



**The CBC Pensioners  
National Association**

*Preserving our Future, Sharing our Past*

**L'Association nationale  
des retraités de la SRC**

*Assurer notre avenir, partager notre passé*

## HELP US SHAPE OUR FUTURE!

### **PNA DISCUSSION PAPER #1 – PRESERVING CBC/RADIO-CANADA**



This is the first in a series of discussion papers prepared by the PNA's Advocacy Committee. We're hoping these backgrounders will help you decide which political party is most likely to meet the interests of older adults and Canadians in general. We begin with the CBC, the place we spent much of our working lives, the place that for many of us became an integral part of our identity. Today, the CBC is struggling – from downsizing, from funding cuts, from constant attacks from its enemies. We know what it means to Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and how it knits us together. We know the CBC. This discussion paper makes the case for its preservation. We're offering questions for you to put to your local candidates to see whether they share a commitment to a robust CBC. And we hope this will help you decide where to mark your X at the ballot box.

Send us your comments: [advocacy@cbcpensioners.ca](mailto:advocacy@cbcpensioners.ca)

**THE ISSUE: The preservation of CBC/Radio-Canada and public broadcasting in Canada**

#### **WHY IT MATTERS:**

One of the questions on the table during the next federal election will be just how important CBC/Radio-Canada is to Canadians. One could just as well ask the following:

- How important is it to Canadians to be able to tell the difference between what is true and what is not? And what are the consequences of not being able to make that distinction?
- Is it important to reflect Canada back to Canadians, including the multicultural nature of our nation?



- How important is a healthy exchange of cultural expression to Canadians?
- Do Canadians wish to promote and nurture a shared national consciousness?

Such questions may be especially pertinent during an era in which AI tools, when not employed ethically and responsibly, can so easily blur the line between fact and fiction. An era in which mass closures of local news outlets and the resultant erosion of quality journalism is creating a climate in which Canadians cannot consistently rely on facts.

How can Canadians make informed decisions about important issues without access to trusted institutions such as CBC/Radio-Canada to help them discern the truth? Institutions that place an emphasis on professional journalistic standards such as transparency, securing corroborating sources, and verifying facts. Institutions that encourage civil online discourse, and actively help build a population resilient to lies.

CBC/Radio-Canada doesn't just contribute to the social and political fabric of this country. It contributes economically as well.

According to a study conducted by Deloitte and Touche LLP<sup>1</sup>, "CBC/Radio-Canada has a substantial positive impact on the Canadian economy." According to their estimate, "in 2010, CBC/Radio-Canada's expenditure of \$1.7 billion in Canada generated \$3.7 billion gross value added, a measure of overall contribution to the Canadian economy."

They also found that:

- "CBC/Radio-Canada helps create diversity and depth in the Canadian independent production sector through commissioning a wide range of genres and committing substantial funds for program development."

---

<sup>1</sup> Sherry Gu *Deloitte proposal document VANOC*. <https://site-cbc.radio-canada.ca/documents/vision/strategy/latest-studies/deloitte-summary-findings-en.pdf> (6/6/11)



- “CBC/Radio-Canada provides a consistent revenue source for independent producers.”
- “CBC/Radio-Canada’s regional and local activities contribute to local economies and creative clusters. In particular, CBC/Radio-Canada’s commitment to French services is recognized as having been important to the formation of a creative sector cluster in Montreal.”
- “CBC/Radio-Canada creates additional economic value for other broadcasters and the wider creative sector in Canada as it often leads the implementation of new technologies, promoting digital content and distribution in Canada through its own net portals and third party distributors, as well as by its support to Canadian artists.”

## **WHERE THE PARTIES STAND:**

The five major political parties each endorse quite different policies with regard to these questions and public broadcasting. Their respective positions are outlined below.

### **Liberal Party of Canada**

The Liberals consider CBC/Radio-Canada a fundamental Canadian institution, calling it “a pillar on which we can build our future—a vital institution that reflects our identity and unites us.”<sup>2</sup> In the face of threats to our sovereignty, they believe that “ensuring its relevance, strength and independence is essential to safeguarding our culture in the face of growing pressures.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Minister St-Onge’s vision for a better CBC/Radio-Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2025/02/minister-st-onges-vision-for-a-better-cbcradio-canada-a-clear-choice-for-canadas-future.html> February 20, 2025

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

---



On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Canadian Heritage, announced her vision for the future of CBC/Radio-Canada.<sup>4</sup> It includes a commitment to the following:

- Trustworthy, local and impartial news
- Reliable information during emergencies
- An end to subscription fees for CBC/Radio-Canada's streaming platforms and advertising during news
- Increased citizen participation and strengthened independence from the Government
- An emphasis on innovation and collaboration
- Development of an Indigenous strategy in collaboration with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities
- Emphasis on the separation of French and English programming
- Increased and stabilized funding written into law

This is consistent with and builds upon the Liberals platform prior to Minister St-Onge's announcement, which supported CBC/Radio-Canada protecting and promoting the French language and Francophone cultures in Quebec and across the country, as well as increasing the production of national, regional and local news.

