Chapter 4

Public-Community Partnerships to Improve Local Media in Canada

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Local Media in Canada

Local media have been transformed dramatically over the last decade in much of Canada. New technologies and consumption patterns, private-ownership consolidation, cuts to public media and a muffled community sector have conspired to favour centralized content creation and distribution over independent local voices in the mainstream media. As a result, many communities have diminishing access to original local news reporting and content.

This chapter provides an overview of the policy and market failures undermining healthy local media in Canada and examines ways in which the community and public media sectors could collaborate to improve local media infrastructure in Canadian cities, towns and rural areas. It concludes by suggesting policy directions to support these efforts.

Definitions

Canada's Broadcasting Act (Canada 1991) gives equal importance to the "public, private, and community elements" in the broadcasting system. For the purposes of definition – not always clear in the Act itself – we adopt a property-based definition of the sectors: that is, public broadcasting is owned, managed and funded by public bodies; private broadcasting is owned and managed by private, for-profit entities; and community broadcasting is owned and managed by not-for-profit, community-based organizations.

Along with differing ownership structures – and in large part because of these differing ownership structures – the three sectors have different mandates. Private-sector media are profit-driven enterprises that depend largely on advertising and/or subscription revenues and must answer to shareholders. Public media, such as CBC/Radio-Canada, the national public broadcaster that operates English and French language-services, are supported in large part by tax revenues and programmed with a public-service mandate.[1] Generally speaking, public media try to serve not only mass audiences, but also underserved audiences to the extent possible within their budget, and to offer services that might not be undertaken by the private sector. The CBC is expected to reflect the whole of the country and must meet high levels of professionalism and journalistic standards.

Community media have an additional mandate not shared by either public or private-sector media: to enable audience members to participate directly in production and to shape the finished media content. They are meant to provide a democratic platform for free expression as well as a low-cost alternative to generating local content, since much of the content is produced by volunteers. Community media offer audiences a greater range and diversity of points of view, since every viewer is a potential producer. Community media tend to be local in focus, given that production facilities must be available locally to enable citizen access, but many countries have also launched national "community media" services that distribute content created at community production facilities, content that has regional or national relevance.

Funding

The funding dedicated to national public and community broadcasting is marginal in Canada relative to other countries. In constant dollars, government funding for the CBC/Radio-Canada has dropped markedly since the late 1980s[2] and represented $29 per capita in 2014, or less than half of the average per capita funding for public broadcasting among OECD countries (Nordicity 2011). As noted by David Skinner, Kathleen Cross and Robert Hackett in Chapter 3, the CBC faced in 2012 its first major federal budget cut (10 per cent of its overall budget) since the 1990s. These data are presented in Figure 1.

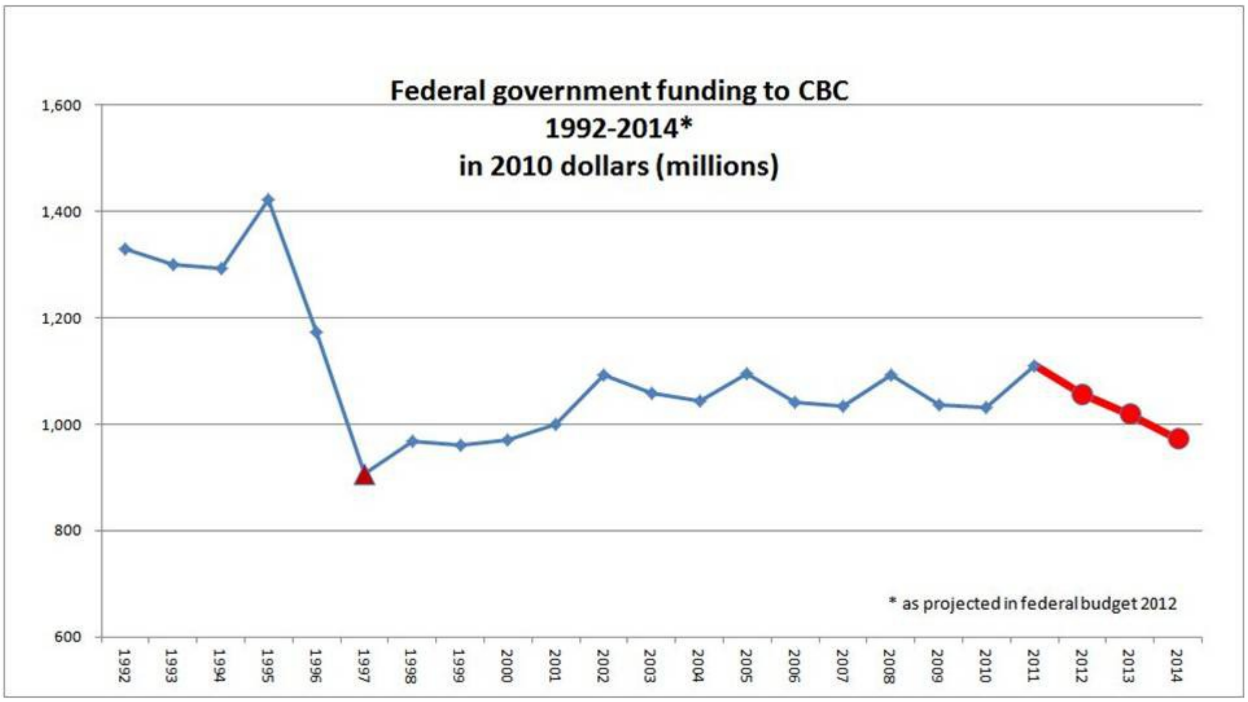

Figure 1 – *Federal Government Funding to CBC, 1992-2014*

Spending on the community sector is more difficult to assess. While the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) requires cable operators to set aside between 1.5 and five per cent of their revenues to support "community television" (which amounts to more than $130 million annually and is sufficient to the sector's needs), this money is in fact directed mostly toward private, for-profit, cable-administered, professional and regional TV services, not to genuine community broadcasting as it is understood internationally (Edwards 2009). In the 28 other countries where a "community broadcasting" sector is recognized as distinct from public and private broadcasting, its defining characteristics are ownership and management by community-based entities. This principle has been recognized formally in Canada's community radio policy since 2000: "A community radio station is owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organization, the structure of which provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large" (CRTC 2010-499, paragraph 13).

