

REQUIEM FOR A CENTURY?
CANADIAN BROADCASTING POLICY, ONLINE STREAMING SERVICE REGULATION,
AND CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

Canada's broadcasting policy debate reignited with the 2023 *Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11), which brought streaming platforms under the nation's cultural policy apparatus. Historically, Canadian broadcasting policy has sought to support both the economy and culture of the nation-state through regulating radio and television; however, the transnational media landscape of the twenty-first century, marked by the rise of American-based streaming services, has disrupted this regime.

This research historicizes Canadian broadcasting policy debates while examining reactions to the *Online Streaming Act*: framed as necessary government intervention, an invocation of twentieth-century cultural nationalism, or somewhere in between. Analyzing media discourses alongside political texts, this thesis argues that while the *Online Streaming Act* is often articulated to the preservation of cultural sovereignty in the digital age, efforts to future-proof broadcasting policy remain tethered to enduring tensions over nation-building, cultural expression, and normative regulatory philosophy in Canada.

DEDICATION

*For my late Pappou, whose wisdom and memory are eternal,
and for my Yiayia, who never misses a chance to remind me that I am blessed to pursue higher
education—
also, to eat something while I study.*

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CHAPTER ONE

From Airwaves to Algorithms: Canadian Broadcasting Policy

After more than three decades of technological transformation and cultural upheaval, debates over Canadian broadcasting policy have reignited. The nation's broadcasting policy remained stagnant until the Royal Assent of the *Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11) two years ago, confronting the digital-age challenges to cultural sovereignty. Previous legislation, the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*, mandated that the broadcasting system—encompassing radio and television broadcasters—*safeguards, enriches, and strengthens the cultural, political, social, and economic fabric of Canada* (*Broadcasting Act*, S.C., 1991, c.11). Intensifying transnational media flows in the twenty-first century have placed increasing pressure on the economic and cultural objectives of Canadian broadcasting policy, eroding the symbolic boundaries of culture traditionally defined by radio signals and satellite footprints (Morley & Robins, 2002).

Streaming platforms function in a fundamentally different way from both radio and television, with algorithmic recommendations, on-demand access, and globalized content mediating audience experience; however, rather than treating these platforms as distinct entities, cultural policymakers expanded the definition of 'broadcasting' through Bill C-11, amending the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* to include online streaming services in April 2023. As of this writing, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is actively developing a regulatory framework for these platforms. Streaming services operating in Canada are now officially obligated to support the preservation and promotion of Canadian culture. This unprecedented regulatory scope is contentious, raising critical questions about the role of broadcasting policy from airwaves to algorithms.

Purpose and Research Objectives

The cultural disruption caused by American-based streaming services has, indeed, posed a great challenge to nationalist dreams and desires historically entrenched in Canadian broadcasting policy (Cooling, 2024). Bill C-11, the *Online Streaming Act* (formally titled *An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts*), was proposed on November 22, 2021, after Bill C-10 of the same title died on the order paper on August 15, 2021, when the federal election was called. In tabling the streaming bills, former Heritage Ministers Steven Guilbeault (C-10) and Pablo Rodriguez (C-11) argued that the dominance of streaming platforms necessitated a radical revision of the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*, proposing that these services be defined as broadcasters and subject to regulation by the CRTC. Earlier, on January 29, 2020, the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel released its report, *Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act*, preceding the first iteration of the *Online Streaming Act* (C-10) in November 2020. With 97 recommendations for regulating media and communication on digital displays, the report represented a bold reimagining of how Canada might assert national sovereignty over the borderless Internet.

The Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel was appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government in June 2018, tasked with reassessing Canada's communication framework and providing recommendations for adapting to a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The comprehensive recommendations in the report envision the legislative framework in Canada as "one that reaffirms Canada's sovereignty, supports [the nation's] democratic values and inclusivity, and aims to realize the promise of advanced technologies for the benefit of Canada's economy and future prosperity, and Canadians as citizens, users, and creators" (Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review, 2020, p. 10).

Perhaps the most influential recommendation was to amend the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* to bring streaming services into the nation-state's cultural policy apparatus, broadening the jurisdiction of the CRTC.

When tabling Bill C-11 in Parliament, Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez declared that the broadcasting policy amendment “starts with making sure that online streamers contribute to the strength and vitality of Canada's cultural sector”, as “Canada's strong culture is no accident” (Rodriguez, 2022, p. 2320). Rodriguez's statement is not without contention, especially in a nation fraught with tensions surrounding what truly defines its *strong culture*. If regulating online streaming services “is about making the Internet a better place for all Canadians” (Rodriguez, 2022, p. 2320), it is necessary for the public to also reimagine what a *better place* might look like.

The cultural objective of Canadian broadcasting policy can be understood as a political-cultural effort to preserve and promote national identity, contributing to the normative regulatory philosophy that has guided broadcasting governance since the 1920s—namely, the commonsense assumption that the state *ought* to intervene for the sake of economy and culture. By analyzing political texts alongside media discourses, including print and digital newspapers as well as online fora, this thesis examines how federal broadcasting policy is constructed as a mediation of Canadian culture and expression, tracing discursive articulations from the regulation of radio in the 1920s to the governance of online streaming services in the 2020s—an era of transnationalism and platform economies. This political-cultural work is contested by those who see the bill as a requiem for a century past.

Drawing on Stuart Hall's (1985) theory of articulation, this thesis employs content analysis, document analysis, and critical discourse analysis to examine how cultural meanings are (re)produced, negotiated, and resisted. This thesis argues that while the *Online Streaming Act* is

often articulated to the preservation and promotion of cultural sovereignty in the digital age, this political-cultural work channels anachronistic narratives of cultural nationalism. Furthermore, efforts to future-proof Canadian broadcasting policy are not merely technocratic; they are tethered to enduring tensions over nation-building, cultural expression, and the state's normative regulatory philosophy. The research historicizes broadcasting policy debates while examining reactions to the *Online Streaming Act*: framed as necessary state intervention in the digital age, invoked as a continuation of twentieth-century cultural nationalism, or situated somewhere in an ambivalent space in between. This thesis compares policy debates preceding the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* with contemporary deliberations surrounding Canada's *Online Streaming Act*.

Although press coverage and online fora differ radically in tone and institutional authority, both function as important sites of meaning-making in policy debates. Analyses of Reddit posts, newspaper coverage, and political excerpts uncover (1) the foundations of Canadian broadcasting policy since the 1920s (specifically from a critical cultural lens) and (2) public perspectives on applying a century-old regulatory framework to new media with the enactment of the 2023 *Online Streaming Act*. This thesis does not set out to determine whether the *Online Streaming Act* is *good* or *bad* policy; it interrogates broadcasting policy discourse as a political-cultural project, covering the responses to its latest chapter. This research addresses political economic considerations where possible within the confines of approximately one hundred pages. In its essence, this thesis asks what happens when we perceive broadcasting policy as cultural discourse, and when we take seriously how Canadians talk about an issue that “directly affects Canadian living rooms” (Taylor, 2013, p. 3)—in Parliament, newsrooms, and digital spaces.

A Short Introduction to Broadcasting Policy Debates

Broadcasting policy in Canada has emerged through historical moments, shaped by sociopolitical tensions and influenced by both economic and cultural pressures as well as global forces. Aligning with Marc Raboy's (1994) conceptualization of broadcasting "as a multifaceted activity taking place in the public sphere and contested by actors situated in the areas of the state, the economy and civil society" who are guided by economic, political, and sociocultural objectives (p. 5), this thesis understands Canada's broadcasting system as defined by and reflective of three intersecting tensions: the economic objectives of broadcasting; its sociocultural purposes; and its role in shaping and negotiating the politics of Canadian identity (Raboy, 1994). The Canadian broadcasting landscape is modelled as a mixed system, composed of a national public broadcaster (the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), commercial broadcasters, and community and campus radio stations (MacLennan, 2001, 2020; Raboy, 1990; Skinner, 2005; Vipond, 1994).

Over the last century, Canadian broadcasting policy has been articulated to ideological narratives that tend to privilege certain forms of cultural capital. Consequently, the contributions of Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, rural populations, and French Canadians have, at times, been marginalized in commonsense assumptions of culture and nationhood (see Ali, 2012; Bourcheix-Laporte, 2024; Fleras, 2011; King & Odartey-Wellington, 2022; MacLennan, 2010, 2011; Odartey-Wellington, 2013; Potvin, 1972; Raboy, 1990; Roth, 2005).

The objective of reinforcing Canada's *cultural fabric* was once realized through the CRTC's Canadian content (CanCon) regulations, applying exclusively to radio and television broadcasters; however, with the twenty-first century shift in cultural production and consumption, an analogue-era policy has been adapted for a digital world (Jeannotte, 2022), raising regulatory challenges that political-cultural arguments of nation-building can no longer easily justify

(Cooling, 2023; Raboy, 2008; Rowland, 2013; Taras, 2012; Taras & Raboy, 2004; Taylor, 2013). After three decades, the very concept of cultural sovereignty has been (re)shaped by transnational media flows and platform economies, with the burgeoning influence of streaming services reviving persistent anxieties over the Americanization of Canadian culture (Davis & Zboralska, 2017; Martin, 2025; Schnitzer, 2019; Wagman, 2017).

Departing from traditional approaches to policy analysis, this thesis adopts Stuart Hall's (1985) theory of articulation as its framework. Hall (1985) conceptualizes articulation as fluid; an articulation cannot be eternal. Articulation draws attention to how ideological assumptions both create and precariously sustain connections among meanings, interests, and identities. Hall (1985) specifically emphasizes the political-cultural work necessary for the (re)production of articulations to occur: an articulation must be actively constructed between social or economic forces and politics, aesthetics, and ideologies. Since the early twentieth century, state-driven cultural policy has been articulated to cultural sovereignty. Without broadcasting policy, there is no natural reason for commercial broadcasters to contribute to fostering a distinct Canadian culture; however, Hall's (1985) theory helps us understand how meanings—like “cultural sovereignty” or “Canadian culture”—are never fixed. They are built, broken, and stitched together in moments of debate. This research traces those moments temporally and spatially, showing how broadcasting policy rhetoric attempts to stabilize notions of cultural sovereignty in times of disruption, and how normative ideals are (re)articulated through debate.

In an unprecedentedly digital territory, Canadians increasingly exercise control over the content they consume. Public discourses continually (re)produce abstract and material (dis)connections between social conceptions of broadcasting policy and political-cultural aesthetics. As Steven C. Bailey (2001) observes, Hall's theory “leaves analytic space for the

contingency of social action [...] but also looks for forces which enable and constrain various articulations, thus refusing a necessary or immanent politics in a given social instance” (p. 46). Debates over the *Online Streaming Act* quite clearly exemplify the work of articulation: politicians and cultural supporters frequently tether broadcasting policy to cultural sovereignty, often invoking a sense of defensive cultural nationalism (MacLennan, 2019) and, at times, hegemonic notions of the nation-state. Still, the public sphere holds space for contestation, allowing critical voices to negotiate and resist dominant ideologies and regulatory norms.