Minister St-Onge also emphasized CBC/Radio-Canada's need for "long-term predictable funding," reminding Canadians that we invest less in our public broadcaster than many other countries, including "the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan."<sup>5</sup>

### **Conservative Party of Canada**

Pierre Poilievre is on record as having stated, "I can't wait to defund the CBC and sell off the headquarters for housing."<sup>6</sup> He believes that the CBC's English

---

<sup>4</sup> Minister St-Onge's vision for a better CBC/Radio-Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2025/02/minister-st-onges-vision-for-a-better-cbcradio-canada-a-clear-choice-for-canadas-future.html> February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Poilievre@PierrePoilievre, "I can't wait to defund the CBC and sell off the headquarters for housing." Twitter July 15<sup>th</sup> 2024 11:07pm



language TV and online services are not necessary because they do not provide anything that the private market doesn't. "Almost everything the CBC does can be done in the marketplace these days because of technology," he has said. "I would preserve a small amount for French-language minorities, linguistic minorities, because they, frankly, will not get news services provided by the market."<sup>7</sup> He has called the CBC a "biased propaganda arm of the Liberal Party."<sup>8</sup>

The Conservative Party of Canada is more concerned with the welfare of private sector broadcasters and service-providers, which they believe play a role through local and regional programming "that reflects the language and multicultural realities of our country." They insist that these businesses must be in a position to compete in "an ever-increasing fragmented and global market."

They accuse CBC/Radio-Canada of having paid over \$18 million on executive bonuses while eliminating hundreds of jobs, and that CBC/Radio-Canada basically just provides opinions and coverage widely available for free elsewhere.

To ensure that the CBC/Radio-Canada does not undercut private sector and independent media by competing for advertising space while "receiving more than \$1 billion in direct taxpayer subsidies," the Conservative Party of Canada would like to see the CBC/Radio-Canada reduce its reliance on government funding and subsidies. In keeping with Pierre Poilievre's recent comments, they have expressly called for the CBC/Radio-Canada to be defunded to "save taxpayer dollars and ensure a free and competitive press in the Canadian media landscape."<sup>9</sup>

### **New Democratic Party**

The NDP profess to hold arts and culture in high esteem, stating that they "are at the heart of who we are as Canadians."<sup>10</sup> It's how we listen and understand each other better. It's how we connect across vast distances and celebrate our identities. And in such a diverse country, it's how we share our incredible

---

<sup>7</sup> Poilievre's pitch to defund CBC, keep French services would require change in law Apr 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/poilievre-defund-cbc-change-law-1.6810434>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Defund the CBC. [www.conservative.ca/cpc/defund-the-cbc/](https://www.conservative.ca/cpc/defund-the-cbc/) (September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024)

<sup>10</sup> Supporting Canadian Arts and Culture. [www.ndp.ca/communities?focus=13934155&nothing=nothing](https://www.ndp.ca/communities?focus=13934155&nothing=nothing) (Sept 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024)



stories with each other, in both official languages – and with the entire world.

After Covid and cuts, they feel it's time for a different approach. They want to see artists able to earn decent livings from their art. They don't feel that Facebook, Google, Netflix and other such digital media companies are contributing adequately to Canadian content funding. They're not playing by the same rules. The NDP promise to modernize the Broadcasting Act to create a level playing field. They want to see Canadian programming owned by Canadians and increase funding for Telefilm and the Canada Media Fund.

The NDP state explicitly that they will increase funding for CBC/Radio-Canada "to help reverse the damage of decades of funding cuts." They believe that public broadcasting has "a remarkable legacy of connecting all points of our country – and it needs to have an even stronger future now more than ever to help make sure that Canadians have access to accurate, relevant information no matter where they live."

The NDP wants to see stable, long-term funding for arts and cultural institutions.

### **Bloc Québécois**

The Bloc Québécois recognize the importance of "stable, long-term funding for the CBC."<sup>11</sup> As such, they are advocating for indexation of current funding. They consider media "a watchdog for democracy. Their pluralism and independence are indicators of the democratic health of a society, which is why it is of paramount importance to ensure adequate funding so that the information they provide is reliable and of high quality."