Since their inception in the late 1960s and 1970s, however, community television channels in Canada have been placed under the stewardship of the cable companies that distribute them. The cable company holds the licence, owns the production facility, controls access and the programming aired. This situation is in marked contrast to the United States, for example -- whose community TV system evolved at the same time and from the same National Film Board of Canada "Challenge for Change" model -- where cable company revenues are directed to non-profit community groups to administer community TV (called "public-access" channels).

When cable companies were relatively small operations, headquartered in their communities, it can be argued that they were generally faithful to the CRTC's expectations of offering an open-access platform to community members to express their views and air programming of their own creation.

When satellite TV came to Canada in the late 1990s, conditions changed, however. Cable companies faced competition for the first time. Since local channels could not be carried by satellite cost-effectively, cable operators saw an opportunity to promote community channels to customers as a competitive advantage. In an effort to improve the technical look of what had formerly been primarily volunteer-produced programming, the cable company took over much of the production. In order to fund the additional staff to pursue this professional production model, many community production studios in smaller markets were closed, and staff were consolidated in larger centres.

Economic and technical shifts within the cable industry also reduced support for community production studios. Cable companies have been consolidated into a few national networks and are no longer headquartered in most of the communities they serve, so their incentive to serve those communities is less. Additionally, it was once necessary for each community to have a cable “head end,” a technical reception booth for microwaved programming signals, which were distributed to houses in the community via coaxial cable. A single cable employee might maintain both the head end and the adjoining community production studio in a small community. The recent interconnection of multiple cable-licence areas using fibre-optic cable has eliminated the need to send microwave programming signals and to maintain head ends. As a result of this restructuring, it has become cost-prohibitive for cable companies to maintain far-flung production facilities.

The result of all these forces is that the majority of cable companies today offer heavily regionalized and professionalized content to their subscribers on “communitytelevision” channels. They can neither be considered “community channels” according to the ownership test, nor by mandate, despite the fact that their community-access and hyperlocal programming expectations are still stipulated as licence expectations in CRTC Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2010-622. Therefore, while there is money available in the system to fund a robust community television sector, five different CRTC audits and two policy reviews have raised questions about how much of this money actually funds production by community members.[3]

Regulatory Support

Regulatory support for public and community broadcasting is also lacking. In the last five years, the vast majority of broadcast policy hearings at the CRTC have dealt primarily or exclusively with the private sector. A few have involved public broadcasters, notably the introduction of the subsequently cancelled Local Program Improvement Fund (LPIF) for small-market TV stations. However, the LPIF excluded community broadcasters, despite the recommendation in the 2003 Lincoln Report, *Our Cultural Sovereignty,* that an LPIF-like fund be created for "community, local and regional broadcasters" (Canada 2003, 367).[4] A number of other policies announced for the private sector, including group licensing rules, permission for private broadcasters to seek "value-for-signal" payments from broadcast distributors, and the Small Market Local Programming Fund (SMLPF) exclude both public and community broadcasters. In this context, CBC/Radio-Canada's 2015 strategic plan—focused, in part, on improving local and regional programming—appears vulnerable to both government austerity measures and regulatory neglect (CBC/Radio-Canada 2010).

Community broadcasting has been dealt with only once in the last decade as an exclusive focus of the CRTC. The CRTC reviewed its community radio and community TV policy in 2010. While some advances were made in community radio policy — notably the establishment of the Community Radio Fund of Canada[5] — there were only token improvements to community TV policy. Despite a strong public call for the funding that is currently tied up in cable community channels to be redirected to community-run organizations, the CRTC left this funding under cable administration. CRTC data posted during the public consultation also indicated that viewership to cable community channels is low, suggesting that audiences don't see them as relevant, even when they have few other local TV options (CRTC, 2009-661-5).

While a licence class exists for community groups to operate over-the-air television channels (introduced in response to the call for community-owned and administered TV channels in 2002), the CRTC's expectation that these licence-holders finance themselves with advertising runs counter to the non-commercial mandate of community television. Like public television, community television is generally understood by practitioners around the world to provide a public service to viewers, rather than a platform to deliver audiences to advertisers. In addition, content on community TV is expected to reflect the individual views of the community members who create it. This mandate can be compromised if management makes programming decisions with a view to revenue generation, in the same way as the national public broadcaster is sometimes criticized for developing commercial programming as a consequence of its hybrid public/commercial funding structure.

Expecting community broadcasters to survive on advertising is also unrealistic when public and private-sector local channels have periodically been given specific financial support for local programming: for example, via the Local Programming Improvement Fund as well as the Small-Market Local Programming Fund, both of which recognize the failure of the advertising model to support local content in an environment of audience fragmentation. The SMLPF was set up specifically to offset the impact of direct-to-home satellite service on local advertising revenues.

The clearest indication that Canada lacks a viable funding model for community-owned and administered television channels is that there are only nine in Canada, compared to almost 200 community radio channels.

The lack of frequency set-asides for community broadcasters has also limited their proliferation. While the public broadcaster has always had two frequencies reserved in every market for both radio and television (one for English service, one for French), there has never been a set-aside for the community sector. Frequencies are allotted on a first-come, first-served basis, with the result that in many big cities close to the U.S. border, would-be community TV and radio organizations cannot get on the air.

