



National Campus and
Community Radio
Association/
l'Association nationale des
radios étudiantes et
communautaires



Alliance des radios
communautaires du
Canada



Association des
radiodiffuseurs
communautaires du
Québec

Written Submission for the

Pre-Budget Consultations

in Advance of the

2021-2022 Federal Budget

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** We recommend that the Government of Canada guarantee funding over a five-year period through the Community Radio Fund of Canada to keep Canadians informed, support homegrown talent and promote Canadian content.
- **Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the Government of Canada make advertising with campus and community radio stations a requirement for all advertising campaigns.
- **Recommendation 3:** We recommend that the Government of Canada increase funding for the Local Journalism Initiative to support campus and community radio stations and grow community-based journalism.
- **Recommendation 4:** We recommend the Government of Canada allow campus and community radio stations to become qualified Canadian journalism organizations (QCJO) to support their economic viability.

Introduction

With the rise of disinformation on social media platforms, the dissemination of verifiable information, and journalistic integrity is more important than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has put the need for trusted sources of factual content on full display. Canadians depend on the news to learn how to keep themselves and their families safe from the virus. Unfortunately, misinformation is being widely spread throughout social media channels, putting a greater onus on traditional media to reach Canadians with factual information.

Campus and community radio stations are a pillar of news media in Canada. Throughout the pandemic, our members delivered accurate public health information to Canadians in at least 63 different languages. The sector is made up of thousands of people committed to ensuring broadcasts meet rigorous standards. As many as thirty percent¹ of Canadians in over 150 communities listen at least once per month to community radio and for many it is their only source of live, local information.

Similar to other sectors in Canada, campus and community radio stations were financially impacted by the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Every province in Canada deemed stations essential and stations incurred added costs to stay on the air, while seeing revenues decline from lost advertising or cancelled fundraisers. During the pandemic, some stations even had staff or volunteers living in the station in order to keep broadcasting and keeping their communities up-to-date with the latest information. While facing the same, or greater challenges than other broadcasters, we played an increasingly active role in offering local information services.

Campus and community stations are critical to serving Official Language Minority Communities and multicultural communities that otherwise have no access to media in their native languages. Whether French or Polish, Arabic or Korean, and so on, campus and community radio stations serve a vast array of minority communities in their own language. From Cree, to Inuktitut, to Ojibway, these radio stations are also an integral part of many Indigenous communities in Canada. Not only do they provide important information in an array of languages, they foster deep cultural connections with the communities they serve and are also products of.

Canadians need all communities to have access to reliable, local information. The government must ensure the campus and community radio sector has support to prosper. The following recommendations are ways the Government of Canada can support the sector through Canada's economic recovery.

¹ <https://ncra.ca/listener>

Disseminating Reliable, Local Information in All Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the trend of some individuals capitalizing on 'fake news', mainly through social media. The efforts of government and public health professionals are one example of information that Canadians can ill-afford to have slowed or manipulated.

During the pandemic, campus and community radio stations have been at the forefront of providing public health information to Canadians. For example, stations continue to have phone interviews with key leaders such as chief medical officers, doctors, mayors and more to keep listeners informed. The stations allow listeners to hear directly from trusted sources of information in order to stay safe, informed and healthy.

Unfortunately, the pandemic caused many businesses to cut their advertising budgets and therefore cut campaigns short with local stations. Advertising continues to be the largest source of income for stations that are primarily run by volunteers due to their small budgets. The sudden drop in revenues caused some stations to lay off staff and rely more on volunteers to continue serving communities. Without a supportive base of volunteers, it is likely many stations would have had to close their doors and stop broadcasting important information. The pandemic has also severely impacted the volunteer base at stations across the country.

It will continue to be important for Canadians to receive reliable information even when the effects of the pandemic subside. This government has recognized that fact by funding various media sources, such as newspapers and spending advertising dollars on commercial and CBC platforms. However, campus and community radio stations continue to be shut out of these opportunities, despite millions of Canadians relying on them, especially those in minority language communities or Indigenous communities, especially when these stations are the only local source for information.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Government of Canada guarantee funding over a five-year period to be distributed through the Community Radio Fund of Canada to keep Canadians informed, support homegrown talent and promote Canadian content.