CHAPTER TWO

Setting the Frequency: A Mixed-Methods Approach to Broadcasting Policy

This research employs a mixed-methods approach with a content and critical discourse analysis of newspapers and Reddit commentary, supplemented by document analysis of select excerpts from Hansard debates, legislation, and commissioned reports spanning the last century. Content analysis enables inferences about the ever-evolving relationship between the Canadian public and state intervention, while document and critical discourse analysis shed light on how Canadian broadcasting policy has developed in relation to discourses of cultural sovereignty, nationalism, and power. With the Royal Assent of Canada's *Online Streaming Act* on April 27, 2023, this study addresses an emergent gap in academic literature by comparing public commentary on the advent of radio and television in the twentieth century with contemporary reactions to streaming service regulation.

This research embodies two tensions adapted from Raboy's (1994) framework: (1) the entanglement of Canadian broadcasting policy with contested constructions of Canadian nationhood and (2) the changing relationship between the politics of broadcasting policy and the regulation of communication technologies, particularly online streaming services. Adopting an inductive approach, this thesis examines how Canadians—from politicians to ordinary citizens—articulate their expectations of broadcasting policy in the digital age, while tracing continuities and changes in the articulation of cultural policy from historical to present-day debates.

Sampling

The mixed-methods approach begins with a non-random general purposive sample for content analysis to inform the selection of a critical case sample for document analysis and critical

discourse analysis. The purposive sample consists of contemporary and historical newspaper articles and forum threads on Reddit.¹

To maintain methodological feasibility, this study delimits data collection to five key time periods, each representing a critical juncture in the development of Canadian broadcasting policy:

- **1928-1936:** From the appointment of the Aird Commission to the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) with the 1936 *Broadcasting Act*
- **1952-1959:** From the launch of the first Canadian television stations in Montreal and Toronto to the introduction of Canadian content (CanCon) regulations by the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG) with the 1958 *Broadcasting Act*
- **1968-1976:** From the replacement of the BBG with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) under the 1968 *Broadcasting Act* to the CRTC's reinforcement of CanCon
- **1980-1991:** From Francis Fox's appointment as Minister of Communications to the 1991 amendment of the *Broadcasting Act*
- **2018-2024:** From the establishment of the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel to the Royal Assent of Bill C-11 in 2023, constituting the first amendment to Canada's broadcasting policy in over 30 years

Newspaper Design

The newspaper sample comprises 537 English- and French-language Canadian news stories—including articles, editorials, and opinion pieces—from legacy newspaper organizations

¹As outlined in Reddit's 2023 Terms of Service, the collection and analysis of publicly accessible content on the platform is permitted for research purposes and does not require formal ethics review: <https://redditinc.com/policies/user-agreement-september-25-2023>. This policy aligns with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-epts2_2022.html), which states that research using publicly available information does not require ethics review when the individuals involved have no reasonable expectation of privacy (Article 2.2).

and independent outlets, where digitally accessible, across Canada from 1928 to 1936, 1952 to 1959, 1968 to 1976, 1980 to 1991, and 2018 to 2024. These outlets include *The L'Acadie Nouvelle*, *Alberni Valley Times*, *The Bashaw Star*, *The Calgary Albertan*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Castor Advance*, *The Chronicle-Herald*, *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Ecosse*, *The Cranbrook Townsman*, *The Daily Gleaner*, *The Daily Herald-Tribune*, *Le Devoir*, *The Edmonton Journal*, *The Expositor*, *The Financial Post*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Interior News*, *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, *The Kootenay Western Star*, *La Presse*, *The Leader-Post*, *The Moncton Transcript*, *The Montreal Gazette*, *The Montreal Star*, *The National Post*, *The Niagara Falls Review*, *The North Bay Nugget*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Ottawa Journal*, *The Owen Sound Daily Sun-Times*, *The Ponoka News*, *The Province*, *The Red Deer Advocate*, *The Saint John Times Globe*, *The Salmon Arm Observer*, *The Sault Star*, *The Similkameen Spotlight*, *The Spectator*, *The Star-Phoenix*, *The Sun Times*, *The Telegraph-Journal*, *The Times Colonist*, *The Times-Transcript*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Toronto Sun*, *The Vancouver News-Herald*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Waterloo Region Record*, *The Weekly Advance*, *The Whitehorse Daily Star*, *The Windsor Star*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, and *The Winnipeg Sun*.

Altogether, these newspapers originate from Atlantic Canada, Northern Canada, Ontario, Québec, and Western Canada. *The Globe and Mail* is coded as “Pan-Canadian” to reflect its national editorial orientation and centralized production model. Postmedia outlets are coded as “Nationwide” to acknowledge the conglomerate’s distributed network of regionally branded newspapers that often share syndicated content beyond *The National Post*, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario. Nationwide (61), pan-Canadian (66), Western Canada (135), Ontario (141), and Québec (154) papers constitute most of the dataset. Only 39 stories were collected from Atlantic

Canada, and 6 from Northern Canada. The sample relied on digitized newspaper databases, which disproportionately archive major metropolitan and national outlets.²

The purposive sample reveals whose voices are amplified in press coverage, how key debates are framed, and when. Newspaper articles were collected across the five time periods using targeted keyword searches tailored to each historical context. The sample criteria defined the keyword searches to focus closely on broadcasting and more broadly on communication policy. Digital newspaper databases (Canadian Major Dailies and newspapers.com) were searched using the following keywords: “radio policy”, “television policy”, “broadcasting policy”, “broadcast policy”, “Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review”, “Bill C-10”, “Bill C-11”, and “Online Streaming Act”. French-language newspapers were searched using equivalent French translations of these terms. The 2018-24 period also includes digital newspaper coverage to supplement a dearth of physical articles.

Social Media Design

The sample of twentieth-century newspapers serves as a historical baseline, with framings shaped by journalistic conventions of the time. In contrast, the social media sample captures discourse produced outside institutional norms of objectivity and neutrality, facilitating a comparative analysis between analogue and digital contexts, and between institutional and social spaces.

The Reddit sample, designed to capture a snapshot of public discourse, shows the differential perspectives of anonymous users and reveals patterns of consensus and contestation within a digital public sphere. Comments on threads from three different subreddits—r/OutOfTheLoop, r/AskACanadian, and r/ontario—were collected using the search terms “Bill C-

²A detailed breakdown of the regional distribution of newspaper coverage is provided in Chapter Four.

11” and “Online Streaming Act”. Subreddits, which are user-moderated fora organized around specific interests, topics, or communities, vary widely in engagement and focus. These subreddits were selected for their comparatively substantive discussions on legislation, whereas other subreddits produced less discursive and more hostile engagement. Other threads were specifically excluded under the sample criteria: the respectful exchange of questions, opinions, or commentary on the *Online Streaming Act*. Only threads with a minimum of 50 replies were included, resulting in a total of 397 items (original posts and replies) collected for content analysis. Out-of-context, irrelevant, or offensive content was manually cleaned from the sample. Comments classified as ‘offensive’ were derogatory, profane, or hateful, and were omitted to maintain ethical standards and focus the analysis on discursive patterns rather than abusive arguments.

Policy Sample Design

The small policy sample includes political texts from across the five historical periods. While the *Broadcasting Act* has been amended numerous times since its inception as the *Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act* in 1932, this thesis delimits its policy analysis to legislation from this century for feasibility. The 2023 revision of the 1991 Act represents an epochal shift, reframing Canadian broadcasting policy through debates over digital governance.

Content Analysis

As the initial phase of this research, content analysis enables the identification and synthesis of recurring themes in broadcasting policy debates, thereby forming a foundation for qualitative analysis across a longitudinal timeline. Content analysis allows researchers to situate data within its specific context and evaluate meanings attributed by individuals, groups, or cultures, using replicable and systematic inferences from data to their contextual significance (Krippendorff, 1989). Inferences describe and quantify phenomena to uncover where attention is

directed by individuals, groups, institutions, or society (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Klaus Krippendorff (1989) explains that communication and messages are separate from observable data: “they inform about something other than themselves; they reveal some properties of their distant producers or carriers, and they have cognitive consequences for their senders, their receivers, and the institutions in which their exchange is embedded” (p. 403). Content analysis identifies, describes, and quantifies texts across a century of broadcasting policy discourse, with data organized into exhaustive, mutually exclusive categories. This method reveals recurring patterns in political media messages (Riffe et al., 2023).

Recent scholarship has examined the *Online Streaming Act* through political economic, settler colonial, and critical communication perspectives (Bourcheix-Laporte, 2023; Cooling, 2024; Cunningham & Eklund, 2022; Dimitrieff, 2023; Geist, 2021). This thesis offers a novel contribution, tuning into public discourse and providing insight into the discursive construction and contestation of policy. The application of content analysis draws on established media research exploring how the public responds to policy processes.

In 2009, Dennis Pilon conducted a content analysis of coverage from five daily newspapers on the 2007 Ontario electoral reform during the campaign period. Coding the coverage by type (editorial, article, or op-ed), position (pro versus con), and argument style (speculative, logical, evidence, or expert), Pilon (2009) found “low levels of coverage overall, a lack of balance in terms of showcasing differentiate sides in the debate, and a tendency to use speculative and logical arguments rather than ones based on evidence or recognized experts” in the broadsheets (p. 21). Accordingly, in “Harnessing the Twittersphere”, Ian Stedman (2018) argues that platforms such as Twitter (now X) have intensified civic participation in political discourse, encouraging scholars to mine digital spaces for data.

With the inclusion of Reddit data, this thesis harnesses the affordances of social media to examine grassroots-level public discourse—distinct from institutional narratives typically found in newspapers. In a recent study on how the technological affordances of TikTok shape political expression and engagement, Mackenzie Quick and Jessica Maddox (2024) conduct a textual analysis of 150 videos to identify recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and argument forms. They find that TikTok shapes civic engagement in a volatile manner, reinforcing confirmation bias and fostering hostile opposition (Quick & Maddox, 2024)—a dynamic that underscores how platform design itself mediates the nature of discourse. Reddit’s relatively open and anonymous structure affords a mode of public discourse that can be systematically analyzed for trends surrounding broadcasting policy in Canada, and the sample was deliberately designed to minimize the distortive effects of volatile participation on the platform.