In the meantime, Canada’s private media sector has remade itself. There are now four major private media/communications companies: Bell, Shaw, Rogers and Quebecor. Each controls a variety of media holdings (some combination of TV, radio, Internet, publishing) and distribution systems (some combination of cable, satellite, wireless) and are thereby considered horizontally and vertically integrated. These companies thrive by securing rights to well-promoted content—the vast majority from the U.S. for the English-language market—and repurposing it for various media and distribution services.

Figure 2 captures this process of consolidation, which continues apace.

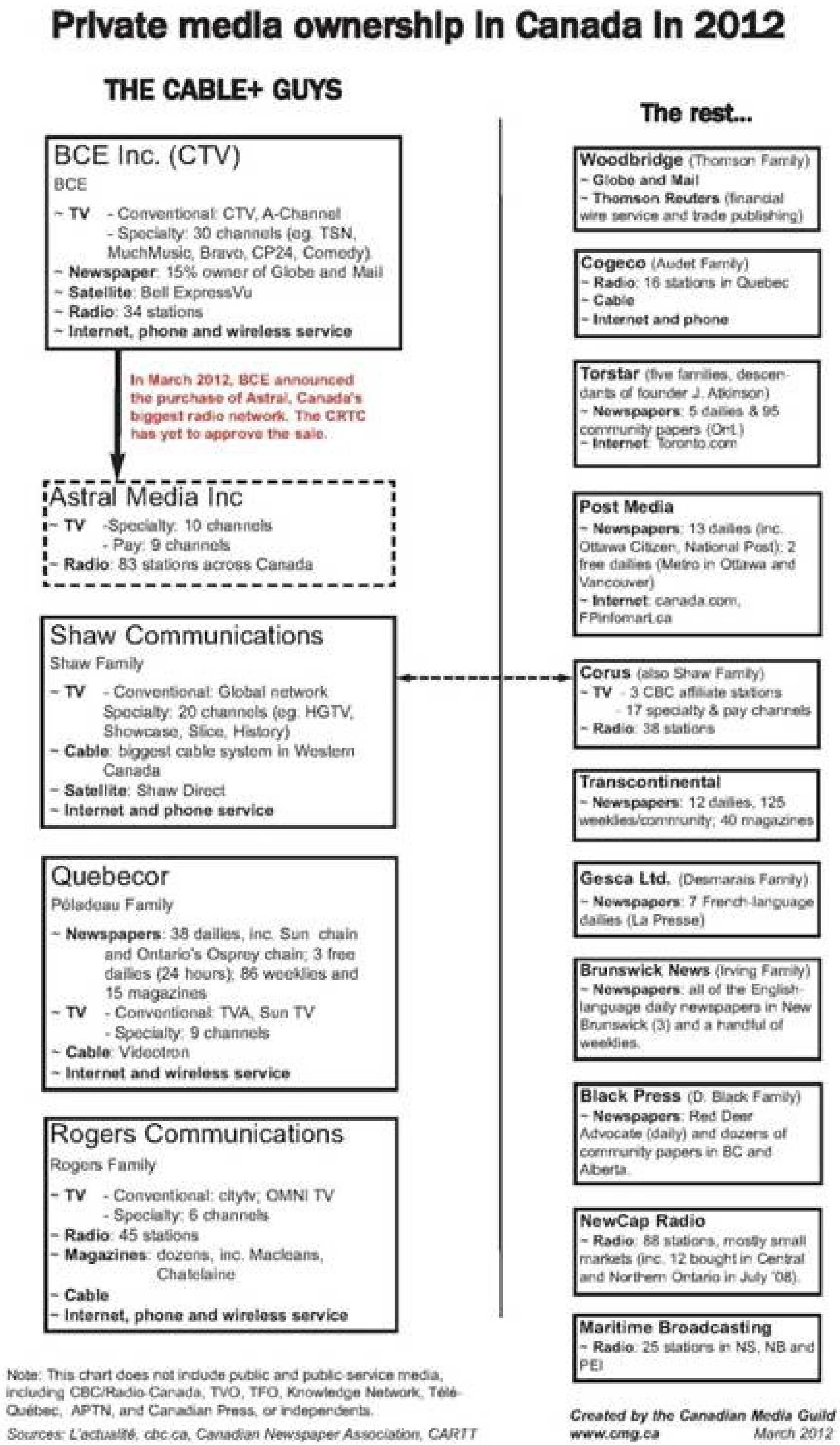

***Figure 2**—Private Media Ownership Concentration*

Ahead of the 2008-09 financial crisis, the private media mergers that built these empires resulted in hundreds of layoffs that affected local newsrooms across the country.[6] Since the crisis, the Canadian Media Guild has calculated that more than 3,000 jobs have disappeared at newspapers, TV and radio stations. Local private TV stations in Brandon, Manitoba and Red Deer, Alberta were closed, while newspapers across the country lost hundreds of feet on the street.[7] Blaming the migration of advertising dollars on new-media platforms, traditional local news media – printed newspapers, TV and radio – remain lean operations.

In this policy and market environment, quality local news reporting will likely continue to decline unless the sectors with a specific public-service mandate—that is, the public and community sectors—can find innovative ways to fill the gap. Since they are the sectors given the least financial and regulatory support, creative solutions are needed.

Why Public-Community Partnerships?

While there have long been partnerships between CBC and private broadcasters through affiliation agreements,[8] and what has become an unworkable partnership between community channels and cable companies in the community television sector (described above), there has been almost no collaboration between public and community television broadcasters in Canada, despite the fact that both have public-service mandates. Both answer to Canadians as citizens first, consumers second. Given these commonalities, we begin with the assumption that partnerships between public and community media might have the potential to:

- improve the quality, quantity and diversity of local media;
- improve the quantity, quality and diversity of viewpoints (i.e. democratizing

national public media, by leveraging community diversity and creativity);

- develop the next generation of artists and journalists from a wider pool, representing more regions of the country;
- create media jobs in smaller communities and the regions.

