

# Written Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations



National Campus and Community Radio Association/  
l'Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires (NCRA/ANREC)

**We have one recommendation for the 2019-2020 budget**

1. That the government increase its allocation of funding to support local journalism in underserved communities from \$50,000,000 over five years to \$200,000,000 over five years.

## **About Us:**

- The **National Campus and Community Radio Association/L'Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires** (“NCRA/ANREC”) is a not-for-profit organization committed to community-owned, locally-reflective radio. We work to ensure stability and support for individual campus and community (“c/c”) stations and the long-term growth and effectiveness of our sector. We represent 111 c/c radio broadcasters in Canada.
- Most of our members are located in English-speaking communities, and broadcast predominantly in English, but serve a diverse range of cultural, social and linguistic communities. We have several Native Type-B and French-language or bilingually-licensed members, although most French-language c/c stations are members of either of the French community radio associations: l'Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada (“ARCC”) and l'Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec (“ARCQ”). We work closely with those associations, and our c/c radio local news action plan (described below) was developed in collaboration with them to benefit the entire sector.
- Overall there are approximately 180 c/c stations in Canada, most of which are members of the NCRA/ANREC.

## **About C/C Radio:**

C/c radio stations are not-for-profit community organizations owned and operated by local community members. They may distribute content in a variety of ways: on the radio, over the Internet, through social media, through print magazines, and on demand through podcasting and downloads. Some stations also distribute through innovative hybrids such as “visual radio:” a form of live video streaming. They are often the only local radio source for information and entertainment, particularly in places not served well by CBC/Radio-Canada or the commercial sector. They also play an important role in the provision of emergency broadcasting messages, especially in communities that have no other local broadcasting service.

Because c/c radio stations are owned and operated by local community volunteers, they have the benefit of being very close to their audiences and knowing their concerns, and are well-positioned to tailor their programming to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse communities to which they belong. This includes:

- local programming in English, French, local indigenous languages, and 65 other languages;
- locally-relevant programming for Official Language Minority Communities;
- promotion of local, independent, and emerging Canadian artists; and
- news programming about locally-relevant social, political, and cultural issues.

C/c radio makes important contributions to Canada’s fulfilment of the goals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (“UNESCO”) Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions by contributing to informed, transparent, and participatory systems of governance for culture through our grassroots local news coverage. UNESCO recognises community radio as “a crucial part of a healthy, pluralistic media sector” that is “specifically tailored... to serve the voice and information needs of rural, grassroots and/or minority groups.”

## **Ensuring Canada's Competitiveness:**

The c/c radio sector is an essential part of the creative system that helps ensure Canada's competitiveness by developing the next generation of Canada's large creative exports and training professional journalists, sound technicians, broadcasters, and podcasters. We help generate value across Canada by:

- Developing and implementing new technologies that can be adapted by other media sources, such as the [learshot digital distribution system](#) and the [EnRUe app](#).
- Nurturing Canadian music talent and providing opportunities for emerging artists at both community and national levels (through collective resources such as the [learshot national charts](#)).
- Providing opportunities for creators to enter international markets, especially French-language markets.
- Creating opportunities for networking and dialogue across cultural, social, and linguistic lines. This can increase understanding between people and allow marginalized people to play a more central role in society and the arts.
- Providing low barrier journalistic, technical, media literacy, podcast, and other training (+10,000 people received technical and journalistic training this year alone, and this number is much higher over time). We have developed [a list](#) of some notable broadcasters, artists, musicians, and others who have made important contributions to Canadian culture that got a start in the c/c radio sector

## **Current Situation**

- The financial health of c/c radio stations is often precarious. Within the past five years several small communities have seen their only c/c radio stations close, leaving no local media at all in those communities.
- Some campus-based c/c stations receive a student levy, but most support themselves through fundraising campaigns and advertising sales, and their financial health depends largely on the generosity of listeners and on their markets' economic situation. For the most part, c/c stations are not eligible for grants aimed at arts and cultural organizations, and are currently not eligible for charitable status
- C/c radio is often the only organized and independent media in rural and remote communities that have no local commercial TV, radio, and print media, due to their marginal profitability.
- Producing breaking or long-form news programming every day is difficult and expensive. Currently, although most c/c radio stations produce some public affairs programming, the amount and quality is limited due to lack of capacity in those communities. In the absence of regular news programming, listeners in rural and underserved communities turn to regional, national, or international sources for news, and as a result they miss stories that happen in their neighbourhoods and receive information that is less relevant to their communities. Lack of financial support from the federal government for local news programming is a barrier to people in those communities accessing local information.

## **Local News Fund:**

It is welcome news that Budget 2018 will provide \$50,000,000 over 5 years to be divided among a variety of independent non-governmental organizations to support local journalism in underserved communities. However, once the funds are distributed to an unknown (and presumably large) number of grant recipients including radio, television, and print media, they are not likely to add much to any single organization's capacity to improve their local news coverage.

For example, we have worked with the ARC and the ARCQ to develop a c/c radio local news action plan that would require approximately \$2,000,000 per year over five years (or \$10,000,000 total) administered through the Community Radio Fund of Canada to be successful (as the funding would need to be dispersed between 180 c/c stations nationwide). Anything less would most likely result in a underfunded project that would not meet its goals (described below) or the communities' needs. Additionally, if the c/c radio proposal to the Local News Fund is successful and we receive one-fifth of the current \$50,000,000 total funding, that would mean that less money is available for the numerous other types of organizations that are involved in creating local news and are also looking for grants from the Local News Fund.

We recognise that c/c radio involvement is only one part of local news development across our country and we want to ensure that funding for the Local News Fund is sufficient to meet the goals of the program, not just for our sector. Our suggestion that the program requires \$200,000,000 rather than \$50,000,000 in total funding is based both on our own calculations (as per our project proposal, available upon request), as well as our awareness of other organizations that would also be seeking grants from the program.

The goal of the c/c sector's local news action plan is to enable c/c stations to increase the production of local news in underserved communities, and maintain quality local news services while ensuring journalist succession. This would require significant increases in staff and volunteer capacities at those stations, including training, resources, skills development, mentorship, and recruitment. The action plan proposes to use the [Community Radio Fund of Canada](#) as a funding body, and to apply a results-based approach to help fill the gap in underserved communities that have few or no local media sources. We are working closely with staff from the Department of Canadian Heritage to make sure our action plan meets the current guidelines that have been developed for the program.

Multiple reports, such as the [Shattered Mirror](#) and [The House of Commons Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage](#) highlight the dire need to do more to provide Canadian citizens with local, relevant and impartial news to strengthen our democratic process. Other industry experts [highlight concerns regarding media conglomeration](#) in the country, leading to a loss of local voices, and note that multiple smaller organizations are stepping in to attempt to serve small and highly specialized audiences. The CRTC also [recommends in its report Harnessing Change: The Future of Programming Distribution in Canada](#) sweeping changes to the way media is organized and supported within Canada. The report says that the current approach is dated and will "impact the production of high-quality content, including news and information provided by these services, as well as the associated creative and knowledge-based employment", and the CRTC's own internal funding systems are only a short-term solution.

Therefore we recommend that the government increase the total amount allocated to at least \$200,000,000, in order to provide a pool of funding to effectively meet the previous budget's stated goal to help "ensure trusted, local perspectives as well as accountability in local communities".