Content Analysis Guidelines

An inductively developed codebook guided the content analysis, enabling the systematic categorization of newspaper articles and Reddit posts by recurring themes, sentiment or tone, and the representation of stakeholders. Assigning open codes to items in the pilot—later refined and grouped into categories—produced a consistent and rigorous cross-section of how broadcasting policy debates have played out in the public sphere over the last century.

A set of broad themes immediately emerged from the pilot data, capturing the breadth of discussions across the articles, many of which spanned multiple themes. “Cultural Sovereignty” addressed debates over how broadcasting policy is linked to Canadian culture and national identity. “Francophone Culture” encompassed concerns about how federal broadcasting policy engages with Québec’s unique linguistic and cultural needs. “Diversity / Representation” focused on portrayals of Canada as a multicultural, multi-regional, and multi-vocal country. Collectively,

these three themes represent discourses about the *cultural objectives* of Canadian broadcasting policy and often reflect narratives of cultural nationalism. On the opposite side of the same coin, discussions of *industrial and economic objectives* were covered by two separate themes. “Market Power & Industrial Outcomes” captured debates surrounding the economic, structural, and commercial aspects of the broadcasting industry, whereas “Cross-Border Trade” addressed legal tensions with the United States over federal governance.

The analysis further traced regulatory strategy and political considerations. “CanCon” documented references to the framework or legacy of the CRTC’s Canadian content requirements. “Policy Process”, as a non-co-occurring theme, encompassed procedural elements of policymaking. “Expression, Democracy, & Politics” included anxieties and concerns over free speech, censorship, content discoverability, partisan conflict, and liberal democratic norms.

Beyond thematic categorization, the overall sentiment of each article was evaluated. Articles were classified as “Supportive” if they mainly presented favourable perspectives on legislation, “Critical” if they conveyed predominantly negative views or criticisms of legislation, and “Discourse / Debate” if they maintained a relative balance of perspectives or were largely descriptive and informative. Voice was another key variable. The analysis identified figures, organizations, and institutions quoted or directly paraphrased in the press.

To ensure consistency, each coded article included additional metadata: title, publication name, and publication date. A notes section recorded summaries of each article’s coverage. The preliminary criterion for inclusion in the dataset was that an explicit discussion of federal broadcasting policy was present. Articles that lacked substantive engagement with policy were excluded. “Substantive” is operationalized as offering analytical, descriptive, value-laden, or critical commentary on the broadcasting policy of the day. Exclusions included certain CRTC

public notices as well as French-language articles about provincial cultural policy. Articles covering Bill C-11 alongside Bill C-18, the *Online News Act*, were also excluded for clarity. Articles specifically related to the governance of CBC/Radio-Canada or routine operations of the CRTC were removed from the sample, in addition to unreadable microfilm scans.

The total population of newspaper articles across the five historical periods consisted of thousands of policy-related items, necessitating the targeted keyword searches tailored to each era. Articles were collected individually through keyword searches in digitized newspaper databases. During analysis, duplicate entries were manually identified and excluded, with duplication interpreted as indicative of content syndication. This manual deduplication ensured that the final content analysis dataset comprised unique articles, facilitating a distinction between content produced with regional specificity versus national distribution. Duplicate articles originating from syndicated columnists, newswires, or the Canadian Press were coded only once; however, their distribution was documented by recording the publication locations of the papers in which they appeared under “Coverage Range”.

Many themes from the newspaper analysis were also evident in Reddit discussions, but additional themes emerged by the nature of online fora—particularly around platform governance, concern for media creators and consumers, and mis/disinformation. The dataset comprised metadata detailing the subreddit community, date of posting, URL, and username for each entry. Sentiment, assessed using the same criteria as for newspapers, and theme were coded to identify patterns.

Thematic clusters emerging from the pilot revealed recurring issues and narratives. “Culture vs. Industry vs. Platformization” captured concerns surrounding broadcasting policy and the nexus of Canadian culture, industry, and platforms in the digital age. Paralleling the newspaper

analysis, “Cultural Sovereignty”, “Diversity / Representation”, and “CanCon” appeared in preliminary analysis, establishing them as frames for further examination. The theme “Freedom of Expression / Anti-Intervention” corresponded loosely to “Expression, Democracy, & Politics” in the newspaper analysis. Other areas of discourse included “Policy (Mis)information” as well as “Satire”, where Redditors used humour and critique to challenge the bill or express frustration or ambivalence. “Freedom of Expression / Anti-Intervention” was never exclusively co-coded with “Policy (Mis)information”, as viral concerns about free speech and conspiratorial attitudes were conceptualized beyond instances of inaccurate or misleading information.

By incorporating user-generated content alongside contemporary newspaper coverage, the thesis captures both institutional responses as well as community reactions to Bill C-11. Only Reddit posts contributing to civic discussion—where users engaged substantively with ideas about Canadian broadcasting policy—were included in the dataset.³

Document Analysis

Kari Karppinen and Hallvard Moe (2012) note that policy documents, legislative texts, and regulatory reports are often treated as primary sources with mere descriptive value; however, documents are important texts intended to communicate political actions. As such, documents hold discursive value, frequently legitimating political actions and warranting critical inquiry (Karppinen & Moe, 2012). Close readings of select political excerpts on Canadian broadcasting policy foreground the political-cultural processes through which these texts acquire meaning.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Drawing on the broader datasets, a critical case sample was selected sequentially to facilitate critical discourse analysis, interrogating public commentary, meaning-making, and

³For detailed code definitions and the inclusion and exclusion criteria, see Appendices A to E.

power dynamics in ways that contextualize understandings of more typical cases (Lindlof, 1995, as cited in Deacon et al., 2021). For Norman Fairclough (1993), critical discourse analysis is explanatory at the micro- and macro-level. Critical discourse analysis allows us to

systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (p. 135)

Critical discourse analysis situates the discursive practices of politicians, lobbyists, and others in the Canadian public within wider social and cultural structures that have historically supported state intervention in the Canadian broadcasting system. Broadcasting policy can therefore be analyzed *vis-à-vis* relations and struggles over political power, informed by commonsense assumptions of culture and regulation.

Critical discourse analysis aligns closely with Stuart Hall's (1985) theory of articulation; both reject the notion of an objective reality existing independent of human interpretation and bias, instead emphasizing reality as constructed through language, power structures, and social relationships. Consequently, the discourse analysis is scaffolded by articulation theory, providing a theoretical framework to critically examine broadcasting policy debates.

Limitations

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this thesis is its absence of a focused critical political economic perspective; it draws specifically upon critical cultural studies to analyze the discursive production of the nation-state in relation to broadcasting policy across the twentieth and

twenty-first centuries. Simultaneously, this limitation contributes to the originality of the research and delineates its scope. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge that the cultural objectives of broadcasting policy cannot be realized without first achieving economic objectives (Cooling, 2024). CanCon, for example, must increasingly succeed in the market to manifest cultural impact. Further research should also contextualize developments in Canadian broadcasting policy globally, given efforts by places including Australia and the European Union towards modernizing cultural policy frameworks for the digital age.

Additional limitations of this research relate to the categorization of newspaper articles for content analysis by corporate affiliation and national or regional representation—a strategy adopted for feasibility and informed by the organizational structure and geographic focus of major newspaper conglomerates. While practical, this approach may obscure minor local variations within affiliated news outlets that are not fully captured through broad categorization.

It is also worth noting that Bill C-11, the *Online Streaming Act*, was only enacted in April of 2023; the long-term cultural and political economic implications of the somewhat ambiguous bill cannot be fully assessed. As of this writing, the CRTC is actively developing its regulatory plan for streaming platforms, holding public hearings and accepting statements. Furthermore, scholarly inquiry into the politics of Canadian culture, nation, and identity—more precisely, Canadian *identities*—and cultural policy certainly warrants a level of attention that exceeds what a master's thesis can provide.

CHAPTER THREE

Through Static and Streaming: Broadcasting Policy and Canadian Culture, 1920s-2020s

This thesis examines the tensions inherent in Canadian broadcasting policy, centred around an analysis of the recent *Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11). Although Bill C-11 seeks to modernize Canada's regulatory framework and safeguard cultural sovereignty in the digital age, the *Online Streaming Act* remains deeply entangled in cultural assumptions inherited from the twentieth century. This literature review covers ongoing debates between longstanding nationalistic approaches to cultural policy and the contemporary pressures of a globalized world. To illustrate how ideas regarding broadcasting policy and Canadian nationhood have developed, the review of the literature is organized chronologically, tracking historical conversations in the field, which ebb and flow alongside policy reform and technological disruption.

Historical Context: Early Regulatory Frameworks (1905-1930s)

From Telegraphy to Radio

The practice of broadcasting legislation in Canada began officially with the *Wireless Telegraphy Act* of 1905, which designated the Department of Marine and Fisheries as the regulatory and licensing authority, closely mirroring earlier legislation in Britain. Influenced by Britain and rapid technological advancements, the Canadian government soon sought more comprehensive legislation (Armstrong, 2016). The subsequent *Radiotelegraph Act* of 1913 responded directly to the rise of wireless radiotelephones, driven by transnational coordination like the London Convention of 1912 (Vipond, 1992).

Radio's Commercial Beginnings and American Influence

Almost one decade later, in 1922, radio stations were first commercially licensed in Canada (MacLennan, 2013). With the proliferation of radio, regulatory challenges emerged, largely due to

interference from American broadcasters whose signals dominated dials allocated to Canadian stations throughout the 1920s and '30s, creating the necessity for airwave regulation. Many Canadians, especially those living near the border, tuned into American stations, attracted by stronger signals, higher production quality, and greater programming variety. American network broadcasters initially dominated the airwaves until the establishment of Canadian affiliates (MacLennan, 2010).

While frequency spectrum scarcity initially justified early broadcasting regulation (Armstrong, 2016; MacLennan, 2018), political economic and cultural aspirations soon became prominent. Robert Armstrong (2016) highlights the pursuit of political, economic, and cultural independence as central to state intervention, linked directly to the failure of the domestic market to sustain adequate competition.

Broadcasting Policy as Cultural Sovereignty: The Aird Debate

Scholars such as Marc Raboy (1990) and Mary Vipond (1992) have extensively documented the relations between broadcasting policy, cultural identity, and nationalism in Canada. The early dominance of private American broadcasters compelled the federal government to consider public broadcasting institutions as essential for asserting cultural sovereignty and fostering a distinct Canadian culture. The ambitions of twentieth-century cultural nationalism transpired in the 1929 Royal Commission on Broadcasting (known as the Aird Commission), established under Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Liberal government. The commission's report led to the creation of the *Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act* of 1932 and its subsequent amendment in 1936 (MacLennan, 2018; Peers, 1969; Raboy, 1990; Vipond, 1992). Chaired by Sir John Aird, president of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, the Commission sought victory for English Canadian nationalists, to whom the notions of 'public' and 'national' were synonymous; on the

other hand, French Canadians and others on the margins rejected the dominant social vision for the idea of public broadcasting (Raboy, 1990). The hegemonic sentiment of Canadian nationalism in the 1920s has been described as “that of an emerging nation struggling to find its place between a British colonial past and the American dream of the future, anxious to preserve the trappings of the former without denying itself the promised pleasures of the latter” (Raboy, 1990, p. 18).