The remainder of this chapter proposes models for such partnerships, and case studies where the models have been or could be applied.

International Precedents for Public-Community Media Collaboration

There are precedents for public and community broadcasting partnerships internationally. In the Netherlands, there are only two categories of licence: public and commercial, available nationally, regionally and locally. Holding a “local public broadcasting” licence is roughly equivalent to holding a community over-the-air TV or radio licence in Canada, and does not imply an affiliation with a national public broadcaster. Although a few local public TV and radio channels are open-access platforms (in larger cities such as Amsterdam), most are not. They are run by local, not-for-profit boards designated by the municipality. Volunteers assist employees with production and provide input into content out of financial necessity and to encourage pluralism, but final decisions about production and programming are made by the board (Edwards, 2009).

In the United Kingdom, known for its dominant and centralized public broadcaster, the BBC, local TV licences of any kind (private or community) have struggled to survive and have only been available since the mid-1990s. Nonetheless, the BBC operated a Community Programme Unit between 1972 and 2004, which enabled selected ideas from viewers around the nation to be recorded by BBC staff and aired nationally. The BBC has also discussed in several policy papers since the 1990s its intention to establish community TV units on the ground. The most successful was established in 2005 in Havant's Leigh Park, the site of a famous 1969 hunger strike. Although the BBC has since pulled its support from the project, the community has continued to produce videos from the facility. These examples demonstrate that the line between community and public broadcasting is often blurred, and models for collaboration depend on local financial, cultural and regulatory conditions, as is explored in the case studies that follow.

Forms Collaboration Could Take in Canada

In Canada, public-community broadcasting partnerships could assume a variety of forms.

Model A: Sharing Transmission Infrastructure

The Canadian Media Guild (CMG) and the Canadian Association for Community Users and Stations (CACTUS) began working together in the lead-up to the transition from analog to digital, over-the-air (OTA) television. In the absence of dedicated government funding for the digital upgrade,[9] CBC/Radio-Canada's transition plan was to upgrade only 27 of more than 600 TV transmitters.[10] These 27 transmitters are located in the 20 cities where the CBC and/or Radio-Canada have a local TV station. In seven of the cities, both French and English signals are available free to air. The red squares in Figure 3 show the locations of these transmitters.

A comparison with Figure 4 (showing the location of the more than 1,000 analog TV transmitters that existed in Canada prior to the digital transition) provides a sense of the quantity of over-the-air infrastructure that has been lost as a result of the transition.

Six hundred and fifty-eight of these transmitters belonged to the CBC and were decommissioned.

Figure 3*—Location of CBC/Radio-Canada Digital Transmitters Post Transition*

Figure 4—*Canadian Analog Over-the-Air TV Transmitters Prior to the Digital Transition (2011)*

Because of Canada's vast geography, the challenge for Canada's cash-strapped national broadcaster of maintaining an aging, over-the-air public transmission infrastructure, and the difficulty of building out fibre-optic networks to replace this infrastructure, there is an increasing and widening digital divide between Canadians in urban areas, who have access to free-to-air television, cellular service, cable television, high-speed Internet, and satellite service, and many rural Canadians, who may soon have access only to satellite TV and high-speed Internet at elevated rates.

The CMG and CACTUS saw an opportunity for partnerships between communities and CBC/Radio-Canada to upgrade and share transmission equipment in smaller markets that were left off the public broadcaster's transition plan. For example, rather than CBC transmitters and towers being decommissioned or pulled down, the proposed partnership would allow communities to maintain analog transmission for the price of the power to supply the transmitter.[11]

Alternatively, the partners could have shared the expense of the upgrade; the cost of digital transmitters starts at about $10,000. Once upgraded, a single digital transmitter could multiplex the CBC/Radio-Canada with one or more other TV or radio channels, including a community channel, or with wireless Internet for communities that lack broadband.

Communities and the CBC could also have shared costs to multiplex the second official language service in markets where only the majority language service has been upgraded. For example, while Calgary's CBC television transmitter was upgraded to digital, its Radio-Canada transmitter was not, and French service free-to-air has ended in that city. Similarly, English service is no longer available in predominantly French-speaking Quebec City. The cost to add a multiplex (an additional piece of hardware to the basic digital transmitter) starts at approximately $10,000. For $10,000, TV viewers in 13 of Canada's biggest cities could regain access to the minority-language service.

Unfortunately, CBC's analog TV transmission sites have now been decommissioned and the opportunity to share this publicy-funded infrastructure with community media organizations was lost.

Model B: Sharing of Production Facilities

In smaller communities that cannot afford a community TV and/or a CBC local bureau, facilities could be shared. There might be separate licences and broadcast channels, but the stations could share a studio, equipment, even personnel. Or, new affiliation models with community stations could be explored in areas in which there is a single broadcast channel. The licence could be the CBC's, with blocks of time set aside for community-generated content, or the community's, with inserts of CBC network content. The latter model is similar to the early development of the Canadian television system in which privately-owned local stations were outlets for distribution of CBC's national service, but provided their own local content. In those early days, the system developed to overcome the challenges of distributing national content across a vast geographic expanse using over-the-air transmitters. With today's distribution systems (including cable, satellite and Internet Protocol TV), national distribution is no longer the problem. The current and serious challenge is to create and broadcast *local* content to communities that are losing it, or never had it. CBC's 2015 plan proposed expanding local programming to communities that have never had their own CBC station (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2010). New local services have opened up in Hamilton and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, and Kamloops, BC. With federal budget cuts, further CBC expansion is on hold. Local content partnerships between community and public media might offer an innovative way out of the impasse.

Model C: Sharing of Content, Personnel and/or Production Methodologies

Even without affiliate status, partnerships between community channels and regional or national public broadcasters could be fruitful and dynamic. Community-generated content could gain greater exposure if supplied to regional or national public broadcasters, while bringing in revenue for the community broadcaster. Regional and national broadcasters could access content in communities where they have no journalistic presence. For example, raw footage or short, edited stories might be uploaded by communities to a common server, where the national broadcaster could access them for a fee.

