current affairs programming, including the country's most watched television newscast at 11:00 p.m., CTV National News. CTV also operates a 24-hour all news service, CTV News Channel.

Rogers Communications Inc.

From a modest start as a single FM radio station in Toronto in 1960, Rogers Communications Inc. has evolved into one of Canada's premier multimedia and communication companies. Millions of Canadians rely on the company's wireless, information technology, cable TV, Internet, print and digital publications, and telephone services. In addition to its substantial wireless operation with 10.4 million customers, Rogers, as it is commonly known in Canada, boasts substantial broadcasting, publishing, and sports entertainment assets. Rogers owns 54 radio stations, 64 television stations, 9 magazines, 4 digital services, and 3 sports and entertainment assets, including the exclusive licensing rights to broadcast the National Hockey League in Canada. In addition to its premier broadcast rights for Canada's most popular professional sport, Rogers owns some of Canada's iconic home-grown magazines including *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, *l'Actualité*, and *Hello! Canada*. As well, Rogers owns big Canadian media properties such as City, OMNI Television, FX Canada, The Shopping Channel, and Sportsnet.

Shaw Communications Inc.

Launched in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1971 as a cable company, Shaw Communications Inc. has grown to become one of western Canada's biggest telecommunications company with 3.2 million cable, Internet, and telephone customers. Based in Calgary, the company offers telephone, Internet, television, mobile, and satellite-based services to customers based mostly in British Columbia and Alberta. Shaw also provides service to parts of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and northern Ontario. Shaw, as most Canadians call it, boasts a national fiber optic network that spans the country. In 2015, Shaw purchased Wind Mobile, rebranding the low-cost wireless provider as Freedom Mobile a year later.

Corus Entertainment

Spun off from Shaw Communications in 1999, Corus Entertainment is a media and broadcasting company with television, radio, and publishing assets. In addition to its 39 radio stations, 44 specialty television channels, and 15 conventional stations, Corus notably owns the broadcasting network Global Television, which reaches millions of Canadians each day with its local and national news programs. Behind CTV, Global is often the second most watched private broadcaster in Canada. Like CTV, Global's programming features many American series and homegrown Canadian television shows. Corus owns a number of premier specialty television channels including OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network Canada, HGTV Canada, Food Network Canada, and Disney Channel Canada. Corus also produces some globally recognized children's content, including *Franklin* and *Max & Ruby*.

Telus Corporation

A major national provider of telecommunication, Telus Corporation's origins can be traced to government-owned phone companies in Alberta and British Columbia. When BC Tel and Alberta's former Crown-owned telephone corporations merged in 1999, Telus became Canada's second largest telecom company with nearly a quarter of the country's market share. In 2017,

Telus reported \$13.3 billion in revenue. Telus has grown from a government telephone company to a full-service telecommunication company with wireless, data, television, entertainment, telephone, and video-on-demand services. Telus is also a big health-care information technology provider in Canada. In 2017, Telus reported having 13.1 million subscribers, with 8.9 million wireless, 1.7 million Internet, 1.3 million telephone, and 1.1 million TV users.

Quebecor Inc.

Founded by Pierre Péladeau, Quebecor Inc. remains a family-owned communications company with broadcasting, telecommunication, and publishing holdings. In 2017, Quebecor reported more than \$4.1 billion in revenue. Dubbed the *king of the popular press*, Péladeau built a Quebec-based publishing empire with weekly newspapers, neighborhood printing shops, and the daily newspapers *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Journal de Québec*. Quebecor Printing grew in the 1970s and 1980s, acquiring holdings in the United States, Europe, India, and South America. Quebecor also owns TVA, the preeminent private French language television network in Quebec. TVA frequently boasts better ratings than the public broadcaster, Ici Radio-Canada Télé, CBC's French-language television station. Quebecor also owns Groupe Vidéotron, a cable television, telephone, Internet, wireless, and video-on-demand company.

Minority and Alternative Media

Outside Canada's mainstream media, there are a number of alternative and minority media services. The Canadian-based Adbusters is a culture-jamming network of activists that challenges consumerism. Canada's alternative media landscape is marked by several independent online sources as well, including The Tyee, rabble.ca, and the National Observer. As noted earlier, Rogers' five OMNI Television stations offer a wide range of ethnocultural and multilingual programming. Canada also produced the world's first independent national aboriginal broadcaster. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network produces programming made by and about Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. Launched in 1992 with government support, the television service initially broadcasted only to Canada's northern territories. In 1999, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network began broadcasting nationally, offering news, current affairs, documentaries, drama, children's

Declining Role of Canada's Newspapers

While once important agenda-setting institutions, Canada's traditional newspapers have faced considerable hardship since the emergence of digital media. Like other traditional media, Canadian newspapers have lost considerable sources of advertising revenue to digital services. Since the 1990s, Canada's newspaper industry has been marked by repeated job losses, mergers, downsizing, and closings. Many Canadian newspapers have attempted to reinvent themselves as digital news services. The country's largest daily newspaper in terms of circulation, *The Toronto Star*, for instance, instituted a paywall in 2013, but it abandoned the plan 2 years later when consumers did not subscribe in large numbers. In 2018, Torstar, the company that owns *The Toronto Star* and dozens of other publications, announced plans to charge readers for online news. Canada's two national newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*, also employ a subscription model.

Canada's newspaper industry is dominated by three corporations: Torstar, Postmedia Network, and *The Globe and Mail*. In addition to publishing *The Toronto Star*, Torstar owns many community newspapers and the daily *StarMetro* free newspapers published in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, and Vancouver. The *StarMetro* is notably dedicated to advancing a socially progressive agenda. Postmedia Network, which includes the national newspaper the *National Post* and a chain of major metro daily newspapers and community papers across Canada, emerged from the 2009 bankruptcy of Canwest Global Media Corporation. Led by the *National Post's* CEO Paul Godfrey, the New York-based hedge fund Golden Tree Asset Management purchased Canwest's dozens of newspapers for \$1.1 billion in 2010. Since 2010, Postmedia has closed numerous papers and slashed staff. In Quebec, the *Journal de Montréal* and *Journal de Québec*, owned by Quebecor, continue to print newspapers. The former French-language newspaper *La Presse*, on the other hand, became an exclusively digital service in 2017. *The Globe and Mail* is one of two English-language national newspapers in Canada. Founded in 1844 by one of the subsequent fathers of Canadian confederation, the *Globe*, as it is commonly called, is considered Canada's newspaper of record. In 2017, the newspaper stopped distributing its print edition in Canada's maritime provinces.

Final Thoughts

Canada's media system is vast and complex. Historically, and contemporarily, the country's media system has been influenced by its distinct geography, culture, and history. Canada's proximity to the United States and its influential mass media are inescapable, meaning concerns will linger about its potential influence. The repercussions of that closeness will, undoubtedly, continue to influence public policy decisions about Canada's media system.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483375519.n100>

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