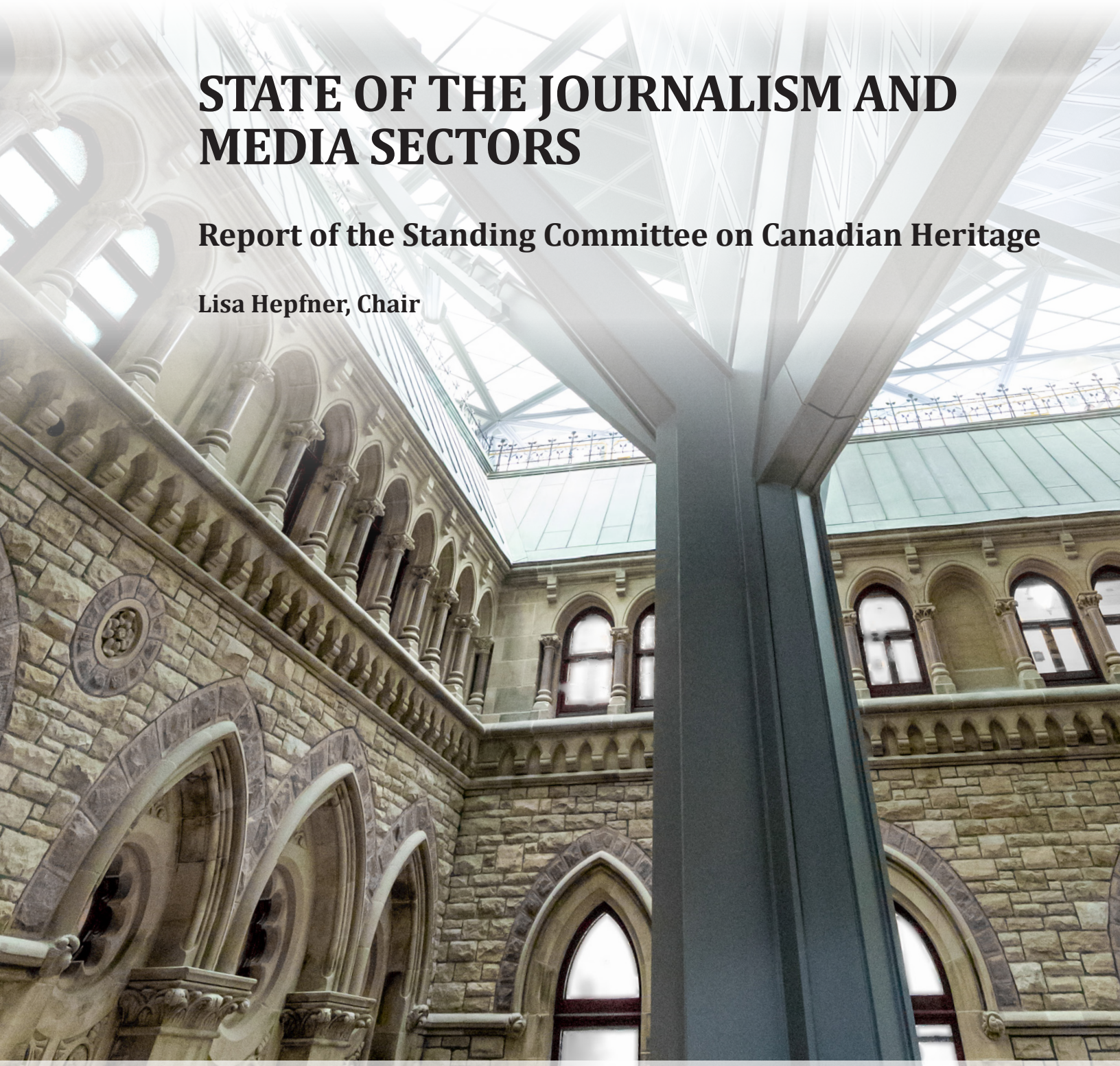
HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



STATE OF THE JOURNALISM AND MEDIA SECTORS

Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Lisa Hepfner, Chair

NOVEMBER 2026
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Chair

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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has the honour to present its

TENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the state of the journalism and media sectors and has agreed to report the following:

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada encourage innovation and competition in the media sector. **40**

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada empower consumers by providing tax credits for media subscriptions to qualified Canadian journalism organisations, strengthening consumer choice and competition. **40**

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada amend the *Income Tax Act* to expand eligibility for the Canadian journalism labour tax credit to include broadcasters and extend the 35% labour tax credit rate. **40**

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada consider implementing tax measures to strengthen the financial sustainability of Canadian journalism, including an investment tax credit for the purchase of news production equipment and a tax credit for advertising in local media. **40**

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada amend section 19 and section 19.1 of the *Income Tax Act* to exclude tax deductibility for foreign-owned or -controlled Internet advertising platforms. **40**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada implement a formal advertising set-aside policy to redirect a portion of its advertising budget from foreign digital platforms to domestic news organizations. **40**

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, in implementing the Services of Exceptional Importance Fund, ensure that it provides stable, long-term support to public-interest broadcasters. 40

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada uphold the *Online News Act* and the *Online Streaming Act* in the context of international trade negotiations. 41

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada provide temporary emergency bridge funding, in the form of repayable loans, to independent broadcasters to address funding shortfalls arising from delays in the implementation of new regulatory contributions. 41

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada establish a Community Radio Initiative to provide stable, long-term core funding to community radio stations, including those representing ethnic, local and underserved communities. 41

Recommendation 11

That, in light of developments in generative artificial intelligence, the Government of Canada uphold the principles of copyright protection and consider updating the *Online News Act* and related frameworks to address the impact of artificial intelligence on Canadian news media. 41

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada improve transparency with respect to federal support for news media, including by making information about funding recipients and mechanisms more accessible to the public. 41

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada work with Canada Post to ensure reliable, affordable distribution of local newspapers. 41

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada promote the digital transition of traditional media and the creation of high-quality digital news media. **41**

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada consider measures to improve access to federal support programs for ethnic and community media. **42**

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada review the eligibility criteria of its existing support programs to ensure they reflect the diversity of business models in the media sector. **42**

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada support initiatives to strengthen media literacy in Canada, in order to help the public better understand journalistic practices and assess the reliability of information. **42**

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada implement measures to make the journalism profession safer and more attractive for everybody. **42**

STATE OF THE JOURNALISM AND MEDIA SECTORS

MOTION ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

On 22 September 2025, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (the Committee or CHPC) adopted the following motion:

> That the committee undertake a study on the journalism and media sectors in Canada and Quebec, including issues of fairness and competition; that the study be comprised of no less than five (5) meetings; that the committee invite the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture to testify in relation to this study for two hours and that the President and Chief Executive Officer of CBC/Radio-Canada be included on the Committee's witness list for this study and that the committee invite other witnesses selected by parties to testify.

Pursuant to that motion, between 10 March 2026 and 28 April 2026, the Committee held seven meetings and heard from 50 witnesses, including journalists, experts, media executives and representatives of not-for-profit organizations. Twenty-eight briefs were also submitted to the Committee. The Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed.

Over the course of the study, witnesses shared a range of perspectives on issues ranging from the importance of a healthy, diverse media ecosystem to the sustainability of news media and the journalistic profession, the challenges and opportunities of the digital age, the fairness and effectiveness of government policies, the role of the national public broadcaster, public trust in media and working conditions for journalists, including newsroom culture and online harassment.

Witnesses were broadly in agreement that the news media sector has long been in a state of upheaval, largely because of the rise of digital platforms. Most emphasized the need for public policy interventions to support its vitality and diversity and ensure its presence in an ever-increasing number of "news deserts" or underserved communities across Canada. Many discussed existing legislative, regulatory and funding supports, pointing out strengths and shortcomings and offering suggestions for improving the policy framework. Some were more skeptical of the benefits of federal intervention in

the ecosystem, citing concerns about editorial independence and market distortion as well as other unintended consequences.

Questions of fairness emerged along several distinct but sometimes intersecting axes. Many witnesses emphasized the power imbalance between large foreign digital companies and Canadian news media outlets, as well as between Canadian legacy media and smaller local, independent and ethnic media outlets, highlighting a need in both cases to level the proverbial playing field. Others were concerned about unequal access to government support between print, broadcast and digital outlets, as well as between legacy and digital-first media companies, while a few questioned the appropriateness of the government's role in determining eligibility for public support. Several witnesses shared concerns about the role of the publicly funded national broadcaster as a potential competitor to private, independent and local media. Issues of fairness were also raised with respect to working conditions as well as in relation to media coverage itself. These latter discussions prompted broader reflections on journalistic ethics, challenges to public trust, and the importance of promoting media literacy in Canada.

While witnesses were not unanimous in their recommendations, the testimony suggested a shared desire to ensure that Canada's media ecosystem operates in a manner that is sustainable, credible and perceived as fair. For many witnesses, this was inseparable from questions about the long-term sustainability of Canadian journalism and Canada's ability to maintain sovereignty over its information environment amid ongoing technological change.

It is important to note that the Committee – recognizing that the news media ecosystem is in a state of transformation, along with the habits and expectations of audiences – agreed to hear from a wide range of witnesses, including some representing alternative media or single-issue advocacy organizations with less expertise in the profession as traditionally defined, or on the structural challenges facing the sector. Their testimony is included here to illuminate for the reader the breadth of public discourse on the media today.

The testimony received by the Committee is organized into two main parts. The first examines the economic pressures affecting the media industry as well as existing and proposed federal policy responses discussed by witnesses. The second examines issues related to the journalism profession, media content and public trust, including newsroom culture, harassment, bias, journalistic standards and accountability mechanisms. Recommendations made by witnesses appear throughout the report.

IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY, DIVERSE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

Witnesses broadly agreed that a healthy, diverse and editorially independent media ecosystem is essential "infrastructure for democracy."[1] Journalism was repeatedly characterized as a "public good"[2] as well as a "fundamental pillar"[3] of democratic life, with a particularly critical role to play in the face of increasing disinformation and political polarization.[4] For Randy Kitt of Friends of Canadian Media, journalism is "one of the few professions capable of grounding public debate in verified fact," and failing to stabilize the sector "means surrendering not just jobs but our sovereignty – losing the local accountability, shared facts and democratic resilience that safeguard our nation's independence."

Witnesses indicated that this democratic function is not confined to any one medium, ownership model or linguistic community. They underlined the importance of legacy media in all its formats as well as digital-first media, highlighting public, commercial, independent, community, Indigenous, ethnic and accessible media operating in French, English, Indigenous languages and other languages.[5]

The importance of local news was also repeatedly emphasized across the broadcast, print and digital sectors. Witnesses described local journalism as the form of reporting most closely connected to municipal decision-making, local elections, courts, community

1 House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (CHPC), *Evidence*, 45th Parliament, 1st Session: Raj Shoan (Executive Director, Friends of Canadian Media). See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Angus Frame (President, Torstar Corporation).

2 See for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Marie-Ève Carignan (Full Professor, UNESCO Chair in the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism, Université de Sherbrooke, As an Individual).

3 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence:* Léa Villalba (Freelance Journalist, Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec); Martin Simard (Vice-President, Groupe Radio Simard); Pierre Harvey (Director, Télé Inter-Rives Ltée). See also brief submitted to the Committee by Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec.

4 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne (President, Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec); Jean-Philippe Pineault (General Manager, News and Operations, Bell Media Inc.); Sébastien Côté (Director General, Information, Gatineau-Ottawa Division, RNC Media Inc); Madeline Ziniak (Chair, Canadian Ethnic Media Association); Murray Wood (Vice-President, News Talk Programming, Rawlco Radio, As an Individual); Raj Shoan; Marie-Ève Carignan; Pierre Harvey. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations.

5 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Caroline Jamet (President, Cogeco Media Inc.); Christa Dickenson (President and Chief Executive Officer, Cable Public Affairs Channel); Jeff Thiessen (Vice-President, Miracle Channel Association); Barry Rooke (Executive Director, National Campus and Community Radio Association); Cheryl McKenzie (Executive Director, News and Current Affairs, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network); David Errington (President and Chief Executive Officer, Accessible Media Inc.); Madeline Ziniak, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by U Multicultural Inc. and National Campus and Community Radio Association, among others.

institutions and civic life, with several adding that it was the kind of news most trusted by the public.[6] For Martin Simard of Groupe Radio Simard, local news is not just "a variation of national news" but "the beating heart of our communities."

Finally, witnesses noted that the public demand for news, especially local news, remains strong across all media types.[7] Éric-Pierre Champagne of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) said that in Quebec, "all media are showing record levels of audience and readership."