The Aird Commission considered two opposite broadcasting models: the American approach, based on competition among private stations for audiences and revenue, and the European public monopoly model, exemplified by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Ultimately, the Commission recommended ending all private broadcasting in favour of a publicly owned national broadcaster modelled on the BBC. Although the system was never fully nationalized, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) was established in 1932 (Armstrong, 2016). The Aird report ignited debates around public versus private broadcasting, Canadian versus American programming, subsidies and broadcaster responsibilities, and regulatory control *vis-à-vis* freedom of expression (Armstrong, 2016; MacLennan & Cooling, 2023).

Marginalizations in National Narratives

Raboy (1990) emphasizes that nationalist rhetoric primarily served urban-elite Anglophone Canadians, marginalizing the dreams, desires, and realities of rural communities, women, French Canadians, farmers, and labourers, who were recognized only as passive consumers of its sentiments—the construction of a collective Canadian consciousness. Both political elites and those on the margins shared fears of Americanization, albeit for different reasons: marginalized communities sought more inclusive and diverse representation, while elites aimed to maintain cultural cohesion and sovereignty through radio. Social and political movements of the 1920s

threatened the hegemony of the Canadian elite, reinforcing the desire to use radio as an instrument of nationalism (Raboy, 1990). David Skinner (2025), writing 35 years later, argues that the aesthetic and intellectual rise of Anglophone cultural nationalism in the early twentieth century profoundly influenced regulatory decisions of the nation-state—a means to an end of asserting *Canadianness*. The framing of broadcasting policy as a tool for mediating a distinct national identity distinguished it from the regulatory pathways taken for other media.

The 1920s were critical for Canada's movement from colony to nation: an imagined construct, manifested through space-binding communication technology. Frank W. Peers (1969), in *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951*, employs archival and ethnographic research to trace policy from the early days of radio in the 1920s to the advent of television in 1952. Peers's work argues that Canada's mixed system of public and private broadcasting, established under the *Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, 1932*, both mirrors and defines the quest for a national identity: one ideologically distinct from Canada's former colonial master, Britain, and the cultural powerhouse to the south, the United States. Peers (1969) canonizes Graham Spry and Alan Plaunt, co-founders of the Canadian Radio League, who lobbied the Conservative government to embrace public broadcasting in the 1920s.

The development of a Canadian national broadcasting network as an natural expression of post-war nationalism is a central theme in former CBC broadcaster E. Austin Weir's (1965) ethnography *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada*, and in subsequent archival works analyzing the Canadian Radio League's political influence, including within the Special Committees on Radio Broadcasting (MacLennan & Cooling, 2023; McChesney, 1999; Nolan, 1986; O'Brien, 1969). Anne F. MacLennan (2019) defines the political-cultural work to

manufacture culture through broadcasting as “defensive nationalism”, arguing that Canada has yet to fully articulate a national identity beyond the distinction of *not British* and *not American*.

In “The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada”, Margaret Prang (1965) analyzes archival letters and documents from private interests and public figures, arguing that radio policy in the 1930s sought to construct a singular Canadian identity—one to be protected and promoted through the new medium. This interpretation counters public broadcasting apologists, who viewed state intervention in 1932 as inevitable (see Peers, 1969; Weir, 1965). Prang (1965) identifies two responsible actors: private enterprise, too reluctant to assume financial risk given Canada’s vast geography and relatively small population, and nationalist pressure groups, which sought to leverage the dominion’s authority against perceived American threats. Prang (1965) characterizes radio regulation as “defensive expansionism”, framing it as a novel cultural policy strategy.

While Prang (1965) emphasizes the cultural nationalist imperatives shaping Canadian radio policy, a critical political economic lens highlights the structural forces at play. Skinner (2025) argues that the perennial struggle to represent Canadian culture through broadcast programming reflects the historical entanglement of state and private capital, where social goals—including cultural expression—are subordinated to the demands of commodification and capitalization of private interests, originating in the nineteenth century. Skinner (2025) further critiques mainstream Anglophone literature for framing policy development as a struggle between rational actors, overlooking how transnational relations of production, consumption, and the marginalization of broadcasting’s publicness have shaped debates over the past century.

Historical contingencies further shaped Canadian broadcasting policy. The Royal Commission on Broadcasting in 1929 and the hegemonic interests of American commercial broadcasters heavily influenced the development of Canada’s mixed broadcasting system; yet,

MacLennan (2018) argues that policy was likewise shaped by the largely unregulated years of radio, highlighting how both regulatory intervention and periods of state freedom informed the implementation of national broadcasting. Before national networks were established in phases during the 1920s and 1930s, broadcasters were small-scale and independent, fostering a feeling of localism. In the absence of a national public broadcaster, however, Canadian listeners were increasingly exposed to American commercial programming on the airwaves, at the expense of domestic content.

Indeed, the slow pace of broadcasting policy development allowed audience experience to influence the emergent public and private system, reflecting both a demand for local broadcasting and American commercial programming (MacLennan, 2018). MacLennan's (2018) contribution on the path to radio broadcasting policy contextualizes Skinner's (2005) findings that both private and public broadcasters capitalized on foreign programming: the private sector to maximize profit, and the public sector to diversify programming, generate revenue, and appeal to a mass audience. Consequently, Skinner (2005) argues that the public-facing Canadian broadcasting system was more so *portrayed* as committed to national programming, while private stations prioritized profit through minimal investment in cultural content.

The CRBC to the CBC: Transitions, Continued Fears

Under the Conservative government of R. B. Bennett, the creation of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC) and its subsequent transformation into the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1936 further entangled cultural nationalism with broadcasting. The 1932 *Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act* reflected a set of compromises with the philosophy of the Aird report to address five central concerns: "the uneven availability of radio signals across Canada, the absence of a pan-Canadian or even interprovincial radio networks, the limited amount

of Canadian programming, the lack of Canadian venture capital available to finance the start-up of radio stations, and the absence of an independent regulatory to supervise private sector stations” (Armstrong, 2016, p. 28).

Although Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King supported the Canadian Radio League’s efforts to establish a government-owned and -operated broadcasting system, the *Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act* of 1936 granted the corporation power to regulate private sector broadcasters, mirroring the BBC in Britain (Armstrong, 2016). MacLennan and Cooling (2023), using archival documents and recordings, underscore the surge of nationalist sentiment in Canada in the wake of the First World War and the subsequent influence of Major Gladstone Murray—former Director of Publicity at the BBC and the first General Manager of the CBC in 1936—who transferred the BBC’s public service broadcasting philosophy to Canada. The CBC’s cultural role was soon decided: to cultivate a sense of shared citizenship and enrich Canadian cultural life across linguistic and regional divides (MacLennan & Cooling, 2023). Yet, even with the establishment of public broadcasting, MacLennan’s (2005) radio program content analysis finds that growing homogenization of the system by 1939 continued the dominance of American-affiliated networks on the airwaves, followed by stations of or affiliated with the CRBC and its successor, the CBC. Political economic and technological circumstances permitted American signals to be heard North of the border, and the development of the CRBC and the CBC inversely complicated the ability for Canadian programming, and thereby cultural expression, to succeed (MacLennan, 2005).

Although the CBC immediately aired American programming to Canadian listeners, despite its production of many unique programs (MacLennan, 2005), radio audiences participated in creating demand for both local and national content, contributing to the formation of a Canadian consciousness. Analyzing the relationship between radio listeners and the Canadian nation-state,

Vipond (1992) turns to the Canadian Radio League—founded in October 1930 by Alan Plaunt and Graham Spry—examining Spry’s public statements to identify why lobbyists advocated for the creation of a national public system. Spry felt that broadcasting was, indeed, a public service that ought to protect and advance ideals of democracy, freedom, and progressiveness by educating and informing the public. He also urged the capacity of public broadcasting to serve nation-building purposes; for Spry, affirming a sense of Canadian consciousness was a fundamental problem of the 1920s, which could be solved through public broadcasting, bringing together diverse cultures and regions (Vipond, 1992). In another study on radio and the Canadian audience, MacLennan (2013) contends that Canadians “had to learn to listen” (p. 311), emphasizing the formative role of radio in cultivating new habits of attention and modes of national belonging. Radio became an integral element of Canadian society and domestic life by the 1930s, though the audience only emerged slowly in the years following 1922 (MacLennan, 2013). MacLennan (2013) determines that radio, in the domestic space of the home, reconstructed listeners’ conception of technology; their connections to radio genres, programs, and celebrities; and, importantly, their ties to the nation-state.

Archival scholarship on Canadian broadcasting traces how this emerging medium became the subject of polarized debate between and among politicians, pressure groups, newspapers, and private interests during the early twentieth century (Dewar, 1982; Nolan, 1984, 1989; Vipond, 1992, 1994). Early regulatory debates in Canada reveal enduring nationalist narratives intertwined with social inequities and marginalization, with ongoing implications for contemporary policy and cultural expression. Raboy (1994) emphasizes that Canada’s mixed-ownership system, regulated by an independent body in accordance with communication law, sustains a delicate balance in which private and public networks coexist in mutual tolerance despite divergent interests. Yet, as

Raboy (1990) reminds us, this tension cannot be reduced to market dynamics alone. Within Canadian collective memory, the development of broadcasting policy is remembered as a conflict between the private and public sectors, but struggles also played out between competing conceptions of national identity (Raboy, 1990).

Broadcasting Policy into the Postwar Era

Television, Technology, and Anxiety

Marc Raboy's (1990) *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy* traces developments from the first Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting in 1928 to the then-new *Broadcasting Act* in 1968, which streamlined the CBC's mandate to enrich the *Canadianness* of the system as television extended services nationwide. Bridging a gap in Québec-centred perspectives, Raboy (1990) contends that the nation-state ultimately missed the social democratic opportunities of broadcasting. Subsequent research on diversity in broadcasting policy echoes Raboy's (1990) critique, arguing that Canadian broadcasting policy—as the mediation of a singular national identity—has historically ignored, forgotten, or denied the dreams and desires of non-hegemonic communities, especially Québécois, Indigenous, and racialized ones (Bociurkiw, 2011; Edwardson, 2008; Filion, 1996; King & Odartey-Wellington, 2022; MacLennan, 2011; Odartey-Wellington, 2013; Potvin, 1972; Roth, 2005).