Advertising Inclusion

The Government of Canada uses the services of a single Agency of Record (AOR) to develop media plans and purchase media space for government advertising. An AOR enables the government to get better value by leveraging the collective buying power of departments. Centralizing these services also enables better integration, oversight, control and reporting.² Therefore, when the Government of Canada launches different advertising campaigns, such as

² <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/ac-ar-eng.html>

those seen during COVID-19 to keep Canadians informed, they use the AOR to complete the advertising purchases with different media outlets.

Unfortunately, campus and community radio stations continue to be left out of advertising purchases by the government's AOR, despite serving a sizable portion of the population in over 63 different languages. Advertising tends, instead, to be delivered to large national media corporations and the CBC. We believe that minority communities deserve to be informed by their government, and that rural communities would also tend to benefit more from government messages if campus and community stations were included in the AOR's plans. For many Canadians, major media outlets are not a source of information either because they don't operate in their area or they don't operate in their language. For the Government of Canada to reach all Canadians, it should require its AOR to advertise with campus and community stations. This will also help to bolster station operations and promote Canadian news and content.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Government of Canada make advertising with campus and community radio stations mandatory for all advertising campaigns.

Fostering Community-Based Journalism

Our sector commends the government for its Local Journalism Initiative (LJI) which supports the creation of journalism that covers the diverse needs of underserved communities across Canada. Community and campus radio stations have served these communities for decades and the LJI has had a strong impact on local stations and our democracy.

However, current funding provided through the LJI is insufficient to adequately support growth in the campus and community radio sector. Additional funds need to be placed into three areas. (1) Placement of (at least one) paid journalist in each station/market. (2) Centralized administrative support unit to govern and nurture independent content development (toward locally reflective news leads). (3) Enhanced resources toward promotion, marketing and technology for effective distribution of news. Finally, LJI produced news is creative commons, and could easily be used as part of the national broadcasters news sources.

With the three areas above addressed, the government will be better able to support community-based journalism and help to create more in-depth and up-to-date local news to keep communities informed. Canadians have relied on local outlets to learn about COVID-19 outbreaks and get updates from local public health officials. Increased funding in the three priority areas will help Canadians stay up-to-date with the latest information from their communities and not just the broad strokes nationally.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Government of Canada increase funding for the Local Journalism Initiative to support campus and community radio stations and grow community-based journalism.

Supporting Recovery through QCJO Designation

The Qualified Canadian journalism organization (QCJO) designation would allow campus and community radio stations to access a wide array of benefits that they currently can't. The current provisions stipulate that to be designated as a QCJO, a media outlet must have two full-time paid journalists on staff. Our stations are primarily run and supported by volunteers and therefore less than 10 stations across Canada meet this stipulation and would be able to be designated as a QCJO.

The benefits from being designated as a QCJO are threefold. First, organizations are able to claim the Canadian journalism labour tax credit, which in reality would have little to no impact on the sector. Second, organizations could potentially have their subscription costs considered as qualifying subscription expenses for the digital news subscription tax credit, which would encourage small businesses to buy local. Third, organizations could apply for qualified donee status as a registered journalism organization, which would have an impact on stations that are able to attract donations.

While the majority of campus and community radio stations don't have two full-time paid journalists, they do continue to gather and transmit local news. This is primarily done through groups of volunteers who help to support their local station. The provisions as they are currently written though don't allow these stations to qualify, while larger, better funded media outlets are able to be designated as a QCJO and access the above-mentioned benefits. As campus and community radio stations look to recover from the pandemic, allowing them to be designated as a QCJO would have a large positive impact.

Recommendation

We recommend the Government of Canada allow campus and community radio stations to become qualified Canadian journalism organizations (QCJO) to support their economic viability.

About

The Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec ("ARCQ"), l'Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada ("ARCC"), and the National Campus and Community Radio Association/Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires ("NCRA/ANREC"). Our associations are not-for-profit organizations committed to non-profit, community-owned, and locally-reflective radio and online broadcasting. Together, we represent 84% of Canada's licensed community radio broadcasters.