MEDIA INDUSTRY ISSUES

Systemic Challenges to the Sustainability of the Canadian Media Ecosystem

Witnesses told the Committee that, despite the importance of journalism to democracy and civic life, the economic foundations supporting that work had been profoundly weakened in the digital era.

According to Kevin Desjardins of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, the challenge for media is "not one of reach, relevance, trust or value" but "the fact that two of the most important market-based supports for journalism" – namely, advertising and subscription revenues – "have been undermined by foreign online giants."[8]

Many witnesses concurred that a key driver of the economic crisis in traditional media has been the migration of advertising revenues to digital platforms like Google and Facebook. Some cited data to quantify the shift, noting that approximately 70% to 80%

6 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: CHPC, *Evidence*: Cathy Cena (Executive Director, Tri Cities Community TV); Angelica Carrero (Executive Director, Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec); Cindy Simard (Vice-Chair, Information, Télé Inter-Rives Ltée); Raj Shoan; Caroline Jamet; Murray Wood; Barry Rooke; and Martin Simard, among others. See also briefs by Torstar Corporation, Local Independent Television Stations and News Media Canada.

7 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Janis Cleugh (Co-Founder, Freshet News); Brandon Gonez (Chief Executive Officer, Gonez Media Inc.); Richard Gray (Vice-President, CTV News, Bell Media); Rudyard Griffiths (Publisher, The Hub); Murray Wood; Éric-Pierre Champagne; Sébastien Côté; and Angus Frame, among others.

8 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Rod Schween (President, Pattison Media, Local Independent Television Stations); Benoit Chartier (Chair of the Board, Hebdos Québec); Éric-Pierre Champagne; and Raj Shoan, among others.

of all digital advertising revenue is now captured by foreign tech giants, most notably Google and Meta.[9]

For some, this represents not simply a shift in revenues but a fundamental asymmetry in the information ecosystem itself.[10] Angus Frame of Torstar Corporation said that Google "maintains a monopoly" over the advertising technology stack and has become "a gatekeeper" in digital markets, "[wielding] the power to make or break publishers with changes to its core algorithm." Benoit Chartier of Hebdos Québec accused both platforms of "illegal, monopolistic, anti-competitive and dubious business practices" and said that until government addresses their behaviour, Canadian media will have to continue fighting for survival.

Witnesses and briefs also described steep declines in subscription, distribution and contribution-based revenues. In the newspaper sector, this included falling newspaper circulation and limited willingness among Canadian audiences to pay for online news. Data cited in a brief from Local Independent Television Stations (LITS) showed that newspaper circulation sales in Canada had fallen 31% between 2014 and 2024, while another brief, from Torstar Corporation, indicated that "most Canadians (86%) do not pay for online news" and that "among non-payers … 50% refuse to pay anything at all."

In the broadcasting sector, witnesses identified the decline of cable and satellite subscriptions – often referred to as "cord-cutting" – as a driver of revenue loss, noting that these services historically generated the wholesale subscriber fees and contribution-based support essential for Canadian programming and local news, including public interest services.[11] A brief from LITS said that the household penetration of broadcast distribution undertakings has "fallen to 58% in 2023 from 80% in 2015," a trend that has particularly impacted public interest broadcasters – such as the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC) and Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) – who depend on subscriber fees.[12]

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9 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Paul Deegan (President and Chief Executive Officer, News Media Canada); Kevin Desjardins (President, Canadian Association of Broadcasters); Éric-Pierre Champagne; Rod Schween; and Caroline Jamet, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and Local Independent Television Stations, among others.

10 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Samuel Lamoureux (Professor, Communication, Université TÉLUQ, Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec); Paul Deegan; and Éric-Pierre Champagne, among others.

11 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Cheryl McKenzie; David Errington; Christa Dickenson; and Kevin Desjardins. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations.

12 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence:* Mike Omelus (Executive Director, Content and Programming Strategy, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network); Christa Dickenson; and David Errington.

The Committee also heard that these longer-standing, platform-based pressures were compounded by recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI). Paul Deegan of News Media Canada said that publishers are "seeing the theft of [their] intellectual property on an industrial scale" as AI companies use copyrighted news content without permission, extracting its value while undermining publishers' reach and revenues.[13]

Finally, several witnesses pointed to the challenge of discoverability in the digital age, noting it was increasingly difficult to ensure that Canadian and local news remain visible and accessible in an ecosystem dominated by foreign tech giants.[14] For Samuel Lamoureux of the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec (AJIQ), it is "easy" to produce and publish online, but "extremely difficult" in the digital economy to get the kind of exposure necessary for the work to be "valued" and monetized, particularly in the case of French-language content.

While most witnesses identified the main pressures on the news ecosystem as platform-driven disruption, some also pointed out that the regulatory framework had not kept pace with that disruption. They told the Committee that media organizations, especially licensed broadcasters, continue to face regulatory obligations that have not been applied to foreign digital platforms, creating what they described as an uneven playing field.[15] Caroline Jamet of Cogeco Media said broadcasters face a "hyper-regulated" environment while "foreign platforms remain free of any obligations."

A smaller group argued that federal policy responses, including subsidies and platform legislation, had themselves weakened the sector by creating market distortions, public trust concerns and other unintended consequences and in some cases were hindering innovation.[16] These and other concerns will be discussed in more detail in the section entitled "The Federal Role," below.

13 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Jane Robertson (President, Canadian Media Guild); Raj Shoan; Angus Frame; and Éric-Pierre Champagne, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Press Forward; Canadian Association of Broadcasters; and Torstar Corporation.

14 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Omelus; Marie-Ève Carignan; and Angus Frame.

15 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Richard Gray; Caroline Jamet; Jeff Thiessen; and Kevin Desjardins. See also brief submitted to the Committee from Local Independent Television Stations.

16 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Peter Menzies (Senior Fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute); Sheila Gunn Reid (President, Independent Press Gallery); and Rudyard Griffiths. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Blacklock's Reporter.

Impacts on Local News

Witnesses described these developments as weakening the economic foundations of Canadian news production, resulting in layoffs, closures, and a reduced capacity for original reporting. They emphasized that these effects are especially acute in local markets, where many pointed to specific cuts and closures and the resulting dearth of timely, locally grounded information.[17] Brandon Gonez of Gonez Media cited a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that found that 2.5 million Canadians live in a "postal code with only one or no local news outlets,"[18] and several witnesses pointed to data from the Local News Research Project showing a net loss of 343 local outlets since 2008.[19] Caroline Jamet described the situation as one of "news poverty," saying that "more media deserts will emerge … outside major urban centres" in the absence of action.

Witnesses were also concerned about a loss of competition in regional markets from which private outlets have withdrawn. Cindy Simard of Télé Inter-Rives Ltée said that while private companies like TVA, Bell and Quebecor reduce their local presence in parts of Quebec, Radio-Canada uses its public funding to create new regional journalist positions that draw talent away from remaining outlets, offering salaries and benefits that the latter cannot match.[20] Several witnesses gave specific examples of CBC/Radio-Canada "poaching" local talent in regional markets,[21] while Ms. Simard and others[22] noted that smaller outlets often shoulder the burden of training new journalists only to lose them to CBC/Radio-Canada: "I train them and I pay to train them, but as soon as they get good, media outlets with more money come and take them from us by offering double their salary." Rod Schween of Pattison Media added that the practice leaves smaller outlets without the people who possess the community knowledge and local contacts necessary to sustain local reporting. While Marie-Philippe Bouchard, President

17 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Mario Bartel (Co-Founder, Freshet News); Murray Wood; Rod Schween; Marie-Ève Carignan; and Pierre Harvey, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Press Forward, Local Independent Television Stations, and the National Campus and Community Radio Association.

18 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan; and Caroline Jamet, among others. See also brief submitted by Local Independent Television Stations.

19 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan, Brandon Gonez and Caroline Jamet. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations and Opportunities for Canadians Institute.

20 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Paul Deegan and Rod Schween, among others.

21 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Rod Schween. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Crowsnest Pass Herald and Karl Johnston.

22 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Paul Deegan and Rod Schween. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Crowsnest Pass Herald.

and Chief Executive Officer of CBC/Radio-Canada, characterized the phenomenon as a normal feature of a free labour market, the question of CBC/Radio-Canada's expansion into regional markets was raised by a number of witnesses over the course of the study and will be further discussed in the section below entitled "The Mandate of the National Public Broadcaster."

Witnesses were keen to emphasize the "democratic deficit"[23] that arises in the wake of local reductions and closures, including reliance on centralized news content, a drop in civic engagement, an increase in political polarization and a loss of accountability for elected officials.[24] Janis Cleugh of Freshet News told the Committee what happened when Glacier Media closed three newsrooms in the midst of a federal election, saying, "we couldn't cover the all-candidates meetings … our candidates couldn't get their messaging out and … our readers were lost about who to vote for." Other witnesses shared concerns about misinformation filling the void left by newsroom closures, noting how such content can pose a risk to public safety given the essential role of local media in times of emergency and crisis.[25]

Impacts on Public Interest, Indigenous, Community and Ethnic Programming

Broadcasters with specific mandates to serve the public interest, such as APTN, CPAC, and AMI, described themselves as uniquely vulnerable because of their reliance on a wholesale fee model tied to traditional cable and satellite subscription revenues – a model that, according to Christa Dickenson of CPAC, is "eroding faster than anticipated" as Canadians reduce or cancel their subscriptions.

David Errington of AMI confirmed that cord-cutting has had a "dramatic impact" on public interest broadcasters, noting that AMI's revenues were in continual decline and describing "substantial changes" at the network, including programming cuts, layoffs and outsourcing. Ms. Dickenson raised similar concerns, noting that the recent three-cent increase for CPAC granted by the CRTC was not a long-term solution. She also

23 CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan.

24 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Randy Kitt (Director of Media, Unifor, Friends of Canadian Media); Janis Cleugh; Mario Bartel; Jean-Philippe Pineault; Cathy Cena; Sébastien Côté; and Caroline Jamet, among others.

25 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Janis Cleugh, and Marie-Ève Carignan, among others. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Torstar Corporation.

described impacts on CPAC's programming, including the cancellation of two flagship programs, and said that CPAC had cut "25% of its workforce in less than two years."

Mike Omelus of APTN told the Committee that both the subscriber fee and APTN's advertising revenue are "at risk," making the Indigenous network "no exception" to the challenges facing the media sector as a whole. He and his colleague Cheryl McKenzie also pointed to advertisers' reliance on a ratings system that does not capture rural viewers, viewers in the territories or viewers using satellite television services as affecting "our bottom line and our revenue when it comes to marketing." Marie-Ève Carignan of the Université de Sherbrooke stressed the importance of Indigenous media for communities that "feel under-represented by the national media," adding that the sector "[faces] pressing issues in terms of human and material resources and training for professional journalists."

Several witnesses also spoke to the unique challenges of community media, typically a volunteer-driven sector with limited resources that nonetheless serves an indispensable function at the community level.[26] Angelica Carrero of the Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec (ARCQ) said that community radio operates on "meagre revenues that are dwindling year after year" as advertising revenues are "[gobbled] up" by foreign platforms. A brief by the National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA) added that the CRTC-mandated Canadian Content Development Contributions, including the Community Radio Fund of Canada, had also been adversely impacted by revenue shortfalls, while Cathy Cena of Tri-Cities Community Television said that cuts in funding, combined with increasing demand in the vacuum created by other newsroom closures, had left community television facing a sustainability crisis as well.

In the print segment, Mario Bartel of Freshet News described the unique challenges of running a non-profit, community start-up without the in-house business expertise and other resources that more established newsrooms typically enjoy. Additionally, Benoit Chartier, along with Paul Deegan, identified several issues with Canada Post – including high distribution rates, labour disputes and a "customer choice" program that can prevent the distribution of newspapers containing advertising flyers – as barriers to sustainability for printed weekly papers.

The Committee also heard evidence about the situation of independent ethnic media, a particularly "fragile" sector[27] that provides "accessible, culturally relevant entry points for

26 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Cathy Cena; Angelica Carrero; Marie-Ève Carignan; and Barry Rooke. See also brief submitted to the Committee by the National Campus and Community Radio Association.

27 CHPC, *Evidence*: Madeline Ziniak. See also brief submitted to the Committee by the Canadian Ethnic Media Association.

the process of integration into Canadian civic life."[28] A brief submitted by the Canadian Ethnic Media Association documented significant declines in advertising revenues and transmission royalties and warned that, without intervention, many programs "may cease operations within 12 months." Madeline Ziniak of the Canadian Ethnic Media Association pointed out that ethnic media outlets are "often voluntary" and are "subsidized by other businesses" in order to continue programming and production. She and her colleague Kiumars Rezvanifar raised concerns about the vulnerability of resource-strapped ethnic media to foreign interference, with Mr. Rezvanifar saying his outlet had been approached by the Iranian government in the past.