Building on the discussion of inequality in access and cultural representation, Ira Wagman (2017) states that the 1920s and '30s saw a cultural policy apparatus as necessary to sharing Canadian stories, and second phase emerged in the 1960s and early 70s: supporting the production and distribution of certified Canadian content (CanCon) within a marketplace defined by spectrum scarcity and a growing influence of foreign networks. This strategic intervention was particularly pressing as Canadian audiences increasingly encountered American and British television, which

had recovered in the post-Second World War period, giving viewers greater cross-border access and reducing the influence of Canadian cultural programming.

Concerns about the cultural impact of American broadcasting helped launch a series of formal inquiries into Canadian media policy in the postwar era. Both the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, chaired by diplomat Vincent Massey from 1949 to 1951, and the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, chaired by Robert Fowler from 1955 to 1957, expressed apprehension over the commercialization of the airwaves (Armstrong, 2016). These commissions reflected anxieties about Americanization and its threat to Canadian culture (Filion, 1996), though they advanced different visions of the role the CBC and private television broadcasters should play within the domestic broadcasting system.

Broadcasting Regulation and Local Representation

Cultural commissions laid some of the groundwork for structural changes in Canadian broadcasting governance. In 1958, the *Broadcasting Act* delegated regulatory powers from the CBC to the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG). With this Act, the CBC's centralized authority was supplanted by a new public body, the BBG, which was legitimated publicly as serving the public interest, reducing concerns about the enduring concentration of institutional power. Raboy (1990) argues that this regulatory transformation was driven less by liberal democratic principles than persistent lobbying from private interests seeking greater power. The BBG's structure was deliberately designed to accommodate private stakeholders within a public, pluralist framework, reflecting the ongoing battle between national objectives and commercial imperatives. In the following decade, the commercial broadcasting sector increased its profit and dominance. A policy reform then created the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The CRTC was created under the *Broadcasting Act* of 1968 with a mandate to supervise

and regulate the broadcasting system, replacing the BBG (Doern, 1997; Potvin, 1972). The CRTC remains an independent public authority that operates at arm's length from the government (Doern, 1997).

Throughout the 1960s and '70s, Canadian broadcasting policy also tried to address questions of cultural diversity. Gilles Potvin (1972) asserts that contributions of waves of immigration to Canada as a 'cultural mosaic' were often disregarded, but their previously marginalized influence slowly gained recognition alongside that of Indigenous sovereignty. Still, MacLennan (2011) finds that Northern communities resisted the CBC's southern-centric expansion due to a lack of local representation, reflecting ideological tensions between national desires and regional cultures. The infrastructural expansion of the network facilitated the hegemonic distribution of programming from central Canada to the North. MacLennan (2011) notes that around two decades of CBC operations would pass before the network disseminated more local programming.

MacLennan's (2011) work is a necessary reminder that the effects of the CBC's delivery of southern programming were felt far more acutely than the CBC's efforts to deliver programming representing the vibrant cultures and languages of the North. Christopher Ali (2012) further emphasizes that localism was often subordinated to nationalism in efforts to safeguard Canadian culture against American commercial influence, reducing the diversity of cultural expression.

Broadcasting Policy and Cultural Sovereignty at the Turn of the Century: 1980s-1990s

Policy Inclusion and Exclusion

Raboy (1995) underscores that, even as Canadian broadcasting has struggled to balance local and national imperatives, its pluralist tradition—exemplified through public hearings—has remained a defining feature of policy development. Notably, the Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force

(1985), following the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee's report (the Applebaum-Hébert Report, 1982), reaffirmed the CBC's importance for upholding cultural sovereignty and supporting both official languages, particularly in the context of media fragmentation, technological change, and globalization (Armstrong, 2016; Raboy, 1995). Assembled after the patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, the Task Force advocated for the social importance of community broadcasting, later acknowledged in legislation (Raboy, 1995).

Indigenous broadcasting finally received legal recognition with the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*. Lorna Roth (2005) argues that enshrining Indigenous rights in broadcasting policy both symbolically and materially validated the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples within Canadian law and society, supporting their self-representation in broadcasting. Television Northern Canada (TVNC) was licensed in 1991 and launched the national Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) in 1999, symbolizing Indigenous peoples' right to broadcast their cultures, languages, and programming across Indigenous communities (Valaskakis, 2002).

The 1991 *Broadcasting Act's* recognition of Indigenous broadcasting rights reflects Raboy's (1994) statement that the politics of broadcasting policy globally are enacted "in different ways in different societies and at different moments in history, to the extent that mass communication systems generally, and broadcasting in particular, are characteristic of the broad currents that mark the development of any particular society" (pp. 8-9). The Canadian broadcasting system thus demonstrates the relationship of civil society to the "policymaking and regulatory arena [...] as the public sphere of broadcasting" (Raboy, 1994, p. 9). Raboy (1994) contends that the Canadian broadcasting system represents *one mixed system*, grounded in public service obligations and structures developed to facilitate public participation in policymaking processes.

Nevertheless, the 1991 Act has not been without limitations. Gretchen King and Felix Odartey-Wellington (2022) note that much of the traditional scholarship on Canadian broadcasting advances the thesis that policy intervention has sought to foster nationhood. The authors argue that the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism and the systemic marginalization of Indigenous, racialized, and disabled peoples have consequently been neglected. They introduce the concept of “apartheid” as an analytical framework for interrogating how Canadian broadcasting policy continues to repossess segregationist logics rooted in racism and colonialism. King and Odartey-Wellington (2022) further argue that structural limitations and enduring biases—especially a lack of diverse voices within the CRTC—have significantly undermined commitments to multicultural and Indigenous representation. Critically, Sara Bannerman (2020) suggests that Canadian broadcasting policy has historically privileged White voices, reinforcing a colonial nation-state structure and reflecting the dominant cultural imaginary.

King and Odartey-Wellington (2022) use the Community Media Advocacy Centre (CMAC) as a case study, demonstrating how the Centre’s work champions intersectional perspectives that resist hegemonic narratives of cultural nationalism. In another study, Odartey-Wellington (2013) uses the CRTC’s 2004 Al-Jazeera Arabic Decision as a case study to examine the tensions between regulating freedom of expression while sustaining a tolerant, multiethnic, and multicultural nation-state. Odartey-Wellington’s (2013) analysis draws on Julia Black’s (2002) notion of regulatory conversation, which views regulation as a communicative process between rational actors, as well as Benedict Anderson’s (2006) concept of imagined communities, to demonstrate how broadcasting policy participates in manufacturing the nation-state, while the CRTC simultaneously negotiates competing pressures surrounding freedom of expression.

Digital Disruption and the Regulatory Challenge (1991-Present)

Technology and Policy Lag

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries saw technological innovation that transformed the broadcasting landscape, introducing material complexities challenging historical nation-building rationales. At the same time, the proliferation of digital platforms has reproduced concerns about the ability of radio and television to uphold and transmit cultural sovereignty (Rowland, 2013; Taras, 2012; Taras & Raboy, 2004; Taylor, 2013). Canadian broadcasting policy has struggled to adapt to the accelerating pace of digital convergence and ever-evolving sociotechnological change (Raboy, 1995), thus leaving the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* ill-equipped to address streaming platforms such as Netflix and other transnational over-the-top (OTT) content distribution services (Davis & Zboralska, 2017). In a Netflix Canada case study, Charles Davis and Emilia Zboralska (2017) explain how the Canadian broadcasting industry is seen as the lifeblood of cultural expression and a symbol of the liberal democratic process. They examine the encroachment of OTT services that have disrupted policy's influence on regulatory jurisdiction, media access and pricing, consolidation of ownership, and diversity (Davis & Zboralska, 2017).

The digital shift precipitated major changes in consumer behaviour and sovereignty, while policy has lagged behind technological advancements (Davis & Zboralska, 2017). Efforts to foster national consciousness have been dismissed as relics of a previous century, producing “policy silences” (Davis & Zboralska, 2017; Freedman, 2010); however, today, cultural policymakers are (re)defining the symbolic boundaries of the nation-state in the digital age (Cooling, 2023; 2024). Mark Terry (2020) notes that with digital disruption, a network of online exhibitions became widely accessible, devaluing licence fee regulations for filmmakers (p. 128). Now, the Canadian government is imposing exclusive broadcast arrangements on streaming services, seeing

transnationalism and platform economies as threatening the viability of the broadcasting industry. The global shift fractured the once strong connection between media technologies and the nation-state, with digital networks functioning largely outside the purview of governments and national political-cultural discourses (Wagman, 2017).

Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Future of Public Broadcasting

Canadian broadcasting debates are increasingly framed by questions of globalization and neoliberalism. Until the 1980s, the dominance of network broadcasters on the airwaves—CBC, Radio-Canada, CTV, and Global—perpetuated specific ideologies to mass audiences (Taras, 2012). Then, cable television arrived, providing “a myriad of all-news channels, each with small but stable audiences” (Taras, 2012, p. 3). In 2004, David Taras and Mark Raboy argued that building a foundation for national cultural production remains as crucial as ever, particularly in an era of globalization marked by the spread of neoliberal sensibilities. Into the 2000s, the task of navigating Canadian broadcasting policy has become even more complex.

Examining the political economic impact of technological disruption, Christopher Cwynar (2017) emphasizes that the worlds of broadcasting and the Internet are colliding, with cross-platform deals for rights to broadcast merging with digital rights for online streaming. The dynamics of new regulatory challenges are also paralleled by Brian Fauteux’s (2016) analysis of Sirius XM, where debates over transnational satellite radio in the early 2000s similarly revealed tensions between traditional Canadian policymaking assumptions of sovereignty and emerging technological and market realities (p. 315). Fauteux (2016) argues that satellite radio moved from a service defined by its geographic footprint to functioning as a “cultural lifeline,” fostering continuous connections between listeners and cultural programming through mobile technology (p. 314).

Neoliberal market forces intersect with Canadian broadcasting regulation, and digitalization and transnational media flows complicate efforts to balance national cultural objectives with commercial and technological pressures. Many of the historical issues in broadcasting policy—including the accelerated availability and influence of foreign programming and peripheral attitudes towards public broadcasting—are products of the ever-changing dynamics of regulation, swayed by private sector interests and free market forces (Skinner, 2005). Notably, Gregory Taylor (2013), in *Shut Off: The Canadian Digital Television Transition*, analyzes the normative regulatory philosophy of public service television in a society that has witnessed rapid technological change, with policy pandering increasingly to the needs of the market. Raboy (2008) therefore suggests that public service broadcasting philosophies be thoroughly overhauled to remain effective in the future, highlighting the BBC’s efforts to move forward while other public broadcasters have “hunkered down in an effort to save the furniture from the advancing flames” (p. 361).

