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CANADA

THE HOLDING OF A NATIONAL FORUM ON THE MEDIA

Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Honourable Hedy Fry, Chair

**NOVEMBER 2024
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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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

FIFTEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied a national forum on the media 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

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Canadian Heritage collaborate with various stakeholders in the Canadian media sector to organize a national forum on the media. The Committee emphasizes the need for governmental support for this initiative to be provided in a manner that upholds the principles of freedom of the press and journalistic independence. The Committee reiterates that it is not up to the Government of Canada to initiate and organize a national forum but simply to recommend one..... 25

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada implement measures to support local journalism..... 26

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada collect data to determine the extent of media deserts in order to put in place measures to mitigate them. 26

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada implement measures to make the journalism profession safer, more attractive and more diversified and to increase retention rates within this profession..... 26

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada implement an extensive information and awareness campaign on the dangers of misinformation and on ways to detect and protect against it; and that media literacy be promoted from an early age..... 26

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada promote the digital transition of traditional media and the creation of high-quality digital news media. 26



THE HOLDING OF A NATIONAL FORUM ON THE MEDIA

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

On 5 December 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (the Committee) adopted the following motion:

Whereas:

1. The news media is in crisis due to the dominance of foreign digital companies;
2. Hundreds of newsroom positions across Canada have been cut since the beginning of the year, and hundreds more are likely to be cut in the near future;
3. Canadian broadcasters, journalists' associations, news unions and many experts agree that urgent action must be taken to ensure adequate, diversified news coverage in all regions of Quebec and Canada;

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study to determine the appropriateness of the government providing support to the national news sector holding a national forum on the media and that the committee invite sector experts and leaders to discuss and help determine the possible terms of reference. Provided the sector initiates a forum, that governments at the national and provincial levels be invited to contribute to this debate.

That the Committee hold a minimum of four meetings and report its recommendations to the House.¹

Pursuant to that motion, the Committee held six meetings and heard from 17 witnesses, including journalists, experts, media executives and representatives of not-for-profit organizations. Seven briefs were also submitted to the Committee. In addition to the

¹ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (CHPC), [*Minutes of Proceedings*](#), 5 December 2023.



appropriateness of holding a national forum on the media, witnesses commented on issues relating to the media industry, journalism and media content. The Committee would like to thank all those who contributed to the study.

A. MEDIA INDUSTRY ISSUES

Media and Democracy

A number of witnesses referred to the essential role that media plays in a free and democratic society. For example, Colette Brin, Director of the Centre d'études sur les médias and Laval University professor, said that "[a]ccess to reliable, comprehensive and quality news on public affairs is a fundamental condition of democracy."² Arsenal Media Chief Executive Officer Sylvain Chamberland also said that the journalism profession is "vital in a democratic society."³ For Jaky Fortin, Assistant Director of Studies and Student Life at Jonquière CEGEP's École supérieure en Art et technologie des médias, news is a "fundamental right"⁴ in a democracy.

For Annick Forest, National Union President of the Canadian Media Guild, the media serves as "a cornerstone of our democracy"⁵ by allowing the public to "make informed decisions."⁶

An Industry in Crisis

The vast majority of the witnesses agreed that the media industry is in the midst of a major crisis. Colette Brin of Laval University's Centre d'études sur les médias said that this is "an economic and structural crisis"⁷ combined with "a crisis of confidence and a crisis of the relevance of journalism" to the daily lives of the public.⁸ Ms. Brin said that the impact is being felt locally and regionally. Jaky Fortin of Jonquière CEGEP's École

2 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1620 (Colette Brin, Professor, Department of Information and Communication, Laval University, Centre d'études sur les médias).

3 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1550 (Sylvain Chamberland, Chief Executive Officer, Arsenal Media).

4 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1625 (Jaky Fortin, Assistant director of studies and student life, École supérieure en Art et Technologie des médias du Cégep de Jonquière).

5 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1630 (Annick Forest, National Union President, Canadian Media Guild).

6 Ibid., 1645.

7 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1620 (Colette Brin).

8 Ibid.

supérieure en Art et technologie des médias agrees that “local news”⁹ is being particularly hit hard by this crisis. For Pierre Tousignant, President of the Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Radio-Canada (FNCC-CSN), the media crisis is primarily financial.¹⁰

April Lindgren, professor with Toronto Metropolitan University’s School of Journalism, agreed with Mr. Fortin about the impact of the media crisis on local news. She said that “more than 500 local news outlets have closed in the last 15 years.”¹¹ Data collected by the [Local News Research Project](#) led by Ms. Lindgren show that three-quarters of these closures were community newspapers.¹²

For Éric-Pierre Champagne, President of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, the media crisis is a “societal crisis”¹³ directly affecting the practice of journalism. Mr. Champagne told the Committee that Canada’s journalism workforce “shrunk by 23%”¹⁴ between 2010 and 2020.

Toronto Star Newspapers Limited journalist Shree Paradkar believes that “the news media is teetering on the precipice of what is likely an extinction-level event.”¹⁵ Ms. Paradkar believes that four factors explain the difficult financial situation of the Canadian news industry:

- declining advertising revenues and subscriptions;
- loss of readers’ trust;
- low public media literacy; and

9 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1625 (Jaky Fortin).

10 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024 2024, 1600 (Pierre Tousignant, President, Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Radio-Canada (FNCC-CSN)).

11 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1615 (April Lindgren, Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism, As an Individual).

12 Ibid.

13 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1650 (Éric-Pierre Champagne, President, Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec).

14 Ibid., 1550.

15 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1535 (Shree Paradkar, Columnist, Toronto Star Newspapers Limited, As an Individual).



- lack of diversity among journalists.¹⁶

Many witnesses pointed to the Internet and the rapid development of digital technologies as the main cause of the collapse of the legacy media business model. The emergence of digital-first media, Canadians' enthusiasm for online news and the migration of advertising revenues to online platforms explain the upheaval underway in the news industry.