It is worth noting that community, ethnic and digital-first media in particular told the Committee of limited access to the federal support programs available to other organizations, a point that will be further discussed in the section below entitled "Criticisms of the Federal Role."

Impacts on the Journalism Profession

The Committee heard evidence about the impacts of systemic challenges on the sustainability of the journalistic profession.

For Samuel Lamoureux of AJIQ, people who pursue journalism as a "passion and a vocation" are often "disillusioned" when they encounter the challenges of working in the sector. Jane Robertson of the Canadian Media Guild said that "contract, casual and freelance work offering fewer protections" is increasingly replacing permanent jobs and noted that cost-cutting and technological change are further destabilizing the profession.

Léa Villalba of AJIQ said that freelance journalists, despite being highly qualified, often perform free labour, receive low and outdated per-page rates, and are in many cases forced to "turn to other endeavours" in order to pay the bills, a trend she added is "killing journalism, slowly but surely." A brief submitted by her organization, the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec, added that freelance earnings have fallen by 30% over the last 30 years, reaching an average salary in 2021 of just $30,000 per year.

Witnesses also pointed to workload strain, with Samuel Lamoureux saying that in the regions in particular, "there is too much work and too few employees to do it," leaving "one person" to "[do] the work of five, but with no better pay and fewer resources."[29]

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28 Brief submitted to the Committee by Canadian Ethnic Media Association.

29 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Robert Ranger (President and Chief Executive Officer, RNC Media Inc.); Jane Robertson; and Cindy Simard, among others.

Marie-Ève Carignan linked these conditions to the future of the profession, telling the Committee that many students are consequently "reluctant to start a career in journalism." Others pointed to the erosion of formal training as an additional challenge, with Barry Rooke of the National Campus and Community Radio Association saying that "close to two-thirds of the journalism and broadcasting schools have closed in Canada," making it harder for people to access pathways into the profession. In a brief, his organization described campus and community radio as one of the "last accessible spaces" where individuals can gain hands-on experience in public-interest journalism.

The Federal Role

The federal government has long supported Canadian media and news production. A brief from Local Independent Television Stations noted that some print media historically enjoyed government support through a pre-Confederation postal subsidy that "evolved into what is now the Canada Periodical Fund," while broadcasters have benefited from measures implemented by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). More recently, in recognition of the structural challenges faced by media in the digital age, the government has implemented a range of measures aimed at supporting journalism and news production, including the *Online News Act*, the *Online Streaming Act*, and various funding programs and tax credits.

Many witnesses argued that public intervention is necessary because of the unique democratic function of journalism discussed above. Randy Kitt said journalism should be treated "like a national park … nurtured, protected and properly funded for future generations," while Robert Ranger of RNC Media said the government has a "responsibility to protect Canadians' access to credible, diverse and accessible local information."[30] Angus Frame said that "absent a functioning marketplace," government "needs to find a way to support independent voices across the country" and that the measures in place are helping to "make sure our industry continues."

Some, however, cautioned that public support could lead to unintended consequences, citing market distortion as well as potential impacts on editorial independence, trust, and innovation.[31] Peter Menzies of the Macdonald-Laurier Institute characterized federal support as "hospice care" for legacy outlets that creates "dependence" on the "corridors of power" that journalists are "expected to patrol on the public's behalf." Still others

30 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Marie-Ève Carignan; Raj Shoan; and Pierre Harvey, among others.

31 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Peter Menzies; Sheila Gunn Reid; and Rudyard Griffiths. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Blacklock's Reporter.

questioned whether support measures were equally accessible to different segments of the media sector, including independent, ethnic, community and digital-first media.[32]

This section presents testimony on existing policy measures as well as proposals for improving the policy framework.

The *Broadcasting Act* and the *Online Streaming Act*

In Canada, the broadcast sector is regulated by the CRTC under the authority of the *Broadcasting Act*. The CRTC operates as an independent quasi-judicial tribunal with authority to issue broadcast licences, establish requirements for licensees and ensure compliance with Canadian content and other regulatory standards. It also oversees several contribution funds designed to support broadcasting policy objectives, including the Independent Local News Fund (ILNF), established in 2016 to support independent local television stations producing news, and the temporary Commercial Radio News Fund (CRNF), established in 2025 to support local news production by commercial radio stations operating outside designated urban markets.[33]

In 2023, the *Online Streaming Act* expanded the *Broadcasting Act* to include online undertakings, giving the CRTC the authority to impose conditions on certain digital platforms, including financial contribution requirements to support Canadian programming. Under *Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-121*, the CRTC imposed an obligation on large foreign streaming services to contribute 5% of their Canadian revenues to Canadian content funds,[34] including 1.5% for the ILNF and CRNF, but the collection of funds has been stayed by the Federal Court of Appeal.

A number of witnesses from the broadcasting sector described the ILNF as a critical source of funds without which their stations would not be in operation and acknowledged the

32 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Kiumars Rezvanifar (President, Canadian Ethnic Media Association); Brandon Gonez; Barry Rooke; and Madeline Ziniak, among others. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Canadian Ethnic Media Association.

33 A brief submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations provides helpful context on the policy and regulatory framework supporting media in Canada.

34 It is also worth noting that on 21 May 2026, the CRTC increased contributions from streaming companies to 15%, with increased flexibility on how to meet the requirement, while lowering the contribution from broadcasting companies to 25%. On 3 June 2026, the federal government announced it would issue a policy direction requiring the CRTC to review this framework, and in a letter dated 17 July 2026 to the Federal Court of Appeal, it stated an intention to eliminate the base contribution requirement on streaming services and replace those contributions with government funding. As of 16 November 2026, the policy direction had not yet been published.

significance of the CRTC's base contribution decision.[35] However, witnesses also expressed concerns about whether the new funding would reach newsrooms in time, pointing to delays in implementation as well as ongoing legal challenges mounted by the streaming services.[36]

The Committee also heard that pressure on the ILNF had increased with the CRTC's decision to add Corus Entertainment's Global television stations to the list of eligible recipients in 2025,[37] particularly given the delay in funds from the *Online Streaming Act*. Broadcasters said that the move had diluted existing support and created additional pressures, with some highlighting a 40% to 60% decrease in their ILNF funding.[38] Kevin Desjardins warned the Committee that even a "temporary" shortfall in funding could have "permanent" consequences for independent television stations.

In response, witnesses urged the federal government to provide temporary emergency bridge funding of $1.5 million per month to stabilize the sector.[39] Pierre Harvey of Télé Inter-Rives Ltée characterized the payments as repayable loans that would help "forestall further closures of private television stations."

A small number of witnesses discussed the CRNF, with Martin Simard noting that it remained "unfunded" and Caroline Jamet pointing out that it is "temporary" and "[excludes] major urban centres." A brief submitted by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters nonetheless described the CRTC decision to establish the fund as "encouraging."

Public interest broadcasters, including APTN, CPAC and AMI, pointed to the *Online Streaming Act* as a possible basis for a proposed Services of Exceptional Importance Fund, arguing it could help stabilize services that provide democratic, cultural, Indigenous or accessibility-related value.[40] Joel Fortune of APTN characterized the fund as a "double

35 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Sébastien Côté; Pierre Harvey; Raj Shoan; and Cindy Simard, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and RNC Media.

36 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Kevin Desjardins; Sébastien Côté; Pierre Harvey; and Jeff Thiessen, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations and Canadian Association of Broadcasters.

37 A brief from RNC Media explains the decision in more detail.

38 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Sébastien Côté; Pierre Harvey; and Jeff Thiessen, among others. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations.

39 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Calvin Millar (President, Channel Zero, Local Independent Television Stations); Jeff Thiessen; Robert Ranger; Pierre Harvey; and Kevin Desjardins. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations and RNC Media.

40 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Omelus; Christa Dickenson; and David Errington.

arm's-length funding mechanism," administered independently of government, that would provide long-term, sustainable funding.[41]

Witnesses also urged Parliament to ensure that the *Online Streaming Act* is not weakened through trade negotiations.[42] Kevin Desjardins argued that foreign platforms already have an "easier path" into the Canadian market than domestic broadcasters and that the *Online Streaming Act* should be preserved as a mechanism for ensuring they contribute to Canadian news and cultural production. Pierre Harvey said the government should have a "plan B" to offset the losses should it cease to enforce the *Online Streaming Act*.

The *Online News Act*

Witnesses discussed the *Online News Act* as a measure intended to address the imbalance between digital platforms and Canadian news organizations. As summarized in a brief by LITS, the *Online News Act* establishes a framework through which digital news intermediaries must bargain with eligible news businesses for the use of their content or obtain an exemption by meeting the requirements set out in the Act and regulations. In 2024, Google secured a five-year exemption by agreeing to provide $100 million annually, indexed to inflation, to news organizations across Canada. The fund is administered by the Canadian Journalism Collective (CJC), an independent non-profit established for the purpose. Of the funds, a maximum of 30% can be allocated to broadcasters, and 7% to CBC/Radio-Canada.

Sarah Spring, Executive Director of the CJC, said that the Collective represents a broad range of news businesses, including large and small publishers, broadcasters, start-ups, not-for-profit outlets, Indigenous media, official language minority media and community outlets. She explained that news businesses apply annually, that eligibility is assessed according to the Act and regulations, and that payments are calculated using independently verified newsroom hours. She said she has heard that "the money is fundamental" for businesses in carrying out their mandate and added that the CJC's administration of the fund does not affect editorial independence.

41 Note that, after the evidence-gathering phase of this study, the CRTC announced the establishment of a Services of Exceptional Importance Fund, requiring broadcasting ownership groups with Canadian revenues of $100 million or more to contribute 1.55% of their audio-visual revenues to support services "currently benefiting from mandatory distribution on the basic service and from mandated wholesale rates under paragraph 9.1(1)(h) of the *Broadcasting Act*." This includes CPAC, APTN and AMI.

42 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan; Jane Robertson; Benoit Chartier; Calvin Millar; Pierre Harvey; and Rod Schween.

Several witnesses described the Google fund as a meaningful source of support that was helping to stabilize the sector.[43] Angus Frame called the *Online News Act* a "strong and courageous piece of legislation" that was making a difference to the industry, while a brief from Press Forward said the Act was not merely an injection of money but a tool to address news poverty. Paul Deegan said that before the *Online News Act*, many publishers "never saw a dime in content licensing" from tech firms but were now "getting about $16,400 per year, per full-time journalist."

Other witnesses and briefs raised concerns about whether the *Online News Act* and its distribution framework adequately reflect the diversity of Canadian media models. Madeline Ziniak and Barry Rooke said that their models did not align with the criteria for the fund. A brief submitted by U Multicultural Inc. said funding is disproportionately awarded to major broadcasters and CBC/Radio-Canada, while community, ethnic and Indigenous broadcasters receive less than 3%. In written correspondence, Neil Malik of *The Level* said that "the companies that could benefit most from these funds" – notably start-up organizations such as his own and Freshet News – are excluded by eligibility rules that require a year in business and the employment of two or more journalists.[44] Léa Villalba noted that freelancers fall outside the framework entirely. Finally, the Opportunities for Canadians Institute, in a brief, cited the *Online News Act* as an example of legislation that "[focuses] primarily on organizations, not citizens, leaving a gap in pluralism, audience choice and democratic engagement."

Some witnesses specifically criticized the allocation of 7% of the fund to CBC/Radio-Canada, saying a broadcaster that already receives substantial public funding should not be eligible for a share.[45] Marie-Philippe Bouchard pointed out that the money was compensation for the use of copyrighted material,[46] while Sarah Spring explained that the 7% allocation was established as a maximum within the regulatory framework and approved by the CJC's board of directors.

Much of the testimony on the *Online News Act* concerned Meta's decision to block news links in Canada. Brandon Gonez said that Meta's ban presented a "major roadblock" to

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43 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Paul Deegan; Benoit Chartier; Cheryl McKenzie; and Éric-Pierre Champagne, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Press Forward and Local Independent Television Stations.

44 Copies of correspondence with the Committee are available from the Committee's Clerk upon request. See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Brandon Gonez.

45 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by U Multicultural Inc. and Crowsnest Pass Herald.

46 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Calvin Millar; Angus Frame; and Richard Gray.

monetization that deprived "credible news sources" of their ability to reach Canadians.[47] He added that Meta-owned platforms had driven substantial referral traffic to both legacy and digital publishers, allowing them to monetize audiences through advertising, and that the Google fund represented a "drop in the bucket" compared with what had been "put at risk." For Mr. Gonez, the *Online News Act* and its consequences "stopped a whole industry that was booming" while "[fostering] organizations that probably weren't on the right trajectory … and are still not reaching the number of Canadians they should be reaching."[48]

Representatives of regional and independent media were especially impacted by the ban.[49] Samuel Lamoureux described the ban as a "major shock" in rural communities where Facebook had served as a "town square." A brief by researchers Blair Visscher and Greg Garrard said the news ban had exacerbated a "public safety crisis" during the wildfires in British Columbia. Murray Wood of Rawlco Radio confirmed that the ban had cost outlets "an important way to share critical local news,"[50] while Barry Rooke noted that many campus and community stations had had their social media platforms blocked entirely.