In examining the major technological shift from analogue to digital—perhaps the most significant development in communication over the last century—Taylor (2013) argues that digitalization fanned flames, becoming “the site of a political and economic struggle that directly affects Canadian living rooms” (p. 3). Taylor (2016) also interrogates the CBC’s espousal of the “post-broadcasting” era by devaluing traditional mass media distribution, moving away from mass content production, and redirecting resources towards building a digital presence to fulfil its regulatory mandate (p. 350). Ultimately, Taylor (2016) suggests that public broadcasting in Canada has embraced digitalization too enthusiastically, “tak[ing] a technology-driven plunge into digital streaming that will, at least for the foreseeable future, damage its ability to offer universal service to Canadians and to fulfil its obligations under the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*” (p. 351).

Cultural Sovereignty in the Digital Age

It is with the new amendment of the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* through the *Online Streaming Act*, 34 years later, that a gap in scholarship has appeared. Mariane Bourcheix-Laporte's (2024) critical article, "Canadian Cultural Nationalism in the Time of Digital Platforms: Reframing Proposed Amendments to the Broadcasting Act", draws on Michel Foucault's (1991) theory of governmentality to argue that Bill C-11 embodies a cultural nationalist logic, perpetuating a settler colonial vision of cultural citizenship skewed by the paradox of multiculturalism.

Bridging Historical Discourses with Contemporary Challenges

Mass media and new media are not just different technologies; they represent radically different modes of communication. Wade Rowland (2013) shows that while mass media broadcasts linearly to passive audiences, the Internet enables dynamic, distributed engagement through streaming platforms. Quite clearly, MacLennan (2016) illustrates Canada's regulatory stakes, arguing that broadcasting transcends borders and that "the historical clash between national broadcasting agendas has delineated and defined the distinct national foundations of identity" (p. 198). Together, these perspectives make evident how the collision of traditional and digital media has complicated the very terrain of policy, regulation, and culture—posing challenges that continue to demand our attention.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Love, War, and Broadcast Politics”: Channelling Cultural Nationalism in Canadian Press

On May 9, 1932—93 years ago—the Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting tabled its report in the House of Commons, “seized, from the inception, *of the national importance and international character of radio broadcasting*” (Special Committee, 1932, p. 729, *emphasis added*). The report recommended regulating Canadian broadcasting to promote “Canadian ideals and culture, entertainment, news service and publicity of [the] country and its products [...] as one of the most efficient mediums for developing a greater National and Empire consciousness within the Dominion and the British Commonwealth of Nations” (Special Committee, 1932, p. 729). Chaired by Canadian politician Raymond Ducharme Morand, the report specifically recommended the creation of a Radio Commission with regulatory powers over broadcasting ownership, station operation, and programming origination, vested with powers to “take over all broadcasting in Canada” if so desired by Parliament (Special Committee, 1932, p. 730).

As the first witness called on March 15, 1932, Graham Spry, co-founder of the Canadian Radio League and public broadcasting advocate, famously testified that the choice before the Committee was clear: “between commercial interests and the people’s interests [...] between the State and the United States” (p. 46). Following Spry’s rhetoric of cultural nationalism, calls for state regulation and control over the Canadian broadcasting system arose as a means of preserving and promoting a national culture in response to the perceived threat of American dominance. This chapter traces how discourses of cultural nationalism—particularly nation-building and the preservation and promotion of Canadian culture—have been channelled and (re)articulated across a century of broadcasting policy debates. Additionally, debates over cultural sovereignty are not isolated; they relate to questions of representation and inclusion. By situating press coverage of

contemporary broadcasting policy within a historical trajectory, the chapter contextualizes the tensions between cultural objectives, nationalist rhetoric, and public perception.

Preface: Content Analysis Findings

Regional Scope and Trends

The coverage range of newspaper organizations was examined temporally and spatially. This regional metadata provides insight into where broadcasting discourses are produced, highlighting geographic concentration and representational gaps.

COVERAGE BY TIME PERIOD	1928-36	1952-59	1968-76	1980-91	2018-24
<i>Atlantic Canada</i>	8	2	5	22	2
<i>Nationwide</i>	0	0	0	0	61
<i>Northern Canada</i>	0	0	0	5	1
<i>Ontario</i>	29	16	25	53	18
<i>Pan-Canadian</i>	0	1	0	0	65
<i>Québec</i>	8	9	27	9	101
<i>Western Canada</i>	19	19	33	53	11

Table 1 Newspaper Coverage by Time Period

Nationwide, pan-Canadian, Western Canada, Ontario, and Québec papers dominate the dataset, reflecting their positions as Canada’s media production centres;⁴ however, Québec-based coverage surges dramatically in the most recent period (2018-24) with 101 original French-language articles, almost six times its closest regional counterpart (Ontario; 18 unique articles).

⁴As noted in Chapter Two, *The Globe and Mail* is coded as “Pan-Canadian” to reflect its national editorial orientation and centralized production model, despite its physical headquarters in Toronto. In contrast, Postmedia outlets are coded as “Nationwide” to acknowledge the conglomerate’s distributed network of regionally branded newspapers that often share syndicated content.

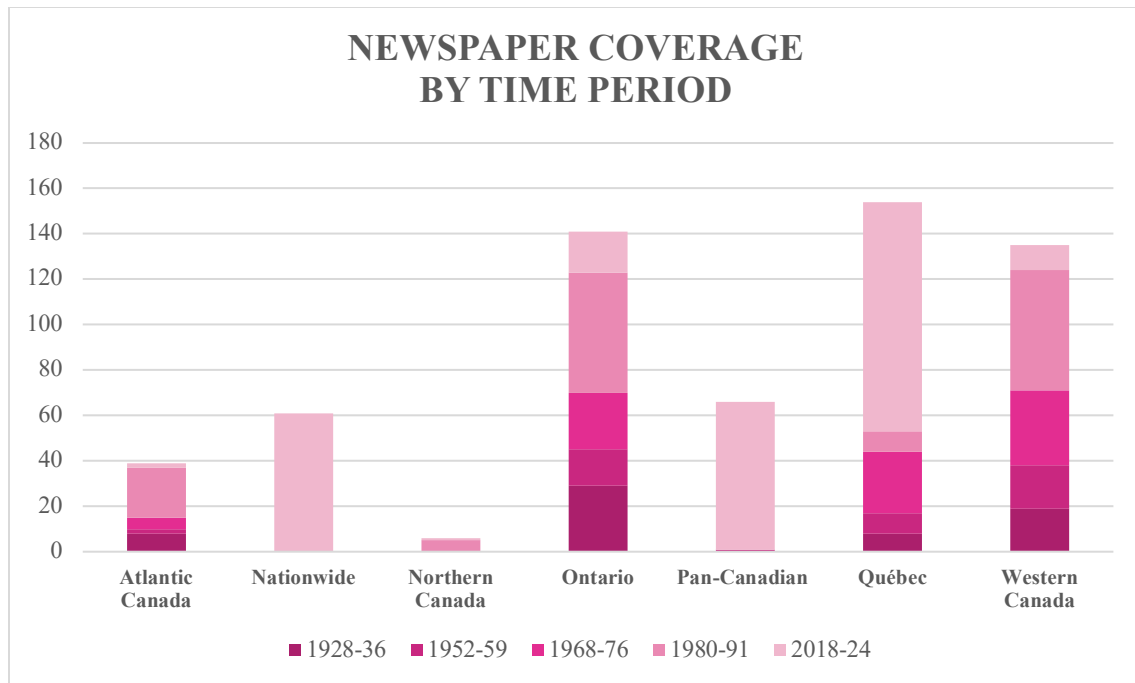


Figure 1 Newspaper Coverage by Time Period

While Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly declared Canada as “the first postnational state” with “no core identity, no mainstream” in 2015 (Lawson, 2015, para. 46), the increase visualized in Figure 1 is attributable to contemporary concerns over Québec’s distinct cultural, linguistic, and political needs in the digital age. Issues of provincial sovereignty and the extent to which Canada’s regions accept—or resist—the notion of a national identity remain contested.

Provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia are regularly represented in earlier decades, but provincial representation declines sharply in the 2018-24 period. The lack of localized coverage can be explained by the ownership structures and national-level coverage of major Canadian newspapers. *The Globe and Mail* (coded as “Pan-Canadian”) and Postmedia’s national syndication network (coded as “Nationwide”) contribute 65 and 61 articles, respectively. These production logics reflect a centralization of federal policy discourse within national publications and trends of media consolidation within conglomerates. The coverage patterns also indicate structural limitations related to archival norms and database availability. The gap in

localized coverage should not be interpreted as a lack of broadcasting debates in those regions, but rather as a function of limited digitization capacities and access, archival asymmetries, and institutional biases.

Cultural and Economic Objectives in Canadian Broadcasting Policy

Economic development and cultural promotion are deeply intertwined, forming dual objectives within a single cultural policy apparatus. This entanglement informs the normative regulatory philosophy used to pursue those cultural and industrial imperatives—a philosophy that not only directs broadcasting policy implementation but also provokes support, critique, and resistance over how these goals manifest within the nation. Raboy (1990) declares that debates over broadcasting policy objectives of the early twentieth century have “been passed down to us” and “continue in much the same guise today” (p. 21). This chapter situates discourse on the distinctly cultural objectives of Canadian broadcasting policy, which carry political-cultural weight (especially in the current geopolitical moment, amid claims from U.S. President Donald Trump that Canada will become the “51st state”). The following pages provide important sociopolitical context for the next chapter on the relations between digital publics and culture, industry, and regulation.

Table 2 lists the frequencies of eight different themes that appeared in legacy newspaper coverage from 1928 to 1936, 1952 to 1959, 1968 to 1976, 1980 to 1991, and 2018 to 2024.

THEMES BY TIME PERIOD	1928-36	1952-59	1968-76	1980-91	2018-24
<i>Cultural Sovereignty</i>	63.1%	22.7%	31.4%	43.69%	49.6%
<i>CanCon</i>	0.0%	6.8%	14.3%	24.3%	28.9%
<i>Francophone Culture</i>	1.5%	2.3%	20.0%	9.7%	18.4%
<i>Diversity / Representation</i>	6.2%	25.0%	28.6%	21.4%	12.9%
<i>Market Power & Industrial Outcomes</i>	36.9%	43.2%	28.6%	45.6%	37.5%
<i>Cross-Border Trade</i>	3.1%	18.2%	17.1%	4.9%	5.5%
<i>Policy Process</i>	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	1.9%	1.6%
<i>Expression, Democracy, & Politics</i>	6.2%	43.2%	22.9%	41.7%	67.2%

Table 2 Themes by Time Period in Newspapers

Table 3 and Figure 2 provide contextual support for these thematic findings, revealing how the overall tone and evaluative stance of narratives surrounding Canadian broadcasting policy have shifted over nearly a century.