Sarah Andrews, Director of Government and Media Relations with Friends of Canadian Media, believes that the migration of advertising revenues from legacy media to digital platforms "fuelled this crisis in the news."¹⁷ In a brief submitted to the Committee, the Canadian Media Guild also blames the media crisis on "the dominance of foreign digital companies."¹⁸

During her appearance, Ms. Andrews said that advertising purchased by Canadian companies on foreign digital platforms should no longer be a "tax-deductible expense."¹⁹ It is worth noting that this tax deduction is permitted under section 19 of the *Income Tax Act*. Ms. Andrews suggested that Canadian companies should be encouraged to choose Canadian media rather than foreign websites for their advertising buys.

Tara Henley, journalist, author and podcaster, also drew a link between "the collapse of the Canadian media" and the Internet. Ms. Henley summed up the situation this way: "The Internet has disrupted our industry and the advertising business model has imploded. ... We have seen mass outlet closures, dwindling audiences and mass layoffs."²⁰

Witnesses stressed how important it is for media organizations to keep up with technological change, Canadians' media consumption habits, and the industry's evolving business models. For example, Brandon Gonez of Gonez Media said that a "healthy media ecosystem"²¹ is made up of all media industry stakeholders, including digital-first

16 Ibid.

17 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1635 (Sarah Andrews, Director, Government and Media Relations, Friends of Canadian Media).

18 Canadian Media Guild, [Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Regarding National Forum on the Media](#), 13 February 2024, p. 3.

19 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1635 (Sarah Andrews).

20 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1615 (Tara Henley, Journalist, Author, Podcaster, As an Individual).

21 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1700 (Brandon Gonez, Chief Executive Officer, Gonez Media Inc.).

media companies that “can sustain themselves.”²² Mr. Gonez added that “digital-first voices”²³ can help provinces suffering from news deserts.

Sylvain Chamberland of Arsenal Media noted that some media companies have been slow to embrace the “digital platform.”²⁴ Mr. Chamberland said that only media companies that possess “a range of properties and capabilities”²⁵ will be able to survive in the current media ecosystem. He urged media companies to “take responsibility” and “work to build their relationship”²⁶ with audiences and readers.

John Gormley, lawyer, retired radio talk show host and former member of Parliament, acknowledged that the media industry is going through a challenging time. However, he believes it would be a mistake to blame the media’s financial troubles on government underfunding.²⁷ He believes there are two factors behind the current situation:

- The media bet on agenda-based journalism, which cost them their audiences.
- Media outlets were complacent when the Internet and social media developed the technology to migrate media content and revenue.²⁸

Mr. Gormley does not believe that news is prepared to “adapt and innovate as it has to.”²⁹

Sue Gardner of McGill University also acknowledged that there is a media crisis. However, the professor does not believe that the current problem is just financial. To get a clear understanding of the situation, Ms. Gardner believes that the nature of the problem to be solved needs to be clearly defined. How journalism is practised needs to be reviewed:

[T]he problem is that this country right now is not producing enough depth and breadth of journalism to the point where the citizenry can be appropriately informed and power

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 1615.

24 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1630 (Sylvain Chamberland).

25 Ibid., 1640.

26 Ibid., 1630.

27 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1610 (John Gormley, Lawyer, Retired radio talk show host and Former Member of Parliament, As an Individual).

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 1705.



can be appropriately held to account. That’s the problem that I think you should be aiming to try to solve.³⁰

Ms. Gardner added that government involvement in the media industry must be driven by public interest, not by “the needs and interests of industry.”³¹

The Appropriateness of Holding a National Forum on the Media

The primary goal of the Committee’s study was to determine the appropriateness of holding a national forum on the media. Witnesses expressed a wide range of views on this point.

Labour organizations representing media workers support conducting such an exercise. In a brief submitted to the Committee, the Canadian Media Guild said that this type of event presents industry stakeholders with an opportunity “to exchange on ideas and possible solutions to this crisis.”³² However, the Guild told the Committee that much of the work had “already been done”³³ in the past. This view was shared by the Canadian Association of Journalists, who said that the national forum on the media comes “10 years too late.”³⁴

Annick Forest, National Union President of the Canadian Media Guild, suggested that the following issues should be discussed during a future national forum on the media:

- media funding mechanisms, including public and private partnerships;
- listening to communities and their stories;
- upholding quality Canadian journalism;
- media literacy; and
- supporting Indigenous Canadians who wish to become media workers.³⁵

30 CHPC, *Evidence*, 13 February 2024, 1605 (Sue Gardner, McConnell Professor of Practice (2021–22), Max Bell School of Public Policy, McGill University, As an Individual).

31 Ibid.

32 Canadian Media Guild, *Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Regarding National Forum on the Media*, 13 February 2024, p. 3.

33 Ibid., p. 4.

34 CHPC, *Evidence*, 27 February 2024, 1630 (Brent Jolly, President, Canadian Association of Journalists).

35 CHPC, *Evidence*, 13 February 2024, 1635 (Annick Forest).

In a brief submitted to the Committee, the Provincial Council of the Communications Sector of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CPSC-CUPE) expressed the view that “an important discussion concerning the news media”³⁶ is urgently needed. Recent lay-offs and the media’s financial problems warrant holding a national forum as soon as possible. This should help identify solutions to protect local news, the public interest and “media diversity.”³⁷ The CPSC-CUPE believes that the federal government is in the best position to host such a forum and to convince the provincial governments to participate.³⁸

Journalist Tara Henley said that she “very much” supports³⁹ a national forum on the media. In her view, it is essential that the public participate in such a forum to “forge a journalism centred on the public interest.”⁴⁰ Éric-Pierre Champagne of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec also believes that unions, media companies and academics⁴¹ should take part.