Aside from cost advantages, the quality of the content could improve for both parties. For the community, internships with the national broadcaster and the need to meet its journalistic standards would stimulate professionalism. For the national or regional broadcaster, access to a grassroots diversity of voices would enhance the depth of discussion on complex issues. This model of collaboration was recently proposed in the Payette Report, suggesting that Télé-Québec (the public educational broadcaster for the province of Quebec) acquire local and regional content from independent community producing groups in Quebec (Québec, 2010).[12]

The long-term development of community relationships and partnerships as a means to improve content for the national broadcaster is already considered a “best practice” by Joan Melanson, executive-producer for CBC Radio in Toronto:

> We strategically reach out to the many diverse communities that make up our city in order to reflect, in an authentic way, their stories and issues. Part of that outreach takes the form of two to four public townhalls a year. The point is to explore a particular issue, often sensitive, through the lens of one community. One recent example was called Turning Point, about domestic violence in Toronto's South Asian communities. These communities are used to the mainstream media coming to them for negative reasons. We want to build trust, so we invite them, before we ever turn on a microphone or a camera, to have a discussion and we really listen. We get an agreement on an approach, and the word gets out that “the CBC is OK. You can talk to them.” Then people show up and say

> remarkable things that they wouldn't otherwise say. Over the long haul, this approach makes my job a lot more productive (Melanson, 2012).

While the CBC has a presence in Toronto, it cannot have that presence in every community across the country. However, the quality of the relationship that Melanson describes between the CBC as a broadcaster and the Toronto community is routinely built between communities and their local community station. The viewing public is already in charge of 'the approach' because it is members of the community themselves who wield the recording equipment and shape the content. The content developed through these partnerships could be made accessible to the national broadcaster.

This is not to imply that community and public media would create or air identical coverage on an issue such as domestic violence in Toronto's South Asian communities. On the contrary, time constraints and expectations for journalistic objectivity might constrain a national broadcaster's approach to such an issue. For example, the completed story might be a few minutes long and would likely feature interviews with members of the affected community as well as experts or community workers for perspective. A community media program on the same issue might be produced by volunteers who identify as belonging to the South Asian community, exploring the issue at greater length from an insider perspective. With a partnership in place, the more in-depth, point-of-view community footage might be made available to the national broadcaster as source material, lending a depth and level of frankness that can be difficult and time-consuming to secure under mainstream media practices, as Melanson describes.

Case Studies for Community-Public Media Collaboration

In late 2011, we began exploring how these ideas might be applied with community media organizations and representatives of CBC/Radio-Canada in several communities. We focused on communities in which concrete challenges for local media have either always existed or have been accentuated in recent years due to the aforementioned technological, regulatory and market trends.

A) Shared Transmission

When the CBC's local private affiliate in Kamloops, B.C. disaffiliated in 2006 and stopped airing CBC programming, residents who wanted to watch CBC free-to-air organized a lobby group called "Save Our CBC." When it purchased Canwest Media/Global Television in late 2010, Shaw Media committed to share Global transmission towers and its broadcast frequency with local broadcasters in smaller markets as part of its tangible public benefit package.[13] CACTUS saw an opportunity for Kamloops to regain access to the CBC over the air by multiplexing it as a sub-channel of the Global signal. The CBC has indicated that it would provide its signal as long as no local substitutions are made to content.[14]

Kamloops is also home to Thompson Rivers University, which has both a campus/community radio channel, CFBX, and an undergraduate journalism program focused on print. TRU staff members are discussing the potential to extend learning opportunities to their students in television, and reaching the community at large on an additional platform. The community is therefore exploring the possibility of multiplexing both a community TV channel and the CBC as standard-definition sub-channels of Global's signal. For example, when Global upgrades its Kamloops repeater to digital, Global's signal might be broadcast on channel 6-1, while the CBC and a community channel from Thompson Rivers University might be on 6-2 and 6-3, respectively.

Public- and community-sector frequency sharing predates the introduction of digital technology. In Arichat, Nova Scotia, Telile Community TV has been replaying two local CBC radio programs produced in the town of Sydney. The audio plays behind the television channel's text-based community bulletin board service, enabling residents in parts of Nova Scotia to listen in beyond the range of CBC's Sydney transmitter. Many community radio broadcasters also lease space on CBC transmission towers.

The CRTC also gave the green light to the first instance of digital multiplexing in the summer of 2012. The Commission approved an application by the community TV broadcaster CFTV of Leamington, Ontario to multiplex four television services from a single digital transmitter.

While any community can consider installing its own towers and transmitters – three CACTUS members in British Columbia have been doing this since the 1980s[15] – the impending loss of CBC service, the efficiency of digital transmission (one 'box' can be used to multiplex several services on a single frequency) and the need for transmission infrastructure for wireless broadband make rebroadcasting especially viable and attractive at the present time. Several communities that have lost free, over-the-air CBC TV are particularly well-positioned to take advantage of these options, thanks to pre-existing community-run video co-operatives or post-secondary media training programs. Examples include Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (the home of PAVED Arts),[16] Lethbridge, Alberta (Lethbridge Community College's broadcast journalism program), London, Ontario (the journalism program at the University of Western Ontario), and Victoria, British Columbia (the Independent Community TV Co-operative).

In the summer of 2011, the CACTUS partnership with the CMG resulted in publication of a brochure for communities entitled *The Transition to Digital Over-the-Air Television: New Opportunities for Communities* (CACTUS, 2011). It was made available both through the CACTUS web site and was linked from the Department of Canadian Heritage's official web site on digital transition. On the official Canadian digital transition date of August 31, 2011, broadcasters in Canada's largest cities (cities with populations over 300,000, and provincial or territorial capitals) were required to switch off analog transmitters. Outside these major cities, analog transmissions were allowed to continue.