Others disputed the view that Meta's conduct should be attributed to the *Online News Act*. Angus Frame noted that Meta had been withdrawing from news globally and said that "Canada just presented a moment at which it could be dramatic about it, make some noise and create a false impression about the value of their platform"; in his view, Canada was "a convenient pawn in the narrative they were creating." Éric-Pierre Champagne said it was time for Meta to end the ban and pay media their fair share, while representatives of Local Independent Television Stations said they had applied to the CRTC to bring Meta under the *Online News Act*.[51]

Some witnesses made recommendations for amending the *Online News Act*. Press Forward, in a brief, recommended revising the *Online News Act* to include the activities of artificial intelligence companies and to clarify that a "news business" must be Canadian-owned and operate within Canada. A brief from U Multicultural Inc called for greater transparency and reforming the CJC.

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47 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Léa Villalba and Sheila Gunn Reid.

48 See also correspondence submitted to the Committee by Neil Malik (available from the Clerk of the Committee upon request).

49 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Robert Ranger; Angus Frame; and Léa Villalba, among others.

50 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Sheila Gunn Reid.

51 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Jeff Thiessen and Calvin Millar.

As with the *Online Streaming Act*, many witnesses urged Parliament to protect the *Online News Act* in the context of Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) renegotiations.[52]

Tax Credits and Funding Programs

Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit

A number of witnesses discussed the Canadian journalism labour tax credit, a refundable tax credit available to qualifying Canadian journalism organizations (QCJOs) for a portion of eligible newsroom labour costs.

Witnesses who supported the measure described it as one of the principal tools for sustaining journalism jobs and original news production, saying the tax credit should be maintained.[53] Some recommended maintaining the temporary rate of 35% rather than decreasing back to 25% in January 2027, as planned.[54]

Other witnesses focused on eligibility. They argued that the credit should be extended to the broadcasting sector,[55] pointing out that broadcasters and publishers face similar pressures[56] and that in the digital age, "many print media … also provide audio and video content," while "broadcasters create text-based news content through their websites and portals."[57] For Michel Lorrain of Groupe Radio Simard, extending the credit is "a question of fairness." Léa Villalba said the tax credit should account for the role of independent journalists and freelancers, noting that many independent outlets rely on freelance labour.

Other witnesses were more critical of the tax credit. Rudyard Griffiths of *The Hub* said that using head count as a metric "rewards incumbents" who "have had decades to build subscriber bases," and allows them to engage in "predatory subscription pricing … knowing that taxpayer supports will make them financially whole." He also said it and

52 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Rod Schween; Raj Shoan; Jane Robertson; Benoit Chartier; Pierre Harvey; and Calvin Millar. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Torstar Corporation and Press Forward.

53 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Paul Deegan and Marie-Ève Carignan, among others.

54 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Benoit Chartier. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Press Forward.

55 Note that on 3 June 2026, the Department of Finance Canada announced a consultation on extending the tax credit to audio and audiovisual news production.

56 CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan.

57 CHPC, *Evidence*: Kevin Desjardins.

other subsidies should instead be allocated on the basis of "reach, engagement and growth."

Mr. Griffiths criticized the "anonymity" of recipients and called for greater transparency[58] as well as rules ensuring that the subsidies fund journalism rather than owners or bondholders. While briefs by Torstar Corporation and Local Independent Television Stations agreed on the need for greater transparency, the latter argued that allocating funds based on "views and engagement" would "encourage click-bait rather than quality journalism" and "disincentivize the production of news for smaller markets."

Local Journalism Initiative

The Local Journalism Initiative (LJI), launched in 2019 and currently funded through 2027, provides funding to eligible news organizations to hire journalists to cover underserved communities. As explained by LITS, the program is available to print and digital publications, community radio stations and community television stations, but not to private, non-community broadcasters or CBC/Radio-Canada. LITS notes that in 2024–2025, the program "supported hiring more than 500 journalists."

Witnesses described the LJI as an important support for local, rural, and community news coverage. Angelica Carrero, Cathy Cena and Paul Deegan, among others, supported sustaining and renewing the program, while briefs from Press Forward, the Community Radio Fund of Canada, and the National Campus and Community Radio Association urged the government to make the program permanent.

Some witnesses identified limits to the program's design. Angelica Carrero noted that the funding in itself does not resolve hiring challenges in a difficult labour market. Cindy Simard suggested expanding the criteria "to include small players in the radio and television sectors," while Mario Bartel said the program was "oversubscribed" and does not fund "such critical supports as hiring ad reps who can bring in ad revenue" or cover other costs. The Canadian Ethnic Media Association, in a brief, said the initiative "does not fit micro-scale television operations where one individual performs multiple roles." Briefs from Press Forward and the National Campus and Community Radio Association recommended increasing funding and adapting the program to better reflect associated costs as well as "emerging and current newsroom realities."

58 See also brief submitted to the Committee by Blacklock's Reporter.

Section 19 of the *Income Tax Act*

A number of witnesses discussed section 19 of the *Income Tax Act*, which limits the deductibility of advertising expenses when the advertising is placed in foreign newspapers, periodicals or broadcast undertakings. Caroline Jamet said that the provision was initially meant "to protect Canadian media and encourage investment in Canada" but that it was "designed before the advent of digital platforms," leaving a loophole allowing full deductibility of advertising on these platforms. A brief by Torstar Corporation noted the Parliamentary Budget Officer had estimated that the value of the tax loophole amounted to $2.2 billion in 2025–2026. Witnesses agreed on the need to close the loophole, saying it would be a simple and cost-effective measure[59] that could "repatriate billions of dollars into the ecosystem."[60] A brief submitted by LITS noted that the request to update section 19 was not new, pointing to recommendations in previous CHPC studies dating back to 2017.[61]

Proposed New Measures

Federal Advertising Set-Aside

Many witnesses recommended that the government dedicate a portion of its advertising budget to domestic media. Sylvain Poisson of Hebdos Québec told the Committee that in 2024–2025, of $78.15 million spent on advertising by the federal government, only $222,000 went to print media, while a brief from LITS noted that only 37% of the advertising budget that year was spent on traditional media overall.[62] Witnesses said a set-aside would provide immediate support to media without increasing the budget, while also helping the government better reach local, regional, linguistic minority and other underserved audiences through trusted channels.[63] Marie-Ève Carignan added that

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59 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan; Éric-Pierre Champagne; and Jean-Philippe Pineault. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Local Independent Television Stations.

60 CHPC, *Evidence*: Calvin Millar.

61 See CHPC, *Disruption: Change and Churning in Canada's Media Landscape*, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, June 2017, p. 33; CHPC, *Tech Giants' Intimidation and Subversion Tactics to Evade Regulation in Canada and Globally*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, November 2024, pp. 28–9; and CHPC, *The Holding of a National Forum on the Media*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, November 2024, p. 6.

62 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Raj Shoan; Paul Deegan; Angus Frame; Angelica Carrero; Caroline Jamet; Murray Wood, Jeff Thiessen; Sylvain Poisson, and briefs submitted by Press Forward, the National Campus and Community Radio Association, and Local Independent Television Stations.

63 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Sylvain Poisson (General Manager, Hebdos Québec); Barry Rooke; Murray Wood; Raj Shoan; Paul Deegan; and Angelica Carrero. See also brief submitted to the Committee by News Media Canada.

government advertising had "helped save" many Indigenous media outlets during the COVID-19 pandemic. Angus Frame said the government is "weakening our information sovereignty by … funnelling millions of tax dollars into the coffers of foreign tech monopolists," adding that, in an emergency scenario, the only way for government to communicate with Canadians would be "through channels owned and controlled by Silicon Valley billionaires and the Trump administration."

While Raj Shoan of Friends of Canadian Media and others suggested a set-aside of 25%, Rod Schween suggested 35% to align with Canadian content requirements imposed on broadcasters, and Kevin Desjardins proposed a 70% set-aside. Robert Ranger suggested adopting a "government distribution act … that sets a maximum threshold for budget spending on digital platforms."

Community Radio Initiative

Angelica Carrero, Barry Rooke, and a brief by the Community Radio Fund of Canada advocated for the establishment of the Community Radio initiative, a funding program designed to provide stable core support for the community radio sector. Seeking an annual investment of $30 million, or $85,000 to $95,000 per eligible station, to be managed through the Community Radio Fund of Canada, proponents argued that the funding is necessary for a sector that relies heavily on volunteers and shrinking advertising revenues and cannot subsist on project-based funding.[64] They said it would help stations to continue providing local journalism, emergency broadcasting and Indigenous language programming in underserved regions and noted that a similar system in Australia has helped foster a vibrant community media sector.[65]

Tax Credit for Local Advertising

Caroline Jamet and Cindy Simard called for a tax credit for the purchase of advertising in local media, a proposition supported by Murray Wood. Brandon Gonez noted that "we should be incentivizing Canadian businesses and advertisers to spend money on digital media companies."

64 See brief submitted to the Committee by the National Campus and Community Radio Association.

65 CHPC, *Evidence*: Barry Rooke. See also brief submitted to the Committee by the Community Radio Fund of Canada.

Digital Innovation Incentive

Brandon Gonez told the Committee there was currently "no policy infrastructure designed to help" digital media and advocated for a digital media innovation incentive, potentially structured as a 25% tax credit, to help Canadian-owned digital media companies "grow into something lasting." He described it as "targeted growth support" allowing digital media to "get a portion of what they spend on innovation written off" as well as to offset the losses incurred by Meta's blocking of news. Neil Malik agreed that government should help "new publishers to compete and experiment with new formats, technologies and business models."[66]

Tax Credit for Equipment

Citing the high costs of television equipment, Cindy Simard proposed that the government reinstate a 40% investment tax credit for the purchase of news production equipment. Pierre Harvey added that previously, the credit "only applied to equipment that was used to generate revenue" and that it would have to be amended to cover "equipment used to produce local news."

Assistance for Digital Transformation

Angelica Carrero and Cindy Simard indicated a need for assistance for broadcast media, particularly independent and community radio, in their digital transformation efforts – including the adoption of artificial intelligence tools to address certain resource gaps.[67] Ms. Simard pointed out that print media have received money to develop applications and websites, while small stations like hers "can't afford $100,000 for an app." Marie-Ève Carignan agreed that smaller players could not "pivot as easily" as major organizations, which can "create their own structures, apps and social media channels," as well as AI tools, while others "[struggle] to maintain their journalistic activities."

Labour and Training Supports

Some witnesses proposed measures to address the labour and training pressures facing journalism, particularly in regional markets and community media as well as among freelance and independent journalists.

66 Correspondence with the Committee can be requested from the Clerk of the Committee.

67 CHPC, *Evidence*: Angelica Carrero.

Marie-Ève Carignan emphasized the need to invest in training and provide journalists "with the resources to develop the technological and digital tools necessary for their discoverability."

Pierre Harvey and Cindy Simard called for federal funding, tax credits or subsidies to help local outlets train new journalists. Cindy Simard suggested government support to cover part of the salary for regional journalists in training, provided they remain in the region for a period of time, and proposed incentives to encourage graduates to work outside major urban centres.

Léa Villalba proposed exploring a status model for freelancers analogous to protections for casual workers in France, including access to employment insurance, as well as legislated fee schedules adapted to the size, circulation budget and format of different outlets. Ms. Villalba also called for including journalists in existing legislation that would "allow them to properly negotiate their working conditions," noting that a 2023 attempt to include them under the *Status of the Artist Act* had failed and suggesting that a "separate act" could reflect their "specific and unique" working conditions. A brief by the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec noted that several European countries have "recognized the precariousness and special status of independent journalists" and allowed them "access to the right to collective bargaining."

Finally, to address the problem discussed above about unequal access to the labour market in the regions, the Crowsnest Pass Herald proposed that, where CBC/Radio-Canada hires journalists trained by private outlets, the Corporation reimburse those outlets for training and development costs. The brief also recommended that the Corporation's salaries be benchmarked against median private-sector journalism salaries in the relevant local market.

Pooling Resources

Marie-Ève Carignan told the Committee that media, particularly smaller outlets, should "pool" their resources in order to sustain news production. She said government could "fund constructive initiatives" such as "platforms … where all community or local media outlets could put their content together," adding that this would make content more accessible and discoverable and might "be a better … lever to get advertising funding." She also suggested pooling investigative resources as well as technological ones.