Ms. Henley added that the federal government should not financially support such a forum. She believes that “the intervention of the government in our industry has caused harm more than it has advanced the interests of the Canadian press.”⁴²

Radio host John Gormley is also open to the idea of a national forum on the media. However, he agrees with Ms. Henley that the federal government should not cover the costs of such a forum:

Should Canada’s news sector hold a conference or forum on the future of the media? Well, why not? The more voices and perspectives, the better. Asking if the government should support this forum implies that taxpaying Canadians should pay, yet again, for more hand-wringing about the media. I am not for this.⁴³

36 Provincial Council of the Communications Sector of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, *Brief from the CPSC-CUPE*, 27 February 2024, p. 3.

37 Ibid., p. 7.

38 Ibid., p. 5.

39 CHPC, *Evidence*, 27 February 2024, 1615 (Tara Henley).

40 Ibid.

41 CHPC, *Evidence*, 15 February 2024, 1650 (Éric-Pierre Champagne).

42 CHPC, *Evidence*, 27 February 2024, 1640 (Tara Henley).

43 CHPC, *Evidence*, 27 February 2024, 1610 (John Gormley).



April Lindgren from the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism admitted that she did not understand the nature of the national forum on the media. She nevertheless acknowledged that it could be useful:

I do think that there is a role for this conversation, if only to help Canadians understand that they are getting less and less access to the news they need to effectively participate in the democratic process, engage with their communities and navigate daily life.⁴⁴

Jen Gerson, co-founder of *The Line*, said that having a national forum could be “a really great thing.”⁴⁵ According to her, it is an opportunity “to discuss the issues facing news media and the democratic deficit that’s going to come from that crisis.”⁴⁶ However, she also expressed some reservations about a forum, noting that it wasn’t clear “why this committee needs to approve that” and cautioning that it might not serve its intended purpose:

My fear is that a national forum wouldn’t really be used as a forum to discuss these things in an open way, but would be used as a PR exercise to drum up public support for a foregone conclusion. If you’re going to create a national forum to create support or to manufacture the concept of support for writing legacy media organizations ever-bigger cheques, that would be a waste of time. If that is the conclusion everybody is working toward, then why are we wasting our time here? Just write the cheque.⁴⁷

Digital-First Media Companies

Digital-first media companies are made up of journalists and news producers who leverage the opportunities provided by the digital age to produce and distribute their media content on the Internet and various online platforms.

In a brief submitted to the Committee, *Blacklock’s Reporter* explained that “social media platforms created a marketplace of 33 million Canadian internet users accessible at low cost.”⁴⁸ These platforms have enabled *Blacklock’s Reporter* to “thrive”⁴⁹ and build a broad customer base.

44 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1615 (April Lindgren).

45 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1610 (Jen Gerson, Co-founder of The Line and Independent Journalist, As an Individual).

46 Ibid.

47 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1610 (Jen Gerson).

48 Blacklock’s Reporter, [Bloc Québécois Motion, National Forum On The Media](#), 19 February 2024, p. 1.

49 Ibid.

The Public Policy Forum (PPF) also submitted a brief to the Committee. In it, the PPF wrote that “new forms of digitally based media and communications,”⁵⁰ such as La Presse, Castanet, The Logic, Gonez Media, Canadaland and Village Media, are promising forms for producing and presenting news. However, the PPF wrote that there is no known study “on how these operations are truly faring and whether they add up to a hill of beans in employing journalists.”⁵¹

The *Online News Act* and the *Online Streaming Act*

Bill C-18, *An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada*, was introduced in the House of Commons on 5 April 2022. Its purpose was to rebalance power dynamics in the digital news marketplace in order to ensure fair compensation for Canadian media outlets and journalists. Bill C-18 was considered by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage between September and December 2022⁵² and by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications between April and June 2023. The Act received Royal Assent on 22 June 2023.

A few witnesses also commented on the impact that the *Online Streaming Act* has had on the financial situation of Canadian media. This legislation, enacted in April 2023, added undertakings for the transmission or retransmission of programs over the Internet, such as Netflix and Spotify, as a separate category of broadcasting undertakings.

According to Jen Gerson of *The Line*, these two bills are “two extremely big sticks”⁵³ that could halt the collapse of the media business model. For Sarah Andrews with Friends of Canadian Media, these laws help “react to the eroding impact that foreign tech companies are having on our news, our culture and even our democratic health.”⁵⁴ However, the CPSC-CUPE wrote in its brief that both laws “have not yet delivered the desired results”⁵⁵ for the media industry.

50 Public Policy Forum, *National Forum on the Media*, 14 March 2024, p. 2.

51 Ibid.

52 CHPC, *Bill C-18 An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada*, 2022.

53 CHPC, *Evidence*, 13 February 2024, 1640 (Jen Gerson).

54 CHPC, *Evidence*, 27 February 2024, 1635 (Sarah Andrews).

55 Provincial Council of the Communications Sector of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, *Brief from the CPSC-CUPE*, 27 February 2024, p. 8.



In its brief, the PPF expressed support for the *Online News Act*. They believe that Google’s annual payment of \$100 million to support Canadian media is a step in the right direction. This amount “should underwrite upwards of \$15,000 a year toward the employment of Canadian journalists.”⁵⁶ However, the organization is uncertain as to whether this financial support will be enough to put Canadian news media back “onto a sustainable path.”⁵⁷

Other witnesses had a more negative opinion of the *Online News Act*. Some said that it had exacerbated, not alleviated, the media crisis. Brandon Gonez told the Committee that for his company, the “revenue impact was a more than 40% loss”⁵⁸ following Meta’s decision to remove links to Canadian news on Instagram and Facebook. He added that the *Online News Act* and regulations had “literally harnessed and chained”⁵⁹ digital-first media companies such as his.

Like Mr. Gonez, journalist Tara Henley believes that Parliament’s intervention in the media industry resulted in challenges for “independent and digital outlets.”⁶⁰ Professor Sue Gardner from McGill University believes that Bill C-18 was “misguided”⁶¹ from the very start. Instead, the *Online News Act* is a tax that has failed to provide the media industry with the financial support that was “originally predicted.”⁶² It would also have been preferable to have had more digital creators appear “in the Bill C-11 and Bill C-18 hearings,”⁶³ according to Ms. Gardner.