On May 18, 2012, the CBC and Radio-Canada submitted applications to the CRTC to shut down all remaining 623 analog TV broadcasting sites across Canada, leaving rural and small-town Canadians without free access to the public broadcaster. To continue to access its programming, Canadians outside large urban centres where the CBC/Radio-Canada has upgraded transmitters to digital have to subscribe to cable or satellite, or download the CBC's programming over the Internet. Cable and satellite subscriptions range from $500 to $700 per year. High-speed Internet connections that would be required to watch the public broadcaster's content are often not available in rural areas that formerly depended on free-to-air analog transmission. Where they are available, users are charged for downloading content. Furthermore, only a part of the CBC program schedule is available on-line.

By June 18, 2012 (the deadline for the CRTC's public consultation regarding the CBC/Radio-Canada's application), CACTUS, the CMG, public-interest groups such as Friends of Canadian Broadcasting and the Public-Interest Advocacy Centre, along with more than 2,200 individual Canadians, had filed submissions with the CRTC proposing that analog equipment and broadcasting towers be donated to communities to maintain and repurpose. Instead, CBC/Radio-Canada was simply allowed to shut down the transmitters on July 31, 2012, and has proceeded to offer them for sale through a commercial process. However, it is unlikely the public broadcaster will be able to sell all of its surplus infrastructure and there could still be opportunities for communities to maintain or repurpose these sites over the next couple of years. For example, the CBC has already given the Hay River Community Service Society in the Northwest Territories the CBC (English), Radio-Canada (French) and APTN analog transmitters formerly maintained by the CBC.

In parallel to the CBC analog decommissioning process, APTN and TVO have also decommissioned analog transmitters and towers since 2011. Unlike the CBC, TVO immediately saw the value of its over-the-air transmission structure to communities, and wrote letters directly to municipalities where they intended to shut down transmitters and towers to offer the towers for free. According to TVO, more than 60 per cent of communities accepted them. CACTUS is in the process of assisting communities that accepted TVO towers to repurpose them.

B) and C) Shared Production Facilities and/or Content and Personnel

Any community that does not enjoy or cannot support a community and/or a public radio, TV or new-media production facility (typically smaller communities) is a potential candidate for a shared community-public production facility (model B), or a community production facility that shares content with a public broadcaster (model C). Both models offer the potential to reduce costs, cross-fertilize one another’s content and enable more local media diversity.

Sporadic sharing of content occasionally occurs already between community and public broadcasters. For example, the independent community TV licence-holder in Neepawa, Manitoba was contacted by CBC Winnipeg in early December of 2012 to collect footage and interviews from a basketball game for inclusion in a story on CBC national radio and TV.

To explore the potential for more lasting partnerships, we have chosen three communities in which residents have identified specific problems with the quality and quantity of local media, where we believe innovative public-community partnerships could help.

Hamilton

Hamilton, Ontario (with a population of just over 500,000) is the largest city in Canada to have neither a local CBC radio nor television station. Hamiltonians have long been frustrated by the fact that their proximity to Toronto results in less quantity and diversity of local information specific to Hamilton. Since 2004, the non-profit Centre for Community Study in Hamilton has hosted the Hamilton Media Project, which seeks ways "to increase the amount of Hamilton coverage in the mainstream broadcast media."[17] The CBC launched an on-line/mobile news service for Hamilton in March 2012. According to Sonja MacDonald of the Centre for Community Study:

> Since this isn't a 'traditonal' model … it has left many in the community without any real sense of what this means. Is it a cheap way to shut up those of us here that have been making a lot of noise about their lack of presence without too much effort or a truly new model of convergent media that connects different platforms with a real local flare (MacDonald

2012).

The potential for a robust community-public partnership in Hamilton is great, both because of the obvious demand for more news and community coverage on mainstreamradio and TV, as well as the presence of:

- The Factory, a film and video co-operative that already offers the community media training and studio production facilities via a partnership with Gallery 205, and;
- two campus radio channels, one at Mohawk College and the other at McMaster University, as well as video production equipment and studio facilities at Mohawk College.
- Hamilton Public Library, one of many public libraries beginning to experiment offering the public access to digital media creation facilities, including green screens, and audio and video production equipment and editing suites.

The possibility that the CBC might partner with existing community-based resources had been raised in the early planning stages for the CBC's new digital service. City administration had encouraged Mohawk College to consider moving its studio facilities downtown to create a central street presence, with the idea that the CBC might share the facility and also the college's existing licensed radio frequency (an example of model B). That partnership did not materialize, however, in part because the parties could not agree on access to prime time within the combined broadcast (both wanted control of supper-time news).[18] Time will tell whether Hamiltonians seek out the CBC's new digital service as a viable alternative, or whether a full radio or TV broadcasting solution in partnership with existing community resources proves more viable.

Kingston

The Kingston, Ontario region has a population of nearly 200,000, a diverse local economy and higher-learning institutions, but it is not well-served by professional local media. The city has a local private TV station—a Corus affiliate of CBC with a local newscast – a cable TV station owned by Cogeco, three private radio stations, campus community radio and TV stations and a professional on-line news site. It also has a daily newspaper, the *Whig-Standard*, now owned by Quebecor. Nonetheless, there has been a decline in the number of professional journalists working in Kingston, resulting in a perceived decline in the quality of local information.