Measures Related to Artificial Intelligence

Citing the risks posed to news publishers by artificial intelligence, Paul Deegan urged the Committee not to amend the *Copyright Act* to protect text and data mining activities.[68] He also said that government should ensure that its AI suppliers sign agreements committing to use copyrighted material ethically. Finally, he suggested the Competition Bureau investigate "the state of competition with respect to search and AI" and potentially require Google to "split" its bot into an AI crawler and a search crawler, enabling publishers to opt out of text and data mining while maintaining a presence in search results.

Canada Post

Citing challenges posed by high distribution rates and labour disputes at Canada Post, Benoit Chartier and Paul Deegan recommended that the government mandate an advantageous distribution rate for weeklies and grant local papers "special status" to prevent delivery stoppages during labour disputes. They also asked that newspapers be excluded from the "neighbourhood mail" category to enable continued door-to-door delivery and protect the revenues from flyers currently threatened by the agency's "consumer choice" opt-out program.

Criticisms of the Federal Role

Despite the support from multiple witnesses for maintaining and strengthening policy measures in support of journalism, several witnesses expressed misgivings about the federal policy framework. Peter Menzies argued that supports that were meant to be temporary[69] have become permanent and have undermined perceptions of editorial independence, while Rudyard Griffiths added that they lack transparency and have weakened trust. Sheila Gunn Reid of the Independent Press Gallery said that publicly funded media organizations may have fewer incentives to hold government to account.[70]

Witnesses also raised questions of fairness, noting disparities between sectors as well as different types of media. Broadcasters pointed out that subsidies available to print media do not apply to radio and television,[71] while radio sector representatives said

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68 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Jane Robertson; Raj Shoan; and Éric-Pierre Champagne, among others. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Canadian Association of Broadcasters and Press Forward.

69 See also brief submitted to the Committee by Blacklock's Reporter.

70 The question of whether government support undermines editorial independence and trust is discussed in more detail in the section entitled "Public Trust in Media," below.

71 Notably the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit, discussed above.

their sector in particular was largely overlooked in federal policy.[72] Meanwhile, digital-first media, ethnic media and community media organizations, including start-ups like Freshet News, said that eligibility criteria did not align with their models or that they faced other barriers to accessing supports.[73] Madeline Ziniak stressed that ethnic independent media represent the only sector in the ecosystem that receives no federal support, while her colleague Kiumars Rezvanifar added that the criteria for funding programs are "prohibitive and punitive" to the sector. Sheila Gunn Reid said subsidies created a "two-tiered" system that excludes independent journalists from both funding and access to "government and the public square."

Some witnesses argued that subsidies support legacy media at the expense of innovation. Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Menzies and Ms. Gunn Reid felt that subsidies like the journalism labour tax credit were propping up moribund business models rather than encouraging adaptation and innovation.[74] For Mr. Menzies, an ever-expanding subsidy regime will tilt the playing field and "suppress investment by innovators looking to create new, independent and sustainable 21st-century appropriate platforms." A brief by LITS, however, noted that digital news media have more federal funding opportunities than "other types of outlets, including radio," and added that historically, there is no evidence that subsidies have stifled innovation.

Some witnesses proposed shifting support from direct subsidies to consumer-focused mechanisms like tax credits or news vouchers. Peter Menzies suggested enhancing subscription tax credits or making them tax-deductible, arguing that this "agnostic" model promotes an informed public without creating a conflict of interest between the government and publishers. The Opportunities for Canadians Institute, in a brief, similarly recommended a citizen-directed news subscription credit with an expanded QCJO framework to better support regional, local, independent and emerging journalism organizations. Likewise, a brief submitted by Torstar Corporation suggested exploring "demand-side measures" such as news vouchers to assist Canadians in paying for digital content.[75]

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72 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Martin Simard; Caroline Jamet; and Cindy Simard, among others.

73 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Brandon Gonez and Barry Rooke, among others. See also correspondence by Neil Malik (available upon request from the Clerk of the Committee).

74 See also correspondence submitted to the Committee by Neil Malik (available upon request from the Clerk of the Committee).

75 A brief from Local Independent Television Stations observes that a 15% tax credit on eligible digital subscriptions was in place from 2020 to 2024, applicable to QCJOs with "primarily written content," and that 450,000 Canadians had claimed the credit in 2024.

Peter Menzies further argued that the time was ripe to consider "whether current approaches are achieving the desired public good outcomes." In place of the current, sector-specific policy framework, which he said inevitably leads to imbalances in the system, he proposed an "industry-wide policy platform focused on the 21st century reality that all news media are converging on the internet" and suggested that an "all-encompassing association" could "determine what constitutes a qualified Canadian journalism organization" rather than leaving this function to government.

The Mandate of the National Public Broadcaster

The Committee's study provided witnesses with an opportunity to comment on various aspects of CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate and funding. Apart from concerns about the Corporation's hiring of journalists in regional markets, and its access to 7% of Google's *Online News Act* fund, as discussed above, witnesses raised concerns about its funding and its place in the media ecosystem, particularly in the regions and in relation to private broadcasters.

Several witnesses emphasized the importance of a strong national broadcaster to the media ecosystem. Raj Shoan said a "vibrant CBC" plays a foundational role in connecting regions and maintaining news capacity where commercial models are under strain. Jane Robertson described the Corporation as "vital" to cultural sovereignty, reflecting communities and delivering trusted information. She also urged the Committee to "follow through" on the government's report *The Future of CBC/Radio-Canada*, published following an extensive review of the Corporation's mandate, funding and governance.

Others, however, said that CBC/Radio-Canada was acting as a competitor to private, independent and local media rather than as a complement. They raised concerns that the Corporation's public funding allows it to compete for advertising revenue and, as previously discussed, journalistic talent in markets where private outlets are under pressure.[76] Paul Deegan said that CBC/Radio-Canada should not "move into communities that are already well served," while, for Murray Wood, "a bigger CBC opening more bureaus" is not a "solution to the local journalism crisis."

Witnesses differed on how to address these concerns. Peter Menzies argued that CBC/Radio-Canada should be removed from the commercial advertising market,[77]

76 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Rod Schween; Cindy Simard; and Martin Simard. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Crowsnest Pass Herald.

77 See also correspondence to the Committee from Neil Malik (available upon request to the Clerk of the Committee).

saying its participation distorts both competition and coverage. Pierre Harvey, however, cautioned that its advertising revenues would simply be redirected to foreign digital platforms and suggested that the Corporation instead share a portion of them with private television networks. Marie-Philippe Bouchard added that CBC/Radio-Canada is working with other media to "regain … more sovereignty in our own advertising market" and said that remaining in it "allows us to take the lead … and offer to pilot stuff with our funds to benefit the whole community."

Ms. Bouchard also disputed the characterization of CBC/Radio-Canada as a competitor, saying it was "prioritizing collaboration" and detailing ongoing initiatives, such as providing free advertising inventory to partners, sharing content, and allowing community stations to broadcast from CBC antennas. She also maintained that because the Corporation is re-entering smaller markets with bureaus rather than stations, its impact on local linear television advertising is negligible. She and other witnesses provided examples of successful partnerships in regional markets, such as shared transmission infrastructure and programming support.[78] Murray Wood and Robert Ranger suggested expanding this collaboration by allowing private and community outlets to access the public broadcaster's national audio and event feeds and leverage public streaming platforms like ICI TOU.tv.

ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC TRUST, NEWSROOM CULTURE AND MEDIA CONTENT

Beyond the predominantly economic factors shaping the news media ecosystem, witnesses shared their views on a range of issues including trust in media, editorial independence, journalistic standards and accountability mechanisms. Some witnesses also told the Committee about certain challenging aspects of the journalistic profession, including online harassment and workplace toxicity.

Public Trust in Media

Several witnesses discussed the issue of declining public trust in media, citing concerns about editorial independence, bias in media content, and journalistic standards, as well as the need for more robust accountability mechanisms and better media literacy.

78 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Rod Schween and Mike Omelus.

Editorial Independence

For some witnesses, government subsidies are the main reason for the decline in public trust. Rudyard Griffiths cited polling by his organization, *The Hub*, showing that "76% of Canadians agree that government funding could undermine journalistic objectivity," while "67% … do not trust the government to decide which media organizations qualify" for support. He also cited the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's *Digital News Report 2025*, which shows a decline in trust from 55% in 2016 to 39% in 2025, saying this coincided with an increase in public funding.[79] Peter Menzies agreed, claiming that "the industry is no longer independent" and that while "correlation is not always causation," the decline in trust "coincides with government funding of news organizations."[80]

Other witnesses and briefs rejected this view. Éric-Pierre Champagne pointed out that publicly funded media had not been especially kind to the Coalition Avenir Québec, while a brief from Torstar Corporation said trust in media was in decline "around the Western world" and cited evidence that "countries with the highest trust in news … also have extensive public supports for news media." Another brief, from LITS, pointed to Canada's "long history of subsidizing arts and culture" as well as to "measures that are legally based, transparent, and objective," such as the use of an independent advisory board to determine QCJO status and the administration of certain funds by industry associations. A number of witnesses also pointed out that trust in local news sources remains high across Canada,[81] while LITS said that "economic fragility" posed a greater threat to independence than subsidies.

Bias in Content and Newsrooms

Witnesses also raised concerns about actual or perceived bias in news coverage, notably at CBC/Radio-Canada but also among private outlets that also receive government support.

Coverage of international crises was one area in which these concerns were most pronounced. Several witnesses and briefs described what they saw as asymmetrical or ideologically driven coverage of events in the Middle East and elsewhere. Notably, Mike

79 See also brief submitted to the Committee by Opportunities for Canadians Institute.

80 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Sheila Gunn Reid.

81 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Murray Wood; Sébastien Côté; Angelica Carrero; Cindy Simard; and Martin Simard. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Press Forward; Torstar Corporation; National Campus and Community Radio Association; Community Radio Fund of Canada; and Local Independent Television Stations.

Fegelman of HonestReporting Canada, Amir Epstein of Tafsik, and briefs submitted by B'nai Brith Canada, Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine (CJJP) and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) described what they characterized as systemic bias in media coverage of events in Israel and Palestine. Kiumars Rezvanifar, meanwhile, described a "total media blackout" over events in Iran and related rallies in Canada, saying "we should be getting [the truth] from CBC."

Witnesses and briefs cited studies[82] of media coverage and pointed to various vectors for bias, including

- narrative framing practices perceived as privileging one group over another;[83]
- proportionality in the representation of disparate viewpoints;[84]
- reliance on sources not seen as impartial,[85] or unequal attribution of credibility to different sources;[86]
- accuracy and proportionality in the reporting of casualties;[87]
- the use of language and terminology that witnesses felt was inaccurate, dehumanizing or wrongly attributed blame;[88]

82 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman (Executive Director, HonestReporting Canada). See also briefs submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

83 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

84 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

85 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine.

86 See, for instance, briefs submitted to the Committee by Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

87 See, for instance, briefs submitted to the Committee by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East and B'nai Brith Canada.

88 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East and Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine.

- decisions to avoid certain words;[89]
- the use of reductive headlines;[90]
- inadequate disclosure of censorship or conflicts of interest;[91]
- failure to cover specific events;[92] and
- failure to provide contextual information that would help audiences better understand events.[93]

Several witnesses argued that these shortcomings could perpetuate misunderstanding and fuel broader antisemitic,[94] anti-Israel,[95] Islamophobic,[96] anti-Palestinian[97] or other racist[98] narratives, posing a risk to public safety while further contributing to marginalization, polarization and the erosion of public trust.

Outside of the conflict setting, a brief from the B.C. Coalition of Experiential Communities raised concerns about harms to sex workers arising from inaccurate and stigmatizing portrayals in Canadian media.

Beyond concerns about content, witnesses and briefs raised questions about the editorial policies and processes that influence decisions about coverage. These included allegations of centralized control over bookings and story selection; pressure from managers and executives; pressure from external advocacy groups; retaliation or

89 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine.

90 See, for instance, brief submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada.

91 See, for instance, brief submitted to the Committee by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

92 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Kiumars Rezvanifar. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine.

93 See, for instance, briefs submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada; Association des Congolais du Canada; and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

94 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Mike Fegelman; Amanda Eskenasi (Director of Education, HR Canada Charitable Organization, HonestReporting Canada); and Amir Epstein (Chief Executive Officer, Tafsik Organization).

95 See, for instance, CHPC, Evidence: Mike Fegelman.

96 See brief submitted to the Committee by Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine.

97 See briefs submitted to the Committee by Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

98 See brief submitted to the Committee by Association des Congolais du Canada.

professional consequences for journalists who advance certain perspectives; and a lack of ideological diversity in newsrooms.