The National Public Broadcaster

The Committee’s study provided some witnesses with an opportunity to comment on CBC/Radio-Canada’s mandate and funding.

Pierre Tousignant from the Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Radio-Canada stressed the importance of providing CBC/Radio-Canada with “adequate, stable and

56 Public Policy Forum, [National Forum on the Media](#), 14 March 2024, p. 5.

57 Ibid.

58 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1555 (Brandon Gonez).

59 Ibid.

60 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1615 (Tara Henley).

61 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1725 (Sue Gardner).

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 1605.

consistent funding.”⁶⁴ He fears that reducing parliamentary appropriations for CBC/Radio-Canada’s French-language services would jeopardize “the survival”⁶⁵ of francophones in Quebec and Canada. Mr. Tousignant believes that a national forum on the media would give the federal government the opportunity “to reaffirm its commitment”⁶⁶ to the national public broadcaster.

Annick Forest from the Canadian Media Guild also believes that CBC/Radio-Canada should receive “good, stable, long-term financing.”⁶⁷ Sarah Andrews from Friends of Canadian Media agreed, calling for “a sustainable funding model”⁶⁸ based entirely on parliamentary appropriations.⁶⁹

For Jen Gerson of *The Line*, the federal government could use CBC/Radio-Canada as a “stick”⁷⁰ to support Canada’s news industry. She believes that the national public broadcaster should focus its programming on public service and local content:

I think you need to look at a fundamental reimagining of what the CBC is, and also to reimagine it as a much more locally focused news outlet, potentially one that is not competing with private outlets and potentially one that has, for example, mandated reporters in every town of about 100,000 people. It’s potentially a CBC that sees itself less as a private broadcast competitor and more as a public library of journalism.⁷¹

This position is shared by Friends of Canadian Media. According to Sarah Andrews, Director of Government and Media Relations, a review of the Crown corporation’s mandate is needed in order to refocus it on its primary objective of “reporting the news to the public,”⁷² particularly at the local level. Ms. Andrews added that the job cuts announced in fall 2023 could have been avoided. She believes that the Crown corporation has been “chronically underfunded”⁷³ compared to other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries:

64 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1600 (Pierre Tousignant).

65 Ibid., 1705.

66 Ibid., 1600.

67 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1620 (Annick Forest).

68 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1635 (Sarah Andrews).

69 Ibid., 1650.

70 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1640 (Jen Gerson).

71 Ibid.

72 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1705 (Sarah Andrews).

73 Ibid., 1700.



If you look at where Canada ranks among similar OECD countries, you see that we rank 17th out of 20 when it comes to funding for the national public broadcaster. That breaks down to about \$33 per person per year.⁷⁴

Brandon Gonez of Gonez Media and journalist Tara Henley lent their support to having a “strong public broadcaster.”⁷⁵ However, Mr. Gonez believes that achieving such a goal should not come at the expense of companies that take risks to establish “a new [media] ecosystem.”⁷⁶ Like Mr. Gonez, Ms. Henley said that CBC/Radio-Canada needs to stop “competing with digital innovators.”⁷⁷ She believes that the national public broadcaster must play a greater role in training and refocus its operations “on local news, on investigative journalism and on filling the gaps in the market.”⁷⁸

Public Funding for the Media

The Committee heard various perspectives on the appropriateness of providing public funding for news media. Some witnesses believe that this kind of support is needed to help the media weather the crisis, while others fear that public funding would compromise media independence.

The union organizations that took part in the Committee’s work were generally in favour of public funding for the media industry. In its brief, the Canadian Media Guild stated that such funding is essential to ensure “the continued production of high-quality Canadian content across diverse platforms and formats.”⁷⁹ The labour organization said that funding should come “from all federal revenue sources.”⁸⁰

For Brent Jolly of the Canadian Association of Journalists, refusing to financially support journalism shows a lack of understanding of “the economics of how journalism works”⁸¹ in Canada. He said that this type of support is provided elsewhere internationally, such as in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia.

74 Ibid.

75 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1655 (Brandon Gonez).

76 Ibid.

77 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1645 (Tara Henley).

78 Ibid.

79 Canadian Media Guild, [Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Regarding National Forum on the Media](#), 13 February 2024, p. 4.

80 Ibid., p. 4.

81 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1650 (Brent Jolly).

Lana Payne of Unifor told the Committee that “no piece of legislation, fund or subsidy”⁸² will be enough to solve the media crisis. Ms. Payne acknowledged that public financial support for the media helps reinforce the public perception that the industry is a “mouthpiece for the Prime Minister’s office.”⁸³ Nevertheless, she suggested that the government “renew and expand”⁸⁴ certain public policies, such as the Local Journalism Initiative and the Canadian journalism labour tax credit. Another option for governments to consider in order to help the media sector is to buy more media advertising, according to the President of Unifor.

Sylvain Chamberland of Arsenal Media argued that public funding is spent mainly in “the major urban centres”⁸⁵ rather than in the regions. Mr. Chamberland gave the example of Government of Canada Advertising Activities, which should be aimed at all Canadians, including those living in “the more remote regions.”⁸⁶ Colette Brin from the Centre d’étude sur les médias believes that there should be “increased support for local and regional news media, including community media, both print and broadcast.”⁸⁷

April Lindgren from the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism said that there was “no obvious silver-bullet solution to the challenges that news media in Canada ... is facing.”⁸⁸ Like Ms. Brin, Ms. Lindgren believes that support for local news is a priority. However, she is not sure that the federal government has the information it needs “to make informed decisions about the policies it’s adopting.”⁸⁹ In her view, there is more to learn about where in Canada the information deserts are:

We don’t really know where there are true news deserts where no local news is available in Canada, despite all of the conversations about that. How is good policy going to be developed out of that if we don’t actually know where the needs are the greatest?⁹⁰

82 CHPC, *Evidence*, 15 February 2024, 1605 (Lana Payne, National President, Unifor).

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 CHPC, *Evidence*, 15 February 2024, 1545 (Sylvain Chamberland).

