



## **Rogers Communications**

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# The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Society

## Rogers Communications

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From its modest origins as a single FM radio station in Toronto in 1960, Rogers Communications has grown to become a powerhouse communications and multimedia company in Canada, providing wireless, information technology, cable TV, Internet, print and digital publications, and telephone services to millions of people across the country's nearly 10 million square kilometers. Traded publicly on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: RCI) and the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX: RCI.A and RCI.B), Rogers Communications generated \$14.1 billion in revenue in 2017.

In addition to its 10.4 million wireless subscribers and 2.2 million Internet customers, Rogers, as it is commonly known in Canada, boasts substantial broadcasting, publishing, and sports entertainment assets. Head- quartered in Canada's business and media capital of Toronto, the corporation employs 24,500 people across the country. This entry provides an overview of Rogers Communications, including its history and its range of services.

### History

Rogers' founder Ted Rogers, a lawyer turned entrepreneur, grew up surrounded by media and electronics. Rogers' father, Ted Rogers Sr., invented the world's first all electronic radio in 1924. Motivated perhaps by his father's pioneering work, Rogers Jr partnered in 1960 with a prominent broadcaster to buy Toronto's CHFI Radio, the country's first FM station. In that same year, Rogers, along with others, launched Toronto's first private television station, CFTO. Rogers expanded with the addition of an AM radio station a few years later.

In 1967, Rogers Cable was launched with just 300 subscribers in Brampton, Ontario. In 1979, Rogers, now a publicly traded company, bought Canadian Cablesystems. A year later, Rogers expanded further, becoming Canada's largest cable TV company, when it purchased Premier Cablevision. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Rogers invested heavily in cellular phone service. By 2007, the little radio and TV company that began with an \$85,000 loan had turned into a major

cell service provider in Canada. Now, in the early 21st century, Rogers is a vertically and horizontally integrated communication, media, and sports entertainment company.

## Rogers' Reach: Wireless

Rogers' reach is wide with the most wireless subscribers (10.4 million) in Canada in 2017. According to its 2017 annual report, Rogers generated \$8.3 billion in service (93%) and equipment (7%) revenue from its wireless division. Wireless revenue represents almost 60% of the communications company's revenue. Rogers boasts in its 2017 financial report, that its wireless services—and its subsidiaries Fido and chat4 Mobile—reach more than 9 in 10 Canadians with its Long-Term Evolution (LTE) high-speed wireless network with 4.5G technology. In 2018, the wireless carrier partnered with the Swedish hardware manufacturer Ericsson as part of a multiyear effort to expand high-speed 5G wireless service. The move coincides with a global migration to the faster wireless network and the Canadian federal government's decision to auction more wireless spectrum to help build ultrafast 5G networks across the world's second largest country by area.

## Rogers and Cable

In addition to Rogers' substantial wireless reach, millions of Canadians rely on the diversified media and communication company for cable TV, telephone, and Internet services. Concentrated in Ontario, New Brunswick, and on the island of Newfoundland, Rogers generated \$3.9 billion in revenue in 2017 from its cable services. In 2017, Rogers's annual report stated the company's Internet subscribers grew by more than 100,000 to 2.2 million. The same financial document details a net loss of 80,000 cable TV subscribers with a total 1.7 million in 2017. Additionally, 1.1 million Canadians rely on Rogers for their home phone.

In line with industry trends, Rogers continues to expand its broadband Internet with the goal of offering faster data communication speeds. The company is in the process of migrating to technology that will enable upload and download speeds of up to 10 gigabits per second. Faster Internet services also pave the way for Rogers' new Internet-based TV. As the number of cable TV subscribers declines across Canada, with many opting to become so-called *cord cutters*, Rogers, along with Shaw Communications Inc, launched the video-on-demand service Shomi in 2014 to keep customers who are increasingly opting to watch TV and movies online. After 2 years, however, Shomi shut down, unable to attract enough subscribers to sustain the streaming service. In 2018, Rogers launched its new Internet-based Ignite TV that allows users to watch traditional cable TV in addition to YouTube and Internet-based streaming services such as Netflix. The service's app also allows subscribers to watch TV on multiple devices such as smartphones and tablets.

## Rogers and Media

In addition to its wireless and cable services, Rogers is a major player in Canada's media landscape, owning 556 radio stations, 64 television stations, 9 magazines, 4 digital services, and 3 sports and entertainment assets, including an exclusive licensing agreement with the National Hockey League (NHL). Rogers owns some of Canada's biggest magazines, including *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, *L'Actualité* (The Actuality), and *Hel-lo! Canada*. In 2016, Rogers scaled back its print media, shifting four of its premier magazines from print to online or app-based publications only. Moreover, *Maclean's*, Canada's last remaining newsweekly, switched its focus to digital, reducing

its print publication to once a month. At the time, Rogers' executives said on-line revenue was outpacing revenue from selling magazines at the newsstand. In 2018, Rogers reduced its print—and digital—publishing staff by one third, citing a decline in advertising revenue. In addition to print and digital, Rogers owns big Canadian media companies such as City, OMNI Television, FX Canada, The Shopping Channel, and Sportsnet.

With television stations in major Canadian centres such as Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Montreal, Rogers' City television stations offer programming aimed at younger audiences. OMNI Television, with five stations across the country, is an over-the-air multilingual free channel offering a wide range of ethnocultural programming. Using four platforms—TV, Radio, Online, and Mobile—Sportsnet delivers sports news and content to local, regional, and national audiences. Ice hockey, with its Canadian origins and passionate fans across the northern nation, dominates much of Sportsnet's programming, comprising 450 national and regional NHL game broadcasts during the 2017–2018 season.

## Rogers and Sports

Until the 2025–2026 season, Sportsnet remains the official NHL national multimedia rights holder in Canada. In 2013, Rogers won the rights to broadcast NHL hockey in Canada, outbidding the long-time public broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Rogers' \$5.2-billion, 12-year deal dramatically changed how Canadians tuned in to watch hockey. The deal also significantly increased Rogers' prominence in Canada's broadcast industry. Steeped in tradition, the Saturday night *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcast is often among Canada's top TV programs, averaging 7.5 million Canadian viewers each week, according to Sportsnet. As part of a sublicensing deal with Rogers, CBC continues to air the English-language broadcast of *Hockey Night in Canada* and Stanley Cup play offs to ensure the NHL games reach the widest possible number of Canadians.

In addition to its multimedia agreement with the NHL, in 2019, Rogers owned 37.5% of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Ltd., owners of the NHL Toronto Maple Leafs, the professional soccer team Toronto Football Club, the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League, the Toronto Raptors with the National Basketball Association, and the Toronto Marlies, a professional hockey team in the American Hockey League. Rogers' Sportsnet is the exclusive broadcaster of many of its professional sports teams. In the 2017–2018 hockey season, for instance, Sportsnet broadcast 40 national Toronto Maple Leafs games. Rogers also owns the Toronto Blue Jays, Canada's sole Major League Baseball (MLB) team. Like its other sports properties, Rogers Sportsnet broadcasts Blue Jays' games on its four regional channels and its nationally distributed Sportsnet ONE channel.

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