Former CBC journalist Travis Dhanraj made a number of allegations about his previous employer in this respect, claiming, for instance, that there was a system of "centralized control" at CBC in which political bookings were subject to "parameters" and "guardrails" limiting who could appear on his program. For Mr. Dhanraj, "Canadians can see" that bias "is an issue" at CBC/Radio-Canada, and further, the Corporation "should not be a polarizing force."[99] Karl Johnston, a former Senior Specialist at CBC, also said in a brief that management routinely "shut down" conservative stories and perspectives.

In briefs submitted to the Committee, CJJP and CJPME described situations at both CBC/Radio-Canada and private news outlets in which journalists had faced censorship or been fired, reprimanded or driven to resign after sharing content on social media or raising concerns about editorial policy. Witnesses and briefs also discussed the adverse effects on newsroom culture of various external pressures, including political pressure,[100] foreign interference or censorship,[101] and targeted campaigns by advocacy organizations.[102]

Some witnesses questioned the range of perspectives represented in Canadian journalism. Peter Menzies argued that many newsrooms have "abandoned" the principle of objectivity amid a "broader conversation about social changes." He said that CBC/Radio-Canada in particular "doesn't allow for enough intellectual diversity" and added that while many newsrooms "lean to the left," a "balance of ideological views" can function as a corrective. On a more structural level, Brandon Gonez testified that as traditional media contracts and becomes more concentrated, there are "fewer opportunities of thought and fewer perspectives in the room."

Some newsroom representatives rejected the claim that their editorial decisions are ideologically driven. Marie-Philippe Bouchard said journalists at CBC/Radio-Canada are not "pursuing a particular agenda," adding that "our reporters are held to standards … they are not pushing their opinions. They are basing their stories and their broadcasts on facts that they check." She said, "I will uphold the right of anybody to have opinions

99 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Sheila Gunn Reid.

100 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Travis Dhanraj (Former journalist, As an Individual).

101 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Kiumars Rezvanifar. See also brief submitted to the Committee by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

102 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Marie-Ève Carignan. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East and Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine.

about our coverage, but I will stand by the quality of our journalism any day." Richard Gray of CTV told the Committee that newsroom discussions at CTV are about ensuring that "all voices are heard" and "all perspectives are reflected," adding that he considered the organization to be doing its job when "both sides are complaining equally loudly" about its work.

Journalistic Standards, Accountability and Media Literacy

Marie-Ève Carignan situated some of the concerns about trust and bias within broader dynamics of changing consumption habits and journalistic trends. She noted that, during crises, media are often seen as "too critical" or "not critical enough," adding that "every party involved views the crisis as their crisis" and that impressions of bias can be "subjective."

Witnesses also pointed to broader trends in the information environment as well as the journalistic profession. Some said the proliferation of disinformation and "fake news" was undermining trust. For Murray Wood, "skepticism is at an all-time high" in an era of "rampant misinformation and intentional disinformation."[103] Others expressed concerns about the increase in AI-generated content, with Jane Robertson noting it can "destroy the audience's trust."[104]

Others pointed to an increase in "opinion journalism," noting that it was increasing in popularity and cost less to produce and that the digital environment was especially conducive to its rise.[105] Marie-Ève Carignan argued that the "blurring of journalistic genres" by influencers who "claim to be journalists" but "don't adhere to ethical standards" undermines public confidence and fuels distrust. Others echoed this view, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing fact-based journalism from opinion, commentary and advocacy[106] and "maintaining a visible commitment to the core disciplines of journalism."[107] While Sheila Gunn Reid argued that journalism can

103 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Cindy Simard; Marie-Ève Carignan; and Angus Frame, among others.

104 See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne; Sébastien Côté; Marie-Ève Carignan; and Angus Frame, among others.

105 See for instance CHPC, *Evidence*: Marie-Ève Carignan, Christa Dickenson, Éric-Pierre Champagne; and Pierre Harvey, among others.

106 See for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne; Pierre Harvey; Mario Bartel; Peter Menzies; Marie-Ève Carignan; and Christa Dickenson. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada and Local Independent Television Stations.

107 Brief submitted to the Committee by B'nai Brith Canada. See also CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne; Pierre Harvey; Mario Bartel; Peter Menzies; Christa Dickenson; and Marie-Ève Carignan.

"encompass opinions" provided that organizations are "honest about their political biases," Ms. Carignan said that even overt opinion journalism remains subject to ethical requirements.

Witnesses defined these core requirements in relation to several foundational pillars: fact verification,[108] balance,[109] editorial independence,[110] the strict separation of reporting and advocacy,[111] and avoidance of conflicts of interest.[112] Janis Cleugh and Mario Bartel emphasized that reporting requires adherence to factual integrity without personal interpretation, as well as balance: for Mr. Bartel, "You try to give both sides of an issue," and further, "we don't try to cultivate friendships with anybody … You give a fair ear to all sides and report accordingly."

Many suggested it was important to strengthen and make known to the public these standards, as well as complaints mechanisms designed to keep newsrooms accountable. Marie-Philippe Bouchard, Angus Frame, Richard Gray and Éric-Pierre Champagne described additional safeguards used by their organizations and professional communities to support accuracy, independence and accountability. These included ongoing editorial discussion and debate, source verification practices, corrections policies, and ombudspersons or other review processes, as well as adherence to the journalistic ethics described above. Ms. Bouchard described CBC/Radio-Canada's processes for debunking misinformation, including AI-generated content.

Witnesses and briefs also told the Committee about external accountability mechanisms. A brief by LITS noted that ombudspersons, public editors and the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council hold organizations and journalists "accountable for their work," while others told the Committee about the Quebec Press Council, a system "made up of journalists, … media employers, and … representatives from the public" that investigates complaints and "[checks] for breaches of ethics."[113] Others mentioned the National NewsMedia Council (NNC),[114] an independent body that carries out similar functions.

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108 CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne.

109 CHPC, *Evidence*: Mario Bartel.

110 CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne.

111 CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne.

112 CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne.

113 CHPC, *Evidence*: Éric-Pierre Champagne. See also Marie-Ève Carignan and Samuel Lamoureux.

114 See, for instance, CHPC, *Evidence*: Marie-Ève Carignan. See also briefs submitted to the Committee by Torstar Corporation; B'nai Brith Canada; and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

Some questioned whether such mechanisms are sufficiently visible or equipped to address recurring concerns. Marie-Ève Carignan said her students are often unaware that ombudspersons or press councils exist, and described the NNC as "greatly weakened." In briefs submitted to the Committee, B'nai Brith Canada and CJPME noted that the NNC addresses complaints only in isolation; CJPME questioned the NNC's membership, noting that "one-fifth of [its] members are owned by PostMedia."

Witnesses and briefs proposed various responses to these concerns, with Mike Fegelman emphasizing that "restoring trust in our media is not a partisan issue, but a national imperative." Ms. Carignan said journalists and news organizations need to better explain how they gather information and whom they consult with. She added that media literacy programs are needed to "explain how journalistic practices and … ethics work" as well as to help audiences choose their sources "wisely." Jeff Thiessen of Miracle Channel Association recommended that newsrooms keep their codes of ethics and journalistic standards at the forefront of newsroom practice.

Others focused on strengthening accountability mechanisms. B'nai Brith Canada, in a brief, recommended more transparent and accessible processes for reviewing concerns about fairness, contextual completeness and editorial balance, saying that trust can improve "when audiences understand that concerns … are taken seriously and reviewed through clear processes." The organization also recommended that Parliament assess whether existing structures adequately address concerns about framing, terminology and sourcing. CJPME similarly argued that complaint mechanisms should be better equipped to address recurring or systemic patterns rather than individual grievances, and recommended reforms to the NNC.

Some proposals returned to the design of existing support mechanisms as a way to address concerns about trust. Samuel Lamoureux suggested making assistance conditional on press council membership, while Pierre Harvey cited a Quebec tax credit's condition excluding commentators from eligibility. Sarah Spring noted that adherence to a code of ethics is already a condition of eligibility for the Google fund. A brief from LITS, while noting that a lot of government programs are already transparent, agreed with Rudyard Griffiths that greater transparency is needed about which news organizations are benefitting from the journalism labour tax credit.[115] Marie-Ève Carignan cited a proposal for an independent body to manage media funding while also acting as "an observer" to highlight "certain problems" and "demonstrate that there is a social responsibility" to address such issues, which she said press councils do not currently do.

115 See also brief submitted to the Committee by Torstar Corporation.

As previously noted, some witnesses suggested that consumer-focused funding mechanisms, such as subscription tax credits, would create more distance between government and supported outlets.[116]

Other proposals focused on professional recognition and training. Janis Cleugh pointed to standardized training models, such as the United Kingdom's National Council for the Training of Journalists, as a way to help distinguish trained professionals from those who call themselves journalists. Éric-Pierre Champagne said that the press cards issued by the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, which are tied to adherence to its code of ethics, can serve as a "seal of credibility."

Witnesses were divided on the need for more formal oversight, such as a professional body or order for journalists. Marie-Ève Carignan said that some see such a body as a way to give journalists a "status" and a "measure of credibility," but acknowledged concerns about freedom of expression. Éric-Pierre Champagne also warned of implications for press freedom, while Samuel Lamoureux said journalism has always included official and "alternative" forms and that an accrediting body would not be "useful."

Harassment and Workplace Issues

Some witnesses discussed harassment and abuse, particularly online, as a factor affecting journalists' safety, as well as the attractiveness of journalism as a profession. Jane Robertson told the Committee that harassment had become pervasive and "overwhelming," particularly for "women, minorities and 2SLGBTQ+" individuals. Marie-Philippe Bouchard described the problem as "terribly concerning," adding that CBC/Radio-Canada has implemented "much more stringent security measures" in recent years. Cheryl McKenzie discussed online hate in relation to short-form content prepared by APTN for online audiences, noting that viewers on social media cannot get the context necessary to understand more complex issues. Marie-Ève Carignan described the problem as a threat to the profession, saying concerns about safety may deter otherwise qualified people from pursuing journalism.

Some testimony raised concerns about the role of advocacy organizations in driving harassment. Briefs submitted by CJPME and CJJP said that some campaigns resorted to "harassment" targeting journalists and media outlets over reporting that they disagree

116 CHPC, *Evidence*: Peter Menzies. See also brief submitted to the Committee by the Opportunities for Canadians Institute.

with. Marie-Ève Carignan said that while "advocacy groups are important," she takes issue with tactics such as doxing, intimidation and targeted harassment.

Marie-Philippe Bouchard said that CBC/Radio-Canada works to document incidents of harassment and has formed a "coalition" with other publishers in order to "come up with better solutions." Others called for policy measures to better protect journalists. Jane Robertson urged the government to support stronger protections through the forthcoming online harms framework, with "journalist safety and mental health as explicit priorities."

Other witnesses described harassment in the context of newsroom culture. Drawing again on his personal experience as a former CBC journalist, Travis Dhanraj alleged that he had encountered a pattern of "systemic control, tokenism, selective enforcement and a toxic culture where intimidation went unchecked."[117] He also said he had faced disciplinary measures over a truthful social media post and that his 25-year career ended after he refused to sign a confidentiality agreement that would have required him to waive his statutory rights under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. It is important to note that Marie-Philippe Bouchard, President and Chief Executive Officer of CBC/Radio-Canada, was unable to respond to Mr. Dhanraj's allegations because of ongoing proceedings related to his complaint.[118]

Sheila Gunn Reid told the Committee that Rebel News journalists have experienced "workplace harassment" and are treated like "a problem to be managed" at political events, where their reporting activities have been escalated into security or police matters. She argued for ending discrimination in media access.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, witnesses painted a complex and nuanced picture of a media ecosystem profoundly destabilized in recent decades by technological change. They also provided valuable insights into the effectiveness and relevance of the existing policy framework as well as areas in which it could be improved. This report is a synthesis of the broad themes discussed by witnesses from every segment of the media industry, as well as professional associations, academia and civil society groups. In light of the testimony received, the Committee advances the following recommendations:

117 See also brief submitted to the Committee by Karl Johnston.

118 See CHPC, *Evidence*, 20 October 2025 (Marie-Philippe Bouchard).

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada encourage innovation and competition in the media sector.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada empower consumers by providing tax credits for media subscriptions to qualified Canadian journalism organisations, strengthening consumer choice and competition.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada amend the *Income Tax Act* to expand eligibility for the Canadian journalism labour tax credit to include broadcasters and extend the 35% labour tax credit rate.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada consider implementing tax measures to strengthen the financial sustainability of Canadian journalism, including an investment tax credit for the purchase of news production equipment and a tax credit for advertising in local media.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada amend section 19 and section 19.1 of the *Income Tax Act* to exclude tax deductibility for foreign-owned or -controlled Internet advertising platforms.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada implement a formal advertising set-aside policy to redirect a portion of its advertising budget from foreign digital platforms to domestic news organizations.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada, in implementing the Services of Exceptional Importance Fund, ensure that it provides stable, long-term support to public-interest broadcasters.