86 Ibid., 1640.

87 CHPC, *Evidence*, 13 February 2024, 1625 (Colette Brin).

88 CHPC, *Evidence*, 13 February 2024, 1615 (April Lindgren).

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.



Brandon Gonez of Gonez Media added that “[a]ny way to sustain [journalism] is a good thing.”⁹¹ For example, he expressed support for a specific investment stream allotted to risk-taking entrepreneurs, especially those from racialized groups.⁹²

Other witnesses believe it is risky to support an industry that, by definition, must hold governments to account and be independent from outside influence.

For journalist Tara Henley, government intervention in the media industry has caused more harm than good and has not advanced “the interests of the Canadian press.”⁹³ She believes that government subsidies for the media have led segments of the Canadian public to believe that “the media public have been bought off by the government.”⁹⁴

Blacklock’s Reporter is firmly opposed to any form of public support for the media. In its brief, the media company referred to a 2017 [speech](#) by the Minister of Canadian Heritage in which she said that the federal government’s approach would not be “to bail out industry models that are no longer viable.”⁹⁵ *Blacklock’s Reporter* is alarmed by “federal interference in newsrooms.”⁹⁶ The company had only one recommendation for the Committee: “Get out of the newsroom.”⁹⁷

Other witnesses said that public policies to support the media industry hinder innovation. For John Gormley, public financial support for the media subsidizes “inefficiency” and does not incentivize “the necessary change.”⁹⁸ Mr. Gormley went into more detail:

Government funding does not incentivize news organizations to make better decisions. It does not compel the media to make subscriptions viable or to develop micro-subscriptions so that consumers can pay as they go, nor does it advance philanthropically supported journalism, donor/member funding models, or non-profits.⁹⁹

91 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1615 (Brandon Gonez).

92 Ibid.

93 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1615 (Tara Henley).

94 Ibid.

95 Blacklock’s Reporter, [Bloc québécois Motion, National Forum On The Media](#), 19 February 2024, pp. 1–2. See also: Canadian Heritage, [Launch of Creative Canada – The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage](#), 28 September 2017.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., p. 4.

98 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1610 (John Gormley).

99 Ibid.

Jen Gerson of *The Line* believes that those responsible for regulating the media do not understand “the difference between the business of journalism and the act of journalism.”¹⁰⁰ First and foremost, it is vitally important to understand why some media companies are experiencing financial challenges:

If you can’t fundamentally understand why the businesses failed, you’re going to fall into the trap of trying to throw more money into a failing industry or problem as opposed to thinking from the public interest perspective: How can we improve the acts of journalism to ensure the public interest is being served here?¹⁰¹

In its brief, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute stated that public funding for the media is “broadly unpopular”¹⁰² among the public. This type of financial support raises questions in the public’s mind “about the independence of the press,”¹⁰³ thereby “undermining the perceived veracity of reported news.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, public funding favours legacy media at the expense of innovative media companies:

The subsidy regime also creates an uneven playing field whereby some news outlets, primarily legacy media companies, are able to qualify for government support and others are not, stifling much needed innovation and private investment in the sector.¹⁰⁵

The PPF stressed the importance of ensuring “independent governance”¹⁰⁶ of the media industry so as to keep government “a hundred thousand miles away from influencing news decisions.”¹⁰⁷ In its brief, the PPF explained that this independence means “transparent funding formulas, arm’s length decision-making, and absolutely no ongoing discretion over which outlets do and do not get money.”¹⁰⁸

Some witnesses preferred using tax credits to alleviate the media crisis. Section 248(1) of the [Income Tax Act](#) allows qualified Canadian journalism organizations (QCJO) able to issue donation receipts to individuals and companies. Subscribers to eligible digital news organizations can also claim the [digital news subscription tax credit](#).

100 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1610 (Jen Gerson).

101 Ibid.

102 Macdonald-Laurier Institute, [National Forum on the Media](#), 25 June 2024, p. 3.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Public Policy Forum, [National Forum on the Media](#), 14 March 2024, p. 3.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.



In its brief, the PPF stated that giving journalistic enterprises the ability to issue charitable tax receipts is “sound policy.”¹⁰⁹ However, they recommended reviewing the criteria for determining which Canadian journalism organizations qualify for the Canadian journalism labour tax credit. The PPF also proposed raising the tax credit for digital news subscriptions from 15% to 50%.¹¹⁰

Shree Paradkar of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited also expressed support for the use of “non-profit models for news companies”¹¹¹ as solutions to the industry’s financial challenges. Journalist Tara Henley said that digital news media companies such as *The Hub* have been successful “at monetizing journalism.”¹¹² The charitable model adopted by The Narwhal News Society and the Investigative Journalism Foundation are other models worth exploring, according to Brent Jolly of the Canadian Association of Journalists.¹¹³

Concentration of Media Ownership

Concentration of media ownership refers to “the level of market presence that an entity could have in terms of media outlets or market share (revenues or audience).”¹¹⁴ Some witnesses believe that the federal government must intervene to limit the negative impacts of this concentration.

Jen Gerson of *The Line* believes that the “media oligopoly” needs to be broken up.¹¹⁵ She recommended that broadcasters be required to reinvest some of their profits into journalism as a condition of their broadcasting licences.

Shree Paradkar of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited also believes that the public’s mistrust in journalism can be attributed to “the perceived lack of diversity”¹¹⁶ in the

109 Ibid., p. 5.

110 Ibid.

111 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1535 (Shree Paradkar).

112 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1640 (Tara Henley).

113 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1710 (Brent Jolly).

114 Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, [Broadcasting Notice of Public Hearing CRTC 2007-5](#), 13 April 2007, par. 25.

115 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1700 (Jen Gerson).

116 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1535 (Shree Paradkar).

media. To address the situation, Annick Forest of the Canadian Media Guild suggested looking at “any way the government can support”¹¹⁷ diversity in media.