Along with other measures, they are "calling for the establishment of an Estates General on the future of the media with all the players affected by the current crisis in the print media, the governments of Quebec and the provinces, and

---

<sup>11</sup> Bloc Québécois Response to CMG's 5 questions. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cmg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Election-2021-Bloc-Quebecois-Response-to-CMG.pdf (2021)



experts in order to find long-term solutions to ensure the survival of our press and of all broadcasters (general and specialized television and radio).”

### **Green Party of Canada**

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Green Party of Canada officially proclaimed support for an ad-free CBC/Radio-Canada.<sup>12</sup> They have not updated their platform for this coming Federal Election. Jo-Ann Roberts, current Deputy Leader of the Green Party of Canada, suggests that the party may drop this stance,<sup>13</sup> but to date they have not done so.

Historically the federal Green Party has been supportive of strong funding for the CBC/Radio-Canada. However, although they are leery of touching CBC/Radio-Canada’s revenue streams, they don’t believe that government money should be used to compete with private companies that don’t get government money, especially in an age that’s seeing less advertising money to go around.

Roberts believes that CBC/Radio-Canada would be a better national broadcaster by securing another funding source to replace the money it raises from advertising along with a budget allotment from the federal government. Roberts notes that some national broadcasters in Europe are funded by small fees placed on cell phone plans. Securing such an alternative source of funding would make CBC/Radio-Canada “a partner for private media outlets and not a competitor or threat” and would have the additional benefit of making CBC/Radio-Canada less vulnerable to changing governments. All that said, Roberts guarantees that should the Green Party of Canada find itself in a position to call the shots, “there will be increased funding for the CBC.”

### **WHAT THE PNA SAYS**

The Pensioners Association is a strong advocate for the preservation of CBC/Radio-Canada.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Green Party welcomes recommendations for regulatory reform on streaming services in Canada.*  
[www.greenparty.ca/en/media-release/2020-01-30/green-party-welcomes-recommendations-regulatory-reform-streaming-services](http://www.greenparty.ca/en/media-release/2020-01-30/green-party-welcomes-recommendations-regulatory-reform-streaming-services) (Sept 17th, 2024)

<sup>13</sup> Jo-Ann Roberts, e-mail message to author, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024





**The CBC Pensioners  
National Association**

*Preserving our Future, Sharing our Past*

**L'Association nationale  
des retraités de la SRC**

*Assurer notre avenir, partager notre passé*

We know that a strong public broadcaster is vital to a healthy democracy. With the rise of so-called citizen journalism and the proliferation of fake news, it's more important than ever for Canadians to have a source of news they can trust.

That source requires stability. The PNA wants to see a commitment to long-term stable funding for the CBC.

The PNA also values how the CBC connects Canadians to each other and it's vital in creating and maintaining that connection, particularly for smaller and rural communities. It's a true public service that we don't want to lose.

For these reasons, the PNA wants to see a commitment to long-term stable funding for the CBC and supports the recommendations of Heritage Minister St-Onge, although we wish they had come sooner.

See our response to the St-Onge report here: <https://www.cbcpensioners.ca/cbc-pensioners-welcome-heritage-ministers-proposals/>

## **SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CANDIDATES**

1. What is your position on CBC/Radio-Canada?
2. What is your plan to facilitate online civil discourse?
3. How do you propose to combat misinformation and disinformation?
4. By which means do you propose to reflect the country back to itself?
5. How do you propose to foster a shared national identity?
6. How do you propose to reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada?
7. How do you propose to contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression in this country?
8. What is your plan to reflect the different needs and circumstances of the many and varied minorities in this country?







**The CBC Pensioners  
National Association**

*Preserving our Future, Sharing our Past*

**L'Association nationale  
des retraités de la SRC**

*Assurer notre avenir, partager notre passé*

9. How would you suggest we fund CBC/Radio-Canada?

### **Addendum**

All five major political parties were invited to contribute to this paper via their respective online portals (in the case of the Liberal Party of Canada, the Conservative Party of Canada, the NDP, and the Bloc Québécois) and via an email to Deputy Leader JoAnn Roberts (in the case of the Green Party).

As of this writing (October 16<sup>th</sup> 2024), only JoAnn Roberts of the Green Party has responded.

However, you can read PNA President Dan Oldfield's response to a letter written by Conservative MP Rick Perkins, when Perkins was asked about the CPC position on the CBC.

<https://www.cbcpensioners.ca/reply-to-perkins-letter/>