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada uphold the *Online News Act* and the *Online Streaming Act* in the context of international trade negotiations.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada provide temporary emergency bridge funding, in the form of repayable loans, to independent broadcasters to address funding shortfalls arising from delays in the implementation of new regulatory contributions.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada establish a Community Radio Initiative to provide stable, long-term core funding to community radio stations, including those representing ethnic, local and underserved communities.

Recommendation 11

That, in light of developments in generative artificial intelligence, the Government of Canada uphold the principles of copyright protection and consider updating the *Online News Act* and related frameworks to address the impact of artificial intelligence on Canadian news media.

Recommendation 12

That the Government of Canada improve transparency with respect to federal support for news media, including by making information about funding recipients and mechanisms more accessible to the public.

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada work with Canada Post to ensure reliable, affordable distribution of local newspapers.

Recommendation 14

That the Government of Canada promote the digital transition of traditional media and the creation of high-quality digital news media.

Recommendation 15

That the Government of Canada consider measures to improve access to federal support programs for ethnic and community media.

Recommendation 16

That the Government of Canada review the eligibility criteria of its existing support programs to ensure they reflect the diversity of business models in the media sector.

Recommendation 17

That the Government of Canada support initiatives to strengthen media literacy in Canada, in order to help the public better understand journalistic practices and assess the reliability of information.

Recommendation 18

That the Government of Canada implement measures to make the journalism profession safer and more attractive for everybody.

APPENDIX A:
LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee's webpage for this study.

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As an individual	2026/03/10	26
Travis Dhanraj, Former Journalist		
Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec	2026/03/10	26
Angelica Carrero, Executive Director		
Freshet News	2026/03/10	26
Mario Bartel, Co-founder		
Janis Cleugh, Co-Founder		
Friends of Canadian Media	2026/03/10	26
Randy Kitt, Director, Media, Unifor		
Raj Shoan, Executive Director		
HonestReporting Canada	2026/03/10	26
Amanda Eskenasi, Director, Education, HR Canada Charitable Organization		
Mike Fegelman, Executive Director		
Haran Shani-Narkiss, Chief Executive Officer, Innohives		
News Media Canada	2026/03/10	26
Paul Deegan, President and Chief Executive Officer		
As an individual	2026/03/12	27
Marie-Eve Carignan, Full Professor, UNESCO Chair in the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism, Université de Sherbrooke		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Aboriginal Peoples Television Network	2026/03/12	27
Joel Fortune, Legal Counsel		
Cheryl McKenzie, Executive Director, News and Current Affairs		
Mike Omelus, Executive Director, Content and Programming Strategy		
Accessible Media Inc.	2026/03/12	27
David Errington, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Kevin Goldstein, Outside Regulatory Counsel		
Canadian Ethnic Media Association	2026/03/12	27
Kiumars Rezvanifar, President		
Madeline Ziniak, Chair		
As an individual	2026/04/14	30
Murray Wood, Vice-President, News-Talk Programming Rawlco Radio		
Canadian Journalism Collective	2026/04/14	30
Sarah Spring, Executive Director		
Hebdos Québec	2026/04/14	30
Benoit Chartier, Chair of the Board		
Sylvain Poisson, General Manager		
RNC Media Inc.	2026/04/14	30
Sébastien Côté, Director General, Information, Gatineau-Ottawa Division		
Robert Ranger, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Télé Inter-Rives Ltée	2026/04/14	30
Pierre Harvey, Director		
Cindy Simard, Vice-Chair, Information		
Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec	2026/04/16	31
Samuel Lamoureux, Professor, Communication, Université TÉLUQ		
Léa Villalba, Freelance Journalist		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Media Guild	2026/04/16	31
Jane Robertson, President		
Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec	2026/04/16	31
Éric-Pierre Champagne, President		
Stéphanie Mac Farlane, Editor-in-Chief, Le Canada Français		
Independent Press Gallery	2026/04/16	31
Sheila Gunn Reid, President		
Macdonald-Laurier Institute	2026/04/16	31
Peter Menzies, Senior Fellow		
Bell Media Inc.	2026/04/21	32
Richard Gray, Vice-President, CTV News		
Jean-Philippe Pineault, General Manager, News and Operations		
Cogeco Media inc.	2026/04/21	32
Caroline Jamet, President		
Gonez Media Inc.	2026/04/21	32
Brandon Gonez, Chief Executive Officer		
Groupe Radio Simard	2026/04/21	32
Michel Lorrain, President and broadcasting consultant, MLorrain Conseils		
Martin Simard, Vice-President		
Tri Cities Community TV	2026/04/21	32
Cathy Cena, Executive Director		
CBC/Radio-Canada	2026/04/23	33
Marie-Philippe Bouchard, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Local Independent Television Stations	2026/04/23	33
Calvin Millar, President, Channel Zero		
Rod Schween, President, Pattison Media		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
The Hub	2026/04/23	33
Rudyard Griffiths, Publisher		
Torstar Corporation	2026/04/23	33
Angus Frame, President		
Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC)	2026/04/28	34
Christa Dickenson, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Canadian Association of Broadcasters	2026/04/28	34
Kevin Desjardins, President		
Miracle Channel Association	2026/04/28	34
Jeff Thiessen, Vice-President		
National Campus and Community Radio Association	2026/04/28	34
Barry Rooke, Executive director		
Tafsik Organization	2026/04/28	34
Amir Epstein, Chief Executive Officer		

APPENDIX B:
LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's webpage for this study.

Garrard, Greg

Johnston, Karl

Visscher, Blair

Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association

Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec

BC Coalition of Experiential Communities

Blacklock's Reporter

BlackWiki

B'nai Brith Canada

Canadian Association of Broadcasters

Canadian Ethnic Media Association

Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

Community Radio Fund of Canada

Freshet News

HonestReporting Canada

HR Canada Charitable Organization

Local Independent Television Stations

National Campus and Community Radio Association

News Media Canada

Opportunities for Canadians Institute

Press Forward

RNC Media Inc.

Télé Inter-Rives Ltée

Torstar Corporation

U Multicultural Inc.

Dhanraj, Travis

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos. 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 43, 47, 49 and 52) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hepfner
Chair

Conservative Supplementary Report on State of the Journalism and Media Sectors

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

On behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, we submit this supplementary report on the State of the Journalism and Media Sectors.

Journalism is vital to a healthy democracy. It serves to inform the public impartially and hold those in power to account. Unfortunately, Canada's journalism and media landscape is facing a crisis of fairness that is impacting its ability to fulfill these essential duties.

Witness testimony revealed that Canada's journalism sector is facing three significant challenges: 1) a lack of fairness in leadership and employment practices; 2) government policies that create an uneven playing field; and 3) a lack of fairness and balance in media coverage. These challenges produce significant consequences for Canadians, but solutions are available.

1. Lack of Fairness in Leadership and Employment Practices

A healthy media ecosystem begins with healthy newsrooms. This should be especially true of Canada's public broadcaster, the CBC, which Canadian taxpayers heavily subsidize to the tune of $1.6 billion.

Sadly, witness testimony reflected the opposite.

Former CBC employees revealed a toxic work environment. Travis Dhanraj, a former CBC host, described the environment as a place of "systemic control, tokenism, selective enforcement and a toxic culture where intimidation went unchecked". He also revealed that employees were punished for raising concerns about newsroom bias. Dhanraj stated:

> "Inside the newsroom, the message was unmistakable and did not need to be spoken. I raised concerns. I challenged centralized control and bias. I fought for real diversity and equal standards. I tried to do my job as a journalist. Within months, I was pulled off the air, disciplined, restricted from speaking, stripped of my prime-time program and eventually out altogether."

When management fails to remain objective in journalism, employees should have the right to voice their dissent. Instead, the CBC punishes employees for speaking out against biased reporting.

Dhanraj was not the only employee who came forward with complaints against the CBC's management and work culture.

Karl Johnston, a former Senior Specialist at the CBC, stated:

> "I was hired to fix CBC North's recruitment issues. I quickly realized the real problem was not finding people; it was a deeply toxic work culture. Through my work with management, I uncovered a systematic pattern of hiding job openings to manipulate budgets using discriminatory hiring practices."

Johnston also revealed political pressure within management, stating, "A CBC North manager told me to vote Liberal, or my job could go away." Johnston summarizes the work environment as "characterized by hostility, harassment, and a lack of accountability".

Taken together, this testimony raises significant concerns about the CBC's workplace culture, leadership, and employment practices, highlighting the need for greater fairness, accountability, and respect for diverse perspectives within newsrooms. As the organization's top executive, the CBC's CEO is ultimately responsible for fostering a fair, inclusive, and respectful workplace. The Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, given his role in the process for appointing the CEO, also has an important responsibility to ensure that concerns about the organization's workplace culture receive appropriate attention and that executive accountability is maintained.

2. Government Policies Create an Uneven Playing Field

Liberal government policies and subsidies have created an uneven playing field in which the government chooses winners and losers.

Blacklock's Reporter provided details about the new subsidy regime, stating:

> "Competition in journalism rests on fair play, transparency and integrity. Parliament in 2019 amended the Income Tax Act to subsidize daily news media on a promise taxpayers' aid was temporary and transitional. "There does need to be a deadline," testified Bob Cox, then-chair of News Media Canada. "The program itself is envisioned to be for five years and I felt that was an appropriate period of time ... because of course there will be news outlets, newspapers, that fail the transition, and you can't give them forever," he added. ... "I don't like the idea of a long-term subsidy for newspapers that becomes permanent." Temporary, transitional aid is now a permanent, secret subsidy for 141 news corporations. It is the only federal program of its kind that does not mandate disclosure of actual payments to corporations."

Subsidies that were meant to be temporary have now become permanent fixtures of the Liberal government that have created an uneven playing field. The committee heard from an independent news outlet called the Hub, which refuses to accept government subsidies on principle. Rudyard Griffiths, the founder of the Hub, stated:

> "By refusing to use subsidies to fund our journalism, we compete on an uneven playing field. To state the obvious, the labour tax credit is not tied to any meaningful performance metric. It is allocated on a journalist head count alone. This conveniently rewards incumbents that have had decades to build subscriber bases to sustain their newsrooms. This is great for them; I congratulate them. Start-ups, meanwhile, have to build their audiences from scratch. They have to go from zero to one, 100 and, in our case, over 30,000 subscribers. They have no subscriber base to fund the newsroom in a way that would qualify them, were there meaningful support in the first place when they start out, as we started out five years ago."

Simply put, government subsidies reward larger legacy outlets and leave out smaller, independent outlets. This ultimately leads to the government choosing winners and losers. The Canadian Ethnic Media Association testified regarding being left behind by government subsidies, stating:

> "Unfortunately, in spite of statements made by government representatives, none of the independent multilingual television community producers have any access to any funding, specifically the Canada Media Fund, the Google news fund, the local journalism

> initiative, or the Canadian journalism labour tax credit. In fact, the criteria for all these funds are prohibitive and punitive to the independent ethnic community producer sector."

Furthermore, subsidies fail to empower citizens. In a brief, Opportunities for Canadians Institute wrote, “Canadian policymakers have introduced measures intended to support journalism and stabilize the sector. However, these approaches have largely focused on supporting institutions rather than empowering citizens to direct support toward the outlets they choose to trust."

Rudyard Griffiths also made the point that government subsidies deter innovation, saying:

> "We have to acknowledge that the subsidy regime is doing something. It is squashing innovation. It is impeding new models, methods and types of organizations to renew our journalistic capacity in Canada. We need to connect it to how the subsidy regime has largely frozen Canadian media... We're not seeing a renewal in the industry. We're not seeing dynamism in the industry. I would challenge anyone to argue otherwise."

Additionally, federal departments are shutting out certain journalists and avoiding accountability. The Independent Press Gallery made this evident, saying:

> "Federal departments have decided who gets answers and who does not. An independent journalist was told by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada very recently that his organization does not qualify for these services. The services were answers to his questions. Global Affairs Canada has also done the same. The message is clear: If you're not approved, you're not entitled to answers. The same pattern exists at the political level. We have seen elected officials refuse to answer questions from independent outlets. We have seen reporters arrested for attempting to question ministers. We have been denied access to federal leaders debates and forced to go to court, successfully twice, just to do our jobs. Increasingly, independent journalists are not just excluded; they're also treated like a problem to be managed."

Liberal legislation like Bill C-18: *The Online News Act*, have taken a significant toll on small, independent media outlets. Brandon Gonez, the CEO and President of Gonez Media, stated:

> "...legislation like Bill C-18 basically pushed Meta—which owns two of the platforms that Canadians utilize the most—out of the room. That put up a major roadblock in terms of monetization. That impacted digital media companies, which are the future of this ecosystem, and put them more at risk. It has impacted the ability for growth, the ability to tell more stories, the ability to expand and the ability to reflect more Canadians. It's had a whole negative impact on the industry."