April Lindgren of the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism does not believe that it is possible to “break up” the consolidation currently seen in the Canadian media industry. Ms. Lindgren would rather see the creation of “an environment for viable competitors, new digital start-ups.”¹¹⁸

Lana Payne of Unifor believes that “these companies have special privileges in our country.”¹¹⁹ According to Ms. Payne, they “have almost a monopoly in some areas, as in the telecommunications sector.”¹²⁰

For Sarah Andrews of Friends of Canadian Media, acquisitions and mergers in the Canadian media industry have given private media companies “a position of dominance in broadcast news.”¹²¹ Ms. Andrews believes that the dominant position of companies such as Bell Canada Enterprises and Quebecor in certain markets is allowing them to “completely get out of their current regulatory obligations to provide news.”¹²²

B. ISSUES RELATED TO THE JOURNALISM PROFESSION AND MEDIA CONTENT

The New Generation of Journalists

Some witnesses expressed concern about the future of the journalism profession and the prospects for younger generations pursuing a career in this field.

According to Colette Brin of the Centre d’études sur les médias, journalism students are “interested in the transformations of the digital media environment.”¹²³ Having been

117 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1700 (Annick Forest).

118 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1700 (April Lindgren).

119 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1635 (Lana Payne).

120 Ibid.

121 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1700 (Sarah Andrews).

122 Ibid.

123 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1655 (Colette Brin).



exposed to digital technologies early on, they are well positioned come up with “creative solutions”¹²⁴ for practising journalism on digital platforms.

For Jaky Fortin of Jonquière CEGEP, “it is important to support media education”¹²⁵ and to consult young people in order “to have them propose new ideas and new solutions to the industry.”¹²⁶

Both Ms. Brin¹²⁷ and Mr. Fortin¹²⁸ said that journalism students are worried about the industry’s job prospects. They are particularly concerned about the availability of internship programs. To address this, Ms. Brin recommended developing “continuing education and paid internships”¹²⁹ for them. April Lindgren of the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism said that the Local Journalism Initiative had achieved the desired results, placing “close to 1,200 people—journalists—at news organizations across the country.”¹³⁰

According to Brent Jolly of the Canadian Association of Journalists, poor job prospects are pushing young journalists to pursue careers in public relations. He says that this “brain drain”¹³¹ is worsening the democratic deficit. The Canadian Media Guild also cited lack of job security in its brief as another factor driving “the next generation”¹³² of journalists to choose another profession.

Journalist Tara Henley made a connection between young people’s interest in pursuing a career in journalism and media concentration. According to Ms. Henley, young journalists are less inclined to “go into the business and do internships or poorly paid jobs” in the expensive cities where the media “are now concentrated.”¹³³ She suggested decentralizing the profession geographically through remote work. She also does not think that a university degree should be a requirement to work in journalism. Ms. Henley

124 Ibid.

125 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1650 (Jaky Fortin).

126 Ibid., 1655.

127 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1625 (Colette Brin).

128 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1705 (Jaky Fortin).

129 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1625 (Colette Brin).

130 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1705 (April Lindgren).

131 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1710 (Brent Jolly).

132 Canadian Media Guild, [Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Regarding National Forum on the Media](#), 13 February 2024, p. 4.

133 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1615 (Tara Henley).

believes that lifting such restrictions would expand “the pool of talent”¹³⁴ and “increase ideological diversity.”¹³⁵

Minority Representation in Journalism

Witnesses addressed the issue of minority representation in journalism. Brandon Gonez of Gonez Media Inc. believes that media content should be more “reflective of the populace across this country.”¹³⁶ In particular, there are shortcomings to be addressed in “the diversity of storytelling.”¹³⁷

Éric-Pierre Champagne of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec shared a view similar to that of Mr. Gonez. Mr. Champagne believes that legacy media “have sometimes failed in their duty to better represent certain new voices, both in Quebec and in Canada.”¹³⁸ He said that it was important to hear the “voices of different communities”¹³⁹ in the media.

Shree Paradkar of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited agrees that the media industry still has some way to go before it is representative of the Canadian population:

The latest survey by the Canadian Association of Journalists found that Canadian newsrooms are still overwhelmingly white, with 75.5 % of their staff coming from that racial background. It gets worse at the supervisory level, which is 84% white. In addition, Black journalists are the most likely to work in part-time or intern roles compared to full-time or supervisory roles. Far too many newsrooms have no indigenous journalists, and while women make up more than half the workforce, they are more than 60% likely to be in part-time roles.¹⁴⁰

134 Ibid., 1640.

135 Ibid.

136 CHPC, *Evidence*, 15 February 2024, 1615 (Brandon Gonez).

137 Ibid.

138 CHPC, *Evidence*, 15 February 2024, 1650 (Éric-Pierre Champagne).

139 Ibid.

140 CHPC, *Evidence*, 15 February 2024, 1535 (Shree Paradkar).



Ms. Paradkar also said that women and minority journalists are sometimes “silenced.”¹⁴¹ She said that these intimidation tactics “create a chill in the free expression of a diversity of perspectives.”¹⁴²

Harassment and Intimidation

Some of the witnesses told the Committee that journalists are sometimes subjected to harassment and intimidation while on the job. These attacks can be damaging to the victims. Brent Jolly of the Canadian Association of Journalists said that journalists have to do their jobs in “an increasingly hostile world,”¹⁴³ which he said hurts them emotionally.

Éric-Pierre Champagne of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec and Lana Payne of Unifor¹⁴⁴ added that journalists are increasingly subjected to harassment and hatred. Mr. Champagne told the Committee that this kind of attack puts “enormous”¹⁴⁵ pressure on journalists. Ms. Payne said that it is important that journalists be able to “work harassment-free.”¹⁴⁶

For Shree Paradkar of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited, women and minority journalists are “disproportionately at the receiving end of harassment, threats and abuse.”¹⁴⁷ She said that these attacks can even come from other journalists.

News Reliability and Public Trust in the Media

During their appearances, several witnesses stressed the need for news in the media to be reliable, relevant and of high quality. Some were concerned that the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation could end up undermining public trust in the media.