For example, at its peak in the late 1980s, 55 people worked in the *Whig-Standard* newsroom; in 2012 there were 17 (O'Hanlon, 2012). A campaign was launched by Communications Workers of America-Canada in 2011 to "Make the Whig Great," which highlights the concern about centralized news-gathering:

> These days, the *Whig* is sadly lacking in the sort of useful Kingston-centric information it used to provide. Its pages are crowded with generic wire copy of little relevance to Kingstonians. Most days there are only three or four letters to the editor. Investigative reporting has all but vanished. Overall, the Kingston that the *Whig* portrays bears little resemblance to the vibrant, creative and diverse community that exists in reality.[19]

As one local activist put it, "if you want to become an informed local citizen, you have to work harder than you used to."[20] According to the activist, citizen journalism has filled some of the void, but it is largely issue-based and contributes to a sense of fragmentation of information and involvement.

Meanwhile, the Queen's University campus radio channel CFRC has been broadcasting for over 90 years and is one of the oldest broadcasting organizations in the world. Queen's TV is a student-run station that webcasts and distributes a weekly program on Cogeco's cable community channel.[21] CFRC functioned as part of a tri-partite partnership with the CBC and the *Whig-Standard* from 1934 to 1938, so innovative community-public-(and private) partnerships have a long history in this city.[22] Our contacts at both university channels—while aware of the crisis at the *Whig*—did not immediately see how a decrease in quality in the local print press might present opportunities for them as community broadcasters, however.

A small investment in a public-community media partnership in Kingston could result in a local news renaissance. If CBC/Radio-Canada were to establish even a small digital station of the type launched in Hamilton for on-line and mobile content, professional journalists could provide training and mentorship to local citizen journalists to improve the quality of their contributions and could provide an on-line clearinghouse for community-generated media content.

For its part, Queen's TV acknowledged that while at one time students had gained valuable hands-on experience at Cogeco's community channel, the opportunity for public involvement at the cable channel has waned in recent years, as has student viewership of cable TV (citing high costs for a cable subscription). Queen's TV has largely redirected its efforts to on-line platforms. An on-line CBC partnership could both leverage the university's studio resources, energy and creativity to generate content for the national broadcaster, while offering students experience and contact with the CBC.

Vancouver

The metropolitan Vancouver region has two daily newspapers (both owned by

Postmedia), several local private TV stations, a Shaw-controlled cable community TV station, as well as public radio and TV stations in both official languages (the CBC/Radio-Canada and the Knowledge Network, British Columbia's provincial educational broadcaster). It also has a vibrant, though financially fragile, community media scene, including Vancouver Co-op Radio, several independent producing groups that contribute content to Shaw's community channel, and (formerly) W2 in the Downtown Eastside. W2 was a multi-purpose production facility that did not itself hold a broadcast licence. It was situated in the poorest part of the city and broadcast a radio program on the Co-op Radio channel, a TV program on the Shaw community channel and live-streamed on the internet on W2 TV..

Although there appears to be a healthy range of media in all three sectors (public, private and community), practitioners in both the public and community sectors acknowledge that there would be more value for the public if more collaboration took place of the kind described in Model C (sharing of content, personnel or production methodologies). For example, the severity of the social and economic challenges facing residents of the Downtown Eastside is well known, yet the mainstream media fail to provide adequate coverage of them. In a city as socially, economically and culturally diverse as Vancouver, the public broadcaster cannot be all things to all people.

Community media in Canada, as in many other countries, play a different role in large cities than they do in small towns; in smaller population centres they can assume the mantle of 'mainstream' content providers. In the busy media ecosystems of large cities, community media tend to become voices of groups not otherwise served by public- and private-sector media. Serving residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is therefore the natural preserve of community media.

In Vancouver's Lower Mainland, there used to be more than a dozen cable community TV neighbourhood offices. However, the current cable incumbent—Shaw—has shut all but one studio in suburban Surrey and produces everything else from its corporate tower downtown. The latter facility is difficult to access by citizens, and virtually impossible for a resident of the Downtown Eastside. Anyone entering the building needs to apply for an access card, which is often denied without explanation, there is no parking for quick equipment pick-ups and drop-offs, and meeting spaces inside the building that community groups require to plan productions are neither readily available nor publicized. The fully independent and community-based W2 was trying to step into the gap, but had to survive from month to month on donations and internal fund-raising activities such as renting meeting space, staging performances and running a small cafe. In 2013, W2 was evicted from its premises by the City of Vancouver for failure to pay a "community amenity fee," and has so far failed to relaunch.

This environment is ripe for the kind of collaboration that Joan Melanson's "best practice" suggests; the public broadcaster could develop better ties with communities by collaborating with community-based facilities such as W2. An opportunity for collaboration exists in Vancouver, where a redevelopment of the CBC broadcast centre resulted in several new community facilities. Two of these new facilities, Studio 700 and the Outdoor Stage, are used by both the CBC and outside community and cultural organizations to host community outreach events. However, the third and largest facility, an 8,500-square-foot space on the main floor, initially dubbed the Vancouver Festival Centre in press releases, and originally intended to house community-based cultural groups such as Vancouver's International Jazz Festival, International Children's Festival and Folk Music Festival at low cost, remains idle, with the city paying its operating costs. No community tenants have been found due to the high cost of renovating the space.[23] With a concerted effort by CBC, the City of Vancouver and community media organizations, this space could be developed into a partnership between public and community media to improve local media for the benefit of the people of Vancouver.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

From our discussions with citizens, journalists and thinkers connected with these case studies, it is clear that some infrastructure is needed to make community-public partnerships possible. Community and public media are two underfunded sectors that can barely keep up with what they are doing today.

Furthermore, the people working in these sectors would need to embrace the notion of partnering to improve their respective local programming and presence. Several projects with good intentions and potential benefits to both parties – CBC disposition of its analog assets to communities and facility- and/or frequency-sharing in Hamilton and Vancouver -- have not realized their full potential to date, because of a lack of understanding on the part of one or both of the public or the community broadcaster of what these benefits might be.

As noted by Skinner et al. in Chapter 3, Canadians urgently need to ensure that public sources of funding for public and independent community media are stabilized and adequate, and that public policy supports strong and stable media institutions. In addition, we suggest that a fund could be established and made available to both the CBC and to local community media organizations to create new and/or enhanced local service in underserved communities (e.g., Hamilton, Kingston, Kamloops).