SENTIMENT BY TIME PERIOD	1928-36	1952-59	1968-76	1980-91	2018-24
<i>Supportive</i>	49.2%	7.5%	14.3%	8.7%	17.6%
<i>Critical</i>	9.2%	45.0%	24.3%	32.0%	42.6%
<i>Discourse / Debate</i>	41.5%	47.5%	61.4%	60.2%	40.6%

Table 3 Sentiment by Time Period in Newspapers

The sentiment distribution across the five time periods reveals a complex and non-linear evolution of the nature of public discourse surrounding Canadian broadcasting policy as mediated by newspaper coverage. The data suggest recurring cycles of debate, decision, and disillusionment.

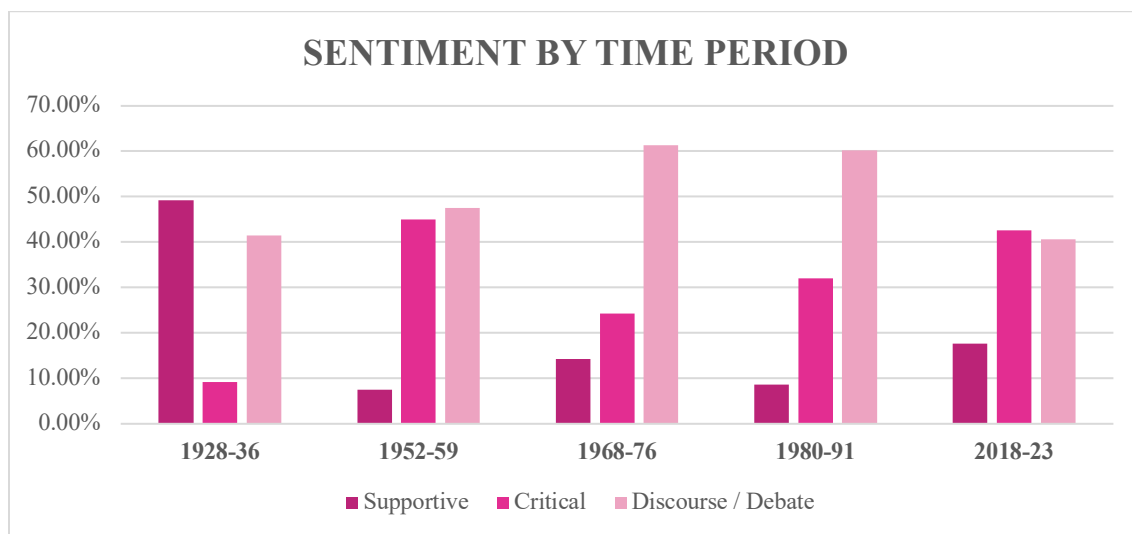


Figure 2 Sentiment by Time Period in Newspapers

The earliest regulatory era (1928-36) is marked by remarkably high levels of supportive sentiment (49.2%), reflecting early enthusiasm for a state-intervened broadcasting system. During this period, criticism is marginal (9.2%) while discourse (41.5%) indicates active engagement with questions of public interest; the latter trend in tone is relatively consistent over the century (at 47.5%, 61.4%, 60.2%, and 40.6% in the subsequent years). In contrast, the postwar period (1952-59) sees a dramatic decline in support (to 7.5%) and a sharp rise in criticism (45%)—likely reflecting concerns over bureaucracy, inequitable regional representation and cultural expression,

and widespread availability of American commercial programming on Canadian channels. Although “Discourse / Debate” peaks at 61.4% in 1968-76, criticism drops to 24.3% and supportive sentiment rises modestly to 14.3%, possibly aligned with broader legislative reforms in Canada and the introduction of CanCon policies.⁵ A continuously unbalanced ratio of support to criticism proves persistent, unresolved tensions.

By 1980-91, critique rises again to 32% as globalized media markets develop and outdated legislation comes under review—beginning with documents such as the 1983 report, *Towards a New National Broadcasting Policy*, by Minister of Communications Francis Fox, and culminating at the end of the period with the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*. Supportive sentiment drops further to 8.7%. In the most contemporary period (2018-24), sentiment distribution remains fragmented. Criticism (42.6%) is prominent, as broader debates over Internet governance continue to unfold, and although support rises slightly to 17.6%, dissent and discourse (40.6%) are not overcome. The relative consistency of “Discourse / Debate” over the century reflects the unsettled, reactive nature of broadcasting policy and regulation at large.

The fourth table provides insight into whose voices have been amplified in press discourse, revealing only subtle shifts in journalistic authority, public (dis)engagement, and expert participation over time.

STAKEHOLDERS BY TIME PERIOD	1928-36	1952-59	1968-76	1980-91	2018-24
<i>Academics / Researchers</i>	0.0%	7.5%	5.7%	6.8%	30.1%
<i>Cultural Actors, Lobbyists, & Civil Society</i>	24.6%	27.5%	20.0%	12.6%	28.1%
<i>Government / Regulators / Committees</i>	52.3%	62.5%	60.0%	67.0%	67.6%
<i>Industry Companies & Corporations</i>	13.8%	20.0%	21.4%	8.7%	19.1%
<i>Journalists / News Organizations</i>	35.4%	22.5%	21.4%	28.2%	15.2%
<i>General Public</i>	1.5%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	2.0%
<i>Public Figures</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%

Table 4 Stakeholders by Time Period in Newspapers

⁵Detailed in Chapter Five.

Government figures, regulatory authorities, and members of commissions and appointed committees dominate across all historical periods, highlighting an enduring reliance on institutional voices in broadcasting policy coverage.

From the earliest disputes over radio nationalization and public broadcasting to the digital-era defence of Canadian culture, the thematic contours of cultural policy debates from 1928 to 2024 ebb and flow alongside cultural, aesthetic, and sociopolitical trends in the nation-state.⁶ Yet one of the most salient findings is the resurgence of cultural sovereignty narratives in the digital age—a cornerstone of cultural nationalist logic used to legitimate state intervention in an era of transnationalism and platform economies. This renewed rhetoric warrants close attention, especially given “[t]he degree to which the ongoing transformation of the world into a single global market has been represented as a natural and inevitable process” (Hrynyshyn, 2002, p. 83).

Broadcasting and the Canadian Nation-Building Project

Before the appointment of the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel by Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government in 2018, the CRTC conducted a series of “Let’s Talk TV” hearings from 2013 to 2014 that typified the shift in regulatory agendas in a brave new world of online streaming. These hearings invited stakeholders and members of the public to share thoughts and comment on the future of Canadian television in light of digitalization and media abundance across platforms (CRTC, 2013).

At a 2014 hearing, the Commission heard from Ms. Corie Wright, Netflix’s Director of Global Public Policy, who stated that “most consumers use Netflix and other online video services to *supplement* their viewing of traditional broadcasting services” (CRTC, 2014, para. 8, *emphasis added*). Wright also claimed that Canadian content is “thriving on Netflix” and that “Netflix’s

⁶Stakeholder representation and newspaper themes representing economic objectives and Canada’s regulatory philosophy are analyzed in Chapter Five alongside Reddit fora.

commitment to Canadian content is market-oriented and driven by subscriber demand and their viewing habits” (CRTC, 2014, para. 8). Netflix refused to provide evidence in support of Wright’s statements and the CRTC ultimately ruled the argument as “anecdotal” (CRTC, 2014, para. 9). The Commission removed Netflix’s intervention and supporting documentation from public record of the proceeding. The tense interaction between the CRTC and the world’s largest streaming service signalled a structural need to address the power imbalance between traditional broadcasters and streaming giants in the domestic market. Lacking concrete evidence to support Netflix’s defence, concerns over the nation’s ability to achieve its economic and subsequent cultural objectives, as set out in the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*, did not resolve.

The stage was set for the release of the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review report, *Canada’s Communications Future: Time to Act*, six years later. Skinner (2005) argues that throughout the 1930s, Canada’s broadcasting system was influenced by “transnational relations of production based in the United States, the prerogatives of Canadian private capital, and the nationalist imperative of the Canadian state” (p. 151)—three forces that continue to shape contemporary cultural policy, including the nation-state’s efforts to reassert symbolic authority through digital legislation. According to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review (2020) report, “Many cultural stakeholders told [the panel] they want to ensure that the definitions encompass actors that operate through the Internet and take an increasing share of advertising and subscription revenues” (p. 129). The panel goes on to explain that “[t]he business model used by many of the new online companies, like traditional broadcasters, is based on providing media content to audiences while selling those audiences to advertisers” (Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review, 2020, p. 129).

Today, advertisers view online media content undertakings “effectively as media companies that directly compete for their advertising dollars” (Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review, 2020, p. 129). As a signal of dominance, Dwayne Winseck (2024) argues that “[t]he heart of this battle is over the fast-evolving \$27 billion online media economy”, which includes audiovisual and music streaming services, with three US-based big tech corporations—Google, Meta, and Amazon—controlling 90% of the \$16.6 billion online advertising market and Netflix, Spotify, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok controlling the bulk of online media revenues (p. 33). Online streaming services have vehemently denied any power asymmetry, insisting that they “already contribute to the development and discoverability of Canadian content and talent and, therefore, do not need to be brought under [broadcasting] legislation” (Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review, 2020, p. 129).

With the Royal Assent of Bill C-11, the CRTC soon decided to repeal its Digital Media Exemption Order and set basic conditions of service for certain online streaming services on September 29, 2023. Both *Online Streaming Act* bills represent an ambitious effort to regulate streaming platforms; however, policymakers and regulators must perform a delicate balancing act: fostering job creation, often driven by foreign productions, while safeguarding Canadian culture through the production and distribution of Canadian content (Cooling, 2023; Nordicity, 2023). These stakes are not new. Since the 1920s, politicians and lobbyists have sought to establish a national broadcasting system wherein *Canadian* programs, produced by and for *Canadians*, are distributed on *Canadian* channels to generate revenue for the *Canadian* economy while cultivating *Canadian* consciousness.

The theme “Cultural Sovereignty” dominated in early debates over the nationalization and regulation of radio, appearing in 63.1% of articles in 1928-36, and its relevance sharply declines

to 22.7% the following period. “Cultural Sovereignty” then appears in 49.6% of the articles in 2018-24—the second-highest frequency since 1928, and a significant increase from mid-century years (22.7% in the 1950s and 31.4% in the 1960s), marking the highest point since Canada’s interwar and postwar years.