According to Annick Forest of the Canadian Media Guild, “misinformation and disinformation pose profound challenges to the integrity and credibility of Canadian

141 Ibid., 1655.

142 Ibid., 1540.

143 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1630 (Brent Jolly).

144 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1605 (Lana Payne).

145 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1550 (Éric-Pierre Champagne).

146 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1610 (Lana Payne).

147 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1540 (Shree Paradkar).

media.”¹⁴⁸ They threaten to “disrupt democratic discourse and undermine the credibility of legitimate news sources.”¹⁴⁹ To counter this, the Canadian Media Guild recommends in its brief that the national forum on the media examine “how to impose greater accountability for creators and distributors of disinformation and misinformation.”¹⁵⁰

For Colette Brin of the Centre d’études sur les médias, disinformation is a “symptom”¹⁵¹ of the media crisis. The Laval University professor said that a “weak information media ecosystem”¹⁵² is allowing this problem to spread. Jaky Fortin of Jonquière CEGEP’s École supérieure en Art et Technologie des médias¹⁵³ said that “media education”¹⁵⁴ is a tool to counter disinformation.

Referring to a January 2024 [report](#) by the World Economic Forum,¹⁵⁵ Sylvain Chamberland of Arsenal Media said that disinformation is “one of the biggest global risks in the next few years.”¹⁵⁶

Lana Payne of Unifor said that fake news “has infested the fabric of our society, sowing distrust in the media, in government and in institutions.”¹⁵⁷

Witnesses cited other factors to explain the public’s lack of trust in the media. Sue Gardner said that “a bit more than 50% of adults in this country don’t trust the news media.”¹⁵⁸ According to her, the proliferation of news sources and changes in the way media content is consumed are factors behind this loss of trust.¹⁵⁹

148 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1630 (Annick Forest).

149 Ibid.

150 Canadian Media Guild, [Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Regarding National Forum on the Media](#), 13 February 2024, p. 6.

151 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1710 (Colette Brin).

152 Ibid.

153 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1655 (Jaky Fortin).

154 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1710 (Colette Brin).

155 World Economic Forum, [The Global Risks Report 2024](#), 19th Edition, January 2024, p. 11. According to the report, disinformation and misinformation are the number one risk over the next two years.

156 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1550 (Sylvain Chamberland).

157 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1605 (Lana Payne).

158 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2024, 1720 (Sue Gardner).

159 Ibid.



For John Gormley, the legacy media are partly to blame for the loss of public trust, having replaced recognized journalistic principles with agenda-based journalism:

The legacy media and their wire services intentionally blurred these distinctions and decided that agenda-based journalism would replace balance, factuality, impartiality, a freedom from ideology and bias, and a divestment of personal opinions and agendas.¹⁶⁰

Mr. Gormley criticized the media for being more concerned about championing causes than about “scrutinizing and reporting on them.”¹⁶¹ Brandon Gonez of Gonez Media Inc. also believes that legacy media must shoulder its share of the responsibility for this loss of trust. He linked the end of news media content availability on Google¹⁶² and Meta to the amplification of misinformation following the enactment of the *Online News Act*.¹⁶³

According to a [survey](#) commissioned by Friends of Canadian Media, “nearly 80% of Canadians felt that it’s getting more and more difficult to know what is true and what is not.”¹⁶⁴ The organization’s director of government relations said that news layoffs explain why “editorially rigorous and trusted journalism”¹⁶⁵ has been replaced by disinformation.

Programmatic advertising is another factor behind the rise in misinformation, according to Ms. Andrews. Programmatic advertising is a form of advertising that “involves targeting individual consumers via cookies, device IDs, and algorithmic software.”¹⁶⁶ Ms. Andrews said that by seeking to increase the number of clicks to boost advertising revenues, programmatic advertising has helped to fund misinformation and disinformation.¹⁶⁷

For other witnesses, public funding of the media has contributed to undermining public trust in the news. Journalist Tara Henley explained that the problems are all closely linked:

160 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1610 (John Gormley).

161 Ibid.

162 In November 2023, the Department of Canadian Heritage and Google had reached an agreement whereby the company would contribute \$100 million annually, indexed to inflation, to news businesses across Canada.

163 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 15 February 2024, 1615 (Brandon Gonez).

164 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1635 (Sarah Andrews).

165 Ibid.

166 Canadian Security Intelligence Service, [Who Said What? The Security Challenges of Modern Disinformation. Academic Outreach](#), February 2018, p. 107.

167 CHPC, [Evidence](#), 27 February 2024, 1655 (Sarah Andrews).

Without trust, we have no audience. Without an audience, we have no revenue. Without revenue, we have no path forward for the Canadian media, and without the media, we do not have an informed electorate or a functioning democracy.¹⁶⁸

Ms. Henley said that the media has a duty to insulate itself¹⁶⁹ from the power that they are meant to hold to account. By accepting public funding, the media cast doubt on their independence and credibility:

The media derive their credibility from their independence from power, particularly government power, and maintaining public confidence in that independence is of paramount importance, as important as maintaining the independence itself. We must contend with the public perception of government funding and understand that it likely erodes trust at the exact moment, unfortunately, that the Canadian press most needs to rebuild trust.¹⁷⁰

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute also believes that “the primary commodity necessary for news organizations to sustain themselves is public trust.”¹⁷¹ The public policy think tank urges media companies not to accept “the per employee subsidies currently on offer from government and industry”¹⁷² in order to win back public trust. *Blacklock’s Reporter* shares this view, writing in a brief that “taxpayers do not trust subsidized media.”¹⁷³

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee’s study focused on the relevance of holding a national forum on the media and the government’s role in providing support for such a forum. Witnesses used the opportunity offered to them to identify specific issues confronting the Canadian media sector. This report is a synthesis of the broad themes discussed by witnesses that could be addressed in the context of a national forum. In light of their testimony, the Committee recommends the following:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Canadian Heritage collaborate with various stakeholders in the Canadian media sector to organize a national forum on the

168 CHPC, *Evidence*, 27 February 2024, 1620 (Tara Henley).

169 *Ibid.*, 1615.