He further described the impact of Bill C-18, saying:

> “For three years now, with Bill C-18 in place, credible news sources, however you think about them, whatever part of the political spectrum they are on, have lost the ability to connect with Canadians on the two biggest platforms they use every single day. Less credible voices, which have no news ethics and no journalism ethics, have filled that void. We have basically ceded our responsibility. All of the outlets, whether legacy or not, have lost three years of building relationships with 40 million Canadians."

Taken together, subsidies and Liberal policies have significantly weakened Canada's journalism sector, creating an uneven playing field that rewards legacy outlets while penalizing smaller, independent organizations for innovating and pursuing new approaches.

3. Lack of Fairness and Balance in Media Coverage

Witnesses appearing before the committee also highlighted concerns about a lack of fairness and balance in media coverage. Travis Dhanraj highlighted political bias in media, stating:

> "There were repeated episodes of Conservatives being blocked. I have the GChats right here. I said, in terms of getting folks on, that we needed to have balance. It was not about just having a show with Conservatives or just with Liberals. If Power & Politics is going to have Liberal talking points on all the time, we should have balance as a network. At one point, I heard that maybe I could have NDP folks on, but Conservatives were a no."

Dhanraj also shared concerns over potential interference from the Prime Minister's Office at the CBC. When asked about it, he shared:

> "I know concerns were raised by people who were on Power & Politics. I have documentation related to those concerns being raised. I know that the folks who raised these concerns are fearful of exactly the same thing that all these other folks are fearful of: professional reprisal. I also know that this was raised repeatedly. Whether or not there was influence from the former prime minister's office in terms of the editorial decisions being made on Power & Politics, even the allegation of that, on its face, needs to be investigated."

Additionally, the media suffers from biased reporting of sensitive issues like the Israel-Hamas conflict. Mike Fegelman from HonestReporting Canada gave an example of this:

"In a letter to editorial staff, George Achi, CBC's former director of journalistic standards and practices, warned journalists not to use the word 'terrorist' when referring to Hamas and not to admit that 2005 was the end of Israel's permanent presence in Gaza, which it was. Even when Canadian officials refer to Hamas as terrorists, Achi wrote that reporters 'should add context to ensure the audience understands this is opinion, not fact.' Hamas is, of course, a listed terrorist organization."

4. Consequences

The challenges of fairness in the newsroom, in government policies, and media coverage produce significant consequences for Canadians.

A toxic newsroom and management can lead to a lack of trust in the media and employee dissatisfaction. Travis Dhanraj proved this saying, "After 25 years in journalism, my career ended. The dream I had as a kid of working at the CBC was shattered, along with my trust in it."

Government subsidies can also cause a lack of objectivity in the media. Peter Menzies from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute stated, "Surveys also indicate that a large plurality of Canadians worry that media dependence on government negatively impacts objectivity. Since 2018, trust in news in Canada has been in decline. Correlation is not always causation, of course, but this coincides with government funding of news organizations." The Independent Press Gallery similarly questioned the impact of government subsidies on newsroom's objectivity, asking,

“Where is the incentive, then, to hold the government to account, if your newsroom is reliant on the government for its survival?"

Government subsidies have also caused declining public trust. The Hub backed this up, saying, “Our polling showed, 76% of Canadians, three out of four, agree that government funding undermines journalistic objectivity.”

Biased reporting by news outlets has clear consequences as well. In the case of the Israel-Hamas conflict, HonestReporting Canada stated, “This media coverage directly contributes to a spike in anti-Jewish hate crimes.”

5. Solutions

While there were many challenges in journalism that were presented in the committee, witnesses also provided solutions.

Witness testimony from CBC employees highlighted the need for greater accountability within news organizations, particularly the CBC. As Canada's publicly funded broadcaster, the CBC must be held to high standards of workplace fairness, journalistic integrity and responsible leadership. The CEO plays a central role in setting workplace standards, and the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture must ensure the CEO is held accountable for fostering a fair, professional and impartial workplace.

Other witnesses illustrated the failures of government policies. Gonez Media made it evident that Bill C-18 is a disastrous legislation that must be repealed to allow outlets to be more innovative and reach audiences through social media.

Furthermore, many witnesses called for the government to stop subsidizing headcount. The Hub advocated for this, stating:

> “Stop subsidizing head count. Why not switch the subsidy metrics from measuring the advantages that are inherent to incumbent legacy organizations and start allocating subsidies on the basis of audience reach, engagement and subscriber growth? This is far more equitable. It would allow smaller organizations in the start-up phase to benefit from subsidies. Right now, they can't.”

Finally, the government must work to empower the consumer. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute made this clear, stating: "That is why I think that one of the ways out of that is to get around to funding the consumer. Let them choose what they want to read or not read. Subsidize that through tax credits to them. Then the market can actually work, and you get some sort of feedback. You get a flow-through impact to successful operators." The Opportunities for Canadians Institute similarly agreed with this idea.

Summary

Canada’s media landscape is facing a crisis of fairness. From unfair leadership and employment practices to government policies that create an uneven playing field, to a lack of fairness and balance in media coverage, these challenges undermine public trust and weaken Canada’s democratic institutions. Meaningful reforms are needed to restore fairness, strengthen accountability, and ensure Canadians have access to a diverse and trustworthy media landscape.

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS :

STUDY ON THE STATE OF THE JOURNALISM AND MEDIA SECTORS

Submitted by Martin Champoux, MP

November 16, 2026

The Bloc Québécois agrees with the report's findings regarding the growing fragility of the media ecosystem, the importance of journalism to democracy and the need to protect high-quality news that is produced by independent professionals. However, we must express significant reservations about the way that some testimony was incorporated into the report.

The intent here is not to challenge anyone's right to express themselves, criticize the media or question a journalist's work. In a democracy, citizens, interest groups, advocacy organizations and the media must be able to call out coverage they believe falls short, point out errors and demand accountability. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press necessarily imply that difficult debates will sometimes arise.

But the right to express oneself does not mean that all opinions have the same value in a parliamentary study on the state of journalism itself. In our view, this essential distinction is not properly made in the report.

The Committee itself heard that journalism is in large part defined by fact-checking, the pursuit of balance, editorial independence, the avoidance of conflicts of interest and a distinction between journalistic work and advocacy. The report also highlights the dangers of blurring the lines between journalism, opinion, commentary and activism.

It is therefore contradictory to recognize the importance of these distinctions while giving, in certain parts of the report, comparable weight to the observations of recognized journalism organizations or specialized researchers, and groups whose mission and methods are, in our view, more in keeping with activism, political mobilization or media advocacy.

Moreover, the Committee had discussed this very issue when it considered the draft report. The solution contemplated at the time was not to censor certain witnesses, but to contextualize their contributions and distinguish their statements from the findings that are representative of the journalism sector.

Rebel News

The case of Rebel News illustrates this difficulty. The problem is not that Rebel News adopts a clearly stated ideological orientation. A media outlet can take an editorial line, publish columns and advocate for ideas while practising journalism. Opinion and journalism can coexist, as can be seen in most major private and public news media, whether they are print or audiovisual and online or traditional outlets. What matters is the method used to produce and present the news.

A recent decision by the Federal Court of Appeal highlights a particularly relevant point. On October 7, 2026, it dismissed Rebel News's appeal regarding the refusal to designate it as a qualified Canadian journalism organization (QCJO). The Court concluded that the process the Minister used to determine that Rebel News was not engaged in the production of original news content was fair and reasonable and that the applicable provisions had been reasonably interpreted and applied.

This decision does not mean that Rebel News does not have the right to publish, ask questions or present itself as a media outlet. It does, however, establish a distinction relevant to this study: for the purposes of a public framework designed to support journalism, Rebel News did not meet the criteria relating to the ongoing production of original news. The decision at first instance noted that, of 423 pieces of content examined during the period in question, only 10 were categorized as original news.

These considerations are especially relevant because the report itself emphasizes the need to distinguish fact-based journalism from opinion and activism.

We are also concerned about the conception of media work as entailing confrontation and provocation when these activities themselves become a means of producing the content that will then be presented as news. Deliberately seeking to provoke a reaction and then turning that reaction into a news story raises an obvious ethical issue.

The report should therefore have tread much more carefully in using these statements as evidence on the general state of the profession.

HonestReporting Canada and the intimidation of journalists

We have different, but equally serious, reservations about HonestReporting Canada.

Here again, the right to criticize the media is indisputable. HonestReporting Canada describes itself as a non-profit organization that ensures the fairness and accuracy of Canadian coverage of Israel and the Middle East. Its right to challenge a news report, submit a complaint to a newsroom or put forward its interpretation of an event must be respected. Its own testimony before the Committee explicitly states this mission.

The problem lies in the methods it uses.

The Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) publicly called on HonestReporting Canada to end its "intimidation tactics targeting journalists." [translation] According to the FPJQ, HonestReporting Canada targets individual journalists and encourages its supporters to write to them or contact their employer. The FPJQ reported that some journalists have consequently received hundreds of messages and cited the case of a journalist who reportedly received 1,500 in a single day. The FPJQ explicitly recognizes HonestReporting Canada's right to criticize the media, but believes that its approach is designed to push journalists to censor themselves.

In addition, J-Source published an investigation showing that HonestReporting Canada's alerts regularly name journalists, include a photograph of them and urge the organization's subscribers to contact newsrooms. Journalists interviewed said that the potential for these campaigns can influence editorial decisions.

These concerns are also apparent in the parliamentary record. Briefs submitted to the Committee expressly condemned pressure campaigns directed at journalists and newsrooms. For example, the brief from Canadian Journalists for Justice in Palestine argued that these campaigns can create a climate of fear among journalists covering Israel and Palestine. Another brief to the Committee explicitly described some of HonestReporting Canada's tactics as akin to harassment.

It is telling that the report itself acknowledges the problem. In the section on harassment, it outlines concerns about organized campaigns against journalists and cites the testimony of Professor Marie-Ève Carignan, who distinguished between legitimate advocacy groups and tactics such as doxing, intimidation and targeted harassment.

Holding a journalist to account is legitimate. Pointing out an error is legitimate. Referring a matter to an ombudsperson, a press council or the management of a media outlet is legitimate. However, organizing a campaign to flood a journalist with messages or exert pressure likely to influence their reporting raises a fundamental problem when the study itself concerns the quality, independence and safety of journalism.

<u>Freedom of expression does not mean all expertise is equal</u>

Our disagreement with the report therefore does not pertain to the inclusion of this evidence in the parliamentary record.

Parliament must remain a place where widely differing opinions can be expressed. It would be equally problematic for a parliamentary committee to establish an ideological test for deciding which opinions can be heard. A democracy does not protect only the opinions of the majority.

However, hearing an opinion and recognizing it as reflecting equivalent journalistic expertise are two different things.

When a committee studies a profession, it is responsible for clearly characterizing the stakeholders it quotes for the reader. A professional organization representing journalists, a researcher specializing in journalism, a publisher subject to recognized ethics and accountability mechanisms, a partisan media outlet and an advocacy group do not testify from the same institutional position. Their remarks may all be relevant, but they are not subject to the same standards and do not necessarily have the same evidentiary value.

This distinction is particularly critical because the report recommends that the government improve media literacy in order to help the public understand journalistic practices and assess the reliability of information. A parliamentary report seeking to promote this capacity should itself clearly differentiate information, opinion, activism and professional journalism.

A question of credibility

The Bloc Québécois unequivocally reaffirms the right of citizens and organizations to monitor the media, criticize its work and demand corrections when errors are made. No journalist or media organization should be shielded from criticism.

However, accountability must itself stay within certain bounds. Reasoned criticism, complaint mechanisms, public debate and the right of reply help improve journalism. Intimidation, targeted harassment and contrived confrontations do not serve the same function.

Groups that choose to use such methods retain their freedom of expression. However, they undermine their credibility when they subsequently ask that their statements be considered equivalent to those of journalistic organizations subject to professional standards of verification, independence, fairness and accountability.

That is precisely why we reject a false choice between censorship and the absolute equivalence of all testimony. Everyone has the right to speak. This does not mean that all speech constitutes journalism, that all methods are journalistic or that all statements carry the same weight in determining the findings of a parliamentary study on journalism.

The Bloc Québécois is therefore of the view that the report should have drawn this distinction more clearly and better contextualized the statements of Rebel News, HonestReporting Canada and any other organization whose methods or mission depart from the professional journalistic practices the report itself describes.

Unless this point is clearly made, the journalism and media sectors will not consider the Committee's report credible or even acceptable. The Committee, and ultimately the government, needs to show that it respects the journalism profession and the fundamental principles that guide it.