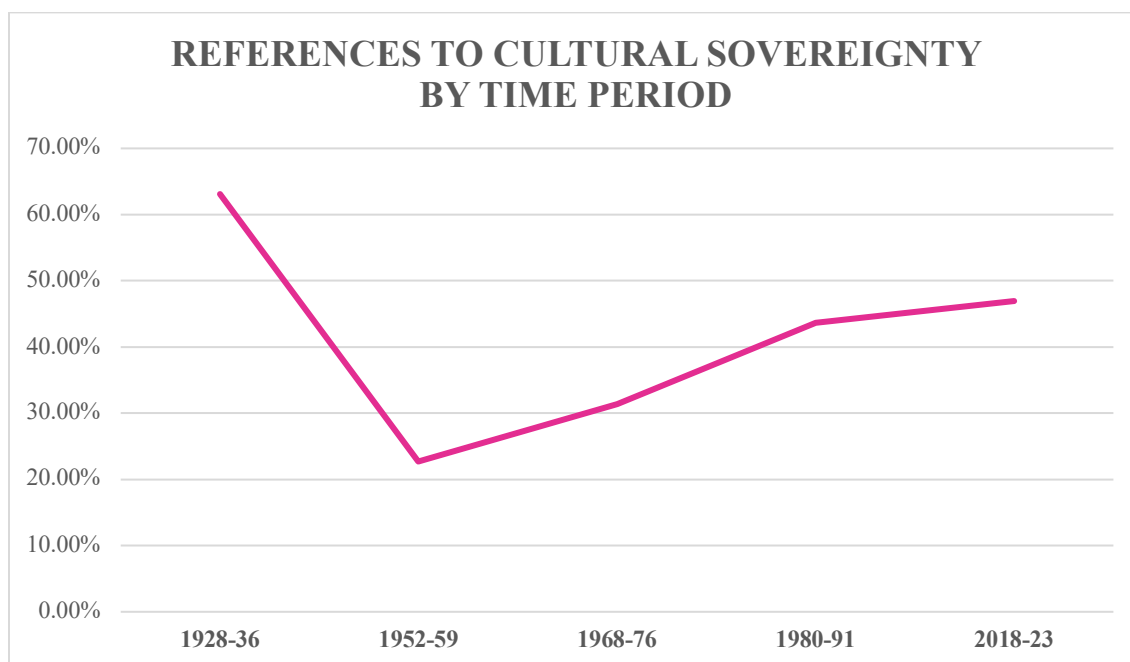


Figure 3 References to Cultural Sovereignty by Time Period in Newspapers

This section draws a historical parallel between the early articulations of cultural nationalist rhetoric in the 1920s and '30s and its manifestations in the 2020s—not only because this discourse has reproduced cyclically, but also because its rhetorical strategies closely mirror earlier efforts to frame broadcasting policy as a tool for cultural defence.

In *The National Dream* (2001/1970), Pierre Berton describes the first prime minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald, as having two sides to his nationalism: “On the positive side he was pro-Canadian [...]. On the negative side he was almost paranoiac in his anti-Americanism” (p. 9). To prevent the transformation of Canadians “into shrill, greedy, tinsel copies of themselves” (Berton, 2001/1970, p. 9), Canada’s first trans-continental railway was engineered as a political nation-building project to support nationalist images of Canada; supporters of radio regulation

would go on to articulate this nation-building idealism to broadcasting policy in the 1920s (Charland, 1986).

As I have suggested elsewhere (Cooling, 2024)—and will proceed to argue here—since the early twentieth century, Canadian politicians and lobbyists have marshalled nationalist rhetoric in response to (outdated) fears of American cultural imperialism. Often, the rhetoric around broadcasting policy constructs a vision of Canadian culture—one that can *itself* be hegemonic—to advance national unity through the amalgamation of space-binding technology and cultural nationalism.

Articulating Cultural Sovereignty in the Twentieth Century

The 1920s were a decade of rising cultural nationalism in English Canada, as debates played out between politicians, intellectuals, and artists over the identity of the young nation. Despite competing nation-building imaginaries, these actors “were deeply concerned that this status was meaningless if Canadians remained colonial and imitative with respect to the culture, myths and symbols of other countries” (Vipond, 1980). While an articulation cannot be made eternal due to the precarious nature of political-cultural work (Hall, 1985), political figures, past and present, select language to frame broadcasting policy—a nation-building project—as the embodiment of Canada’s cultural will.

An article in *The Financial Post* from November 13, 1930, reports on the Aird Commission, the prospect of radio nationalization under the then-new Bennett Government, and lobbyist influence (quoted only second to policy officials in 1928-36 and 1952-59 at 24.6% and 27.5%, respectively). The article reads,

For one reason or another, the report of the Aird Commission has powerful friends from one end of the country to the other and a constant pressure has been exerted on ministers and private members. [...]

They all seem to look on the radio as a tremendous factor in molding public opinion, in developing and stimulating a sense of nationality, in educating people about their country. They seem to regard the penetration of Canada by United States' radio broadcasts as a menace, a peaceful, pleasant but dangerous contact. *Amos and Andy* leave them stone cold: the slumber hour produces nightmares. Their support of the report springs from national and not business considerations. Indeed, it would not be surprising if the leading men of the association soon to be born were, for the most part, ardent workers in the Canadian Club movement. (*The Financial Post*, 1930, p. 5)

Dominant visions of Canadian culture—and, by extension, the nation-state—as a “fragile communicative entity” (Dorland, 1996), fraught with danger and in need of protection from external threats, helped legitimate arguments for a fully government-owned and -operated system in the 1930s. Economic autonomy, national unity, and cultural sovereignty were articulated to radio by the Aird Commission’s *powerful friends* at the Association of Canadian Clubs in response to early cross-border media flows. Yet the newspaper’s satirical jabs—mocking the portrayal of American radio as a *peaceful, pleasant, yet insidiously dangerous contact*—intervene in the commonsense naturalization of nationalist anxieties embedded within an urban-elite, Anglo-Canadian imaginary.

The popularity of *Amos 'n' Andy* is used as a shorthand for the alarm provoked among cultural nationalists by American radio; *nightmares* were conjured during the slumber hour, while the moral and aesthetic signifiers of Canadian nationhood were put out under duress. The reporter

rightly implies that such anxieties were, in many respects, disproportionately overblown. MacLennan (2013) finds that American radio programs such as *Amos 'n' Andy* “had little tangible connection to small communities within Canada, not really accounting for its popularity”, finding that “without the same discourse of race and in a country with a different sense of national identity, the program did not resonate with its listeners in the same way” (p. 321).

Lobbyist efforts for state control over the broadcasting system are closely associated with Graham Spry—sometimes called *Canada's father of public broadcasting*—who, upon returning to Canada from Oxford University in 1926, assumed the role of national secretary for the Association of Canadian Clubs (Babe, 2000) (the reporter in *The Financial Post* refers to the “Canadian Club movement”). Spry’s Canadian Radio League co-founder, Alan Plaunt, would later urge Prime Minister Bennett to invite Major Gladstone Murray—a conduit of the BBC’s model of public broadcasting in Canada—to survey national radio (MacLennan & Cooling, 2023).

According to a December 19, 1930, article in *The Vancouver Sun*, the Canadian Radio League played a pivotal role in initiating the public broadcasting movement. The reporter writes, The Radio League finds that there are only two possible systems of broadcasting: the American plan, followed so far in the Dominion, with the power of the station and the quality of its program based on advertising revenue; and the British plan of a national service, “with the powers of a private enterprise and the functions of a public utility.” The league frankly prefers the latter.

It dislikes the advertising basis which places radio development in the hands of “irresponsible authorities however public-spirited,” and in public opinion, insofar as it may be influenced by the radio, “at the mercy of the American chains.” (Kip, 1930, p. 3)

With radio imagined not merely as a medium of entertainment, but as a powerful mechanism of public service, the League's discourse articulates broadcasting policy to state responsibility and cultural freedom, while commercialism, individualism, and free market logics are produced as irresponsible and immoral. Oppositional binaries of responsible versus irresponsible, cultural expression versus control, and utility versus commercialization legitimate state intervention as a means of fortifying Canadian consciousness within the emergent broadcasting landscape. This political-cultural work frames Canadian broadcasting—associated quite directly with state interests and nation-building—as imprisoned *at the mercy of the American chains*.

As a function of public utility, the government-mandated production and distribution of Canadian programming has long been understood as a strategy for fostering cultural sovereignty within a geographically vast, sparsely populated nation—one that not only shares a border with the United States but also an official language, intensifying the perceived vulnerability of Canadian culture (Armstrong, 2016; Dorland, 1996; Dowler, 1996; Raboy, 1990, 1995). Maurice Charland (1986) conceptualizes Canadian broadcasting policy as a manifestation of technological nationalism, highlighting how Canadian nationhood has been produced symbolically through broadcasting policy and programming, notably the CBC's 1974 didactic production, *The National Dream*. Charland (1986) argues that Canada is a technologically constituted nation that imagined itself into existence by virtue of political will, interrogating the television program about the Canadian Pacific Railway for representing a rhetoric of *technological nationalism* born in Anglophone Canada. This dream of *Canadianness* is further manifested in the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*, which enshrined Canada's paradox of official multiculturalism within a bilingual framework, and now its amendment with the 2023 *Online Streaming Act*.

In an Advice & Dissent column for *The Financial Post* on May 6, 1988, titled “No More Fawning Over Flora”, economist William Watson comments on the vilification of Flora MacDonald, Minister of Communications and Culture, and the nation’s public broadcaster by nationalists for failing to advance an ideological agenda:

While I have heard it air many, many impassioned briefs on behalf of public broadcasting, the Canadian identity, the crucial role of broadcasting in securing that identity against the American onslaught, and so on, and so on, and so on, I can’t recall its ever having broadcast a single sustained attack on Canadian cultural nationalism. CBC is paid for by all the tax payers. To the extent it reflects any views, it should reflect all the taxpayers’ views. (Watson, 1988, p. 13)

In a historical moment when debates over cultural sovereignty again intensified (from 31.4% in the preceding period to 43.69%), Watson’s opinion piece works as a discursive event of rearticulation—intervening in the dominant linkages between public broadcasting policy, Canadian identity, and cultural nationalism actively forged during the 1920s and ‘30s. Watson contests the articulation of Canadian nationalism to the CBC as a symbol of national unity, independence, and cultural authority, critiquing the tendency to prioritize symbolic performances and bureaucratic turf wars over broader considerations of democratic pluralism and political