170 *Ibid.*

171 Macdonald-Laurier Institute, *National Forum on the Media*, 25 June 2024, p. 2.

172 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

173 Blacklock’s Reporter, *Bloc Québécois Motion, National Forum On The Media*, 19 February 2024, p. 4.



media. The Committee emphasizes the need for governmental support for this initiative to be provided in a manner that upholds the principles of freedom of the press and journalistic independence. The Committee reiterates that it is not up to the Government of Canada to initiate and organize a national forum but simply to recommend one.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada implement measures to support local journalism.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada collect data to determine the extent of media deserts in order to put in place measures to mitigate them.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada implement measures to make the journalism profession safer, more attractive and more diversified and to increase retention rates within this profession.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada implement an extensive information and awareness campaign on the dangers of misinformation and on ways to detect and protect against it; and that media literacy be promoted from an early age.

Recommendation 6

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

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
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Sue Gardner, McConnell Professor of Practice, Max Bell School of Public Policy, McGill University (2021-2022)</p> <p>Jen Gerson, Co-founder of The Line and Independent Journalist</p> <p>April Lindgren, Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University School of Journalism</p>	2024/02/13	110
<p>Canadian Media Guild</p> <p>Annick Forest, National Union President</p>	2024/02/13	110
<p>Centre d'études sur les médias</p> <p>Colette Brin, Professor, Department of Information and Communication, Laval University</p>	2024/02/13	110
<p>École supérieure en Art et Technologie des médias du Cégep de Jonquière</p> <p>Jaky Fortin, Assistant director of studies and student life</p>	2024/02/13	110
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Shree Paradkar, Columnist, Toronto Star Newspapers Limited</p>	2024/02/15	111
<p>Arsenal Media</p> <p>Sylvain Chamberland, Chief Executive Officer</p>	2024/02/15	111
<p>Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec</p> <p>Éric-Pierre Champagne, President</p>	2024/02/15	111

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Gonez Media Inc. Brandon Gonez, Chief Executive Officer	2024/02/15	111
Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Radio-Canada (FNCC-CSN) Pierre Tousignant, President	2024/02/15	111
Unifor Marc Hollin, National Representative	2024/02/15	111
Lana Payne, National President	2024/02/15	111
As an individual John Gormley, Lawyer, retired radio talk show host and former member of Parliament	2024/02/27	112
Tara Henley, Journalist, Author, Podcaster	2024/02/27	112
Canadian Association of Journalists Brent Jolly, President	2024/02/27	112
Friends of Canadian Media Sarah Andrews, Director, Government and Media Relations	2024/02/27	112

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](#).

Blacklock's Reporter

Canadian Media Guild

Conseil provincial du secteur des communications du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique

Fédération des télévisions autonomes du Québec

Macdonald-Laurier Institute

National Campus and Community Radio Association

Public Policy Forum

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. 110, 111, 112, 126, 134 and 136](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.
Chair

Conservative Dissenting Report on the National Forum on the Media

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 dissenting report to address an important aspect that was missed during the consideration of the report:

Defund the CBC.

Supplementary Opinion of the New Democratic Party

The media is in crisis but it's not the way it's told by big broadcaster CEOs or the parties that enable them. New Democrats are concerned about the spread of media deserts – communities need journalists present in their neighborhoods telling their stories.

Postmedia owns more than 80% of the newspapers that operate in Canada. Over the last 2 years, there's been a series of brutal cuts to media rooms.

As Lana Payne, President of UNIFOR pointed out, "Postmedia cut 11% of its editorial staff; BCE cut 1,300 jobs and closed radio stations last year; Nordstar Capital eliminated two-thirds of Metroland's workforce, converting more than 70 weekly papers to digital only; Corus/Global, just this month, cut more jobs; and BCE just last week announced the layoff of 4,800 employees in both telco and media, including 800 Unifor members. On the media side, the cuts included all but one noon-hour newscast in Toronto and weekend newscasts in most major markets across the country, as if the news stops on Friday at 5 p.m."

More and more Canadians aren't getting the news that's happening in their communities, regions, or provinces. More and more Canadians live in media deserts.

New Democrats are concerned about the harassment of journalists. As Shree Pradakar pointed out, *"The continuing reality is that women and other minoritized journalists who challenge the status quo are disproportionately at the receiving end of harassment, threats and abuse, a phenomenon that has been adequately documented, even by the United Nations. Where they were trolled initially by strangers, the attacks that led to dog-piling then began to come from journalists and other professionals and are, regrettably, being normalized by politicians. These intimidation and silencing tactics create a chill in the free expression of a diversity of perspectives. This, in turn, feeds a distrust of media within communities."*

Ms. Pradakar also said, *"One of the pleas I make is for Canada to invest in a free press. That is the only way forward. Canada has the potential to be a world leader in being completely free, pluralistic and independent in its press. We have the potential. I think it's going to require a lot of introspection at individual and collective levels for us to make it happen."*

Jen Gerson made clear that a national forum for the media should not be a priority, saying, "I'm not sure why this committee needs to approve this idea... my fear is a national forum would be a public relations exercise to create support for a foregone conclusion"

Instead, New Democrats recommend:

1. Taking on corporate concentration ensuring jobs are protected and local and regional journalism is protected.

As Jen Gerson said, “It's a media oligopoly. It's a grocery oligopoly. It's a telecom oligopoly. Break it up. I completely agree with that... Use the regulatory powers you have in order to control and dictate some of the content coming out of the major broadcast organizations, which are making billions of dollars in profit, and require them to put some of that money into journalism as a condition of their broadcasting licences.

2. Effectively fund the CBC-Radio Canada to fill in media deserts across the country so they can invest in local and regional journalism, not to fund executive bonuses.
3. Support and expand the local journalism initiative to better serve communities across the country.