One way such a program could work is that ideas for collaboration originate with non-profit community groups that already produce community media, or wish to. They would approach their nearest CBC location to pitch an idea for collaboration and to refine the idea. Together, they would go to the fund for support for the additional personnel and technical infrastructure for both organizations to make the project happen. One criterion for funding could be the project's long-term sustainability. Either the project would demonstrate proof of concept to the CBC – that collaboration results in a greater quantity and diversity of content – and become part of its normal operating procedures in that region, and/or it would demonstrate proof of concept at the community level, and benefit from long-term support from a municipality, subscriptions or collaboration with existing community facilities (such as a library).

Finally, a national body such as CACTUS, working in partnership with public broadcasters, would be needed to promote and develop awareness among practitioners about the benefits of public-community partnerships and the availability of funding to support them.

Notes:

1. Sixty-five percent of CBC/Radio-Canada's revenues come from a parliamentary appropriation (i.e. general tax revenues) while 35 per cent is self-generated from advertising, subscription fees, and leasing.
2. Based on unpublished CBC finance data shared with the Canadian Media Guild.
3. Public complaints about cable community channels were first raised in volume in

the run-up to the CRTC's 2001 review of community TV policy. Audits by cable staff were conducted each year from 2002 through 2005 to see whether cable companies were observing the production quotas for local programming and for community-produced programming in the new policy. More than 3,000 Canadians complained about cable community channels in the lead-up to the 2010 community TV policy review, and the most comprehensive audit of cable community TV channels ever conducted by the CRTC was carried out in 2011 in response to a complaint by CACTUS.

4. As Skinner et al. noted in Chapter 3, the LPIF is to be discontinued.

5. The Community Radio Fund of Canada provides funding for special projects and initiatives of community radio channels, not operational funding. Community radio channels are expected to survive primarily on the sale of advertising.

6. There were 300 layoffs at CHUM the day its sale to CTV was announced in 2006. (See http://playbackonline.ca/2006/07/24/layoffs-20060724/). In 2007, there were 200 layoffs at Canwest-owned Global TV and additional cuts at Canwest-owned newspapers prior to the Canwest purchase of specialty TV company Alliance Atlantis. See: (http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2007/11/11/canwest-cuts.html). More layoffs followed as Canwest began to sink under the massive debt it incurred to buy Alliance Atlantis. In 2010, when the company was on the brink of bankruptcy, the Canwest TV assets were bought by Shaw Communications.

7. See http://www.cmg.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Preliminary-numbers-

Broadcast-Job-cuts-between-2008-2013-CMG.pdf. See also the CRTC Diversity of Voices proceeding (CRTC 2007-5), in which hundreds of Canadians voiced dissatisfaction with local media, and Broadcasting Public Notice 2008-100, announcing the creation of the Local Program Improvement Fund.

8. See an overview of the development of the Canadian television industry here: http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/specialized/network_histories/histories.php%3Fid%3D3 . A patchwork of public and privately-owned stations developed across the country, beginning with the launch of the CBC production centres in Toronto and Montreal in 1949 and the first live broadcast from Montreal in 1952. The private stations were considered "outlets" of the national service and broadcast CBC content, a situation that has continued to this day at a reduced number of affiliate stations. See CBC's Affiliated Station policy from 1993: http://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/reporting-to-canadians/acts-and-policies/programming/program-policies/1-1-24/ Current CBC affiliates include Corus-owned CKWS in Kingston, Ontario. There are two Radio-Canada affiliates in Quebec, including RNC Media-owned CKRN-TV in Rouyn-Noranda.
9. Unlike the Accelerated Coverage Program, adopted by the federal government in 1974 to provide dedicated funding to extend CBC/Radio-Canada's analog TV and radio signals to unserved communities.
10. See: http:///www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/newsreleases/pdf/dtv_plan.pdf
11. It can cost from a few hundred dollars to a couple of thousand dollars to power an analog television transmitter annually, depending on its range.

12. The “independent community producing groups in Quebec” referred to in the Payette Report are not-for-profit associations created with the purpose of producing community television. Approximately 45 such associations exist in Quebec. They do not themselves hold licences from the CRTC and do not own distribution infrastructure. They supply content for playback on private cable-controlled “community channels.”
13. When changes in ownership occur within the Canadian broadcasting sector (most recent transactions have created increased concentration in ownership), a percentage of the transaction value (usually 10 per cent) must generate “tangible public benefits.” For the particular transaction discussed, see http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2010/2010-782.htm.
14. From private conversations between CACTUS and CBC.
15. Valemount Entertainment Society in British Columbia, CHEK-TV in Dawson Creek and Chetwynd, British Columbia, and AshCreek TV Society, British Columbia.
16. PAVED Arts is a non-profit, community-based organization that provides training and equipment access for community members to express themselves through Photography, Audio, Video, Electronic and Digital media.
17. For more information, see PAVED Art’s web site at http://www.pavedarts.ca. For more information, see: http://communitystudy.ca/?page_id=323
18. From interviews with Hamilton city and college officials, February, 2012.
19. See: http://www.greatwhig.ca/content/campaign.
20. Interview with anonymous source, January, 2012.

21. This is a community channel in name only; it is owned and controlled by a private entity.
22. For more information, see the CFRC's web site at http://cfrc.ca/blog/about/history.
23. http://www.cbc.ca/bc/communityspaces/, http://forum.skyscraperpage.com/archive/index.php/t-138876.html. For more information about this CBC-community partnership, see: http://vancouverjazz.com/forums/showthread.php?t=1828. Additional information regarding the Vancouver Festival Centre was provided by Colin Preston, library co-ordinator for CBC Vancouver in December of 2012.

http://cfrc.ca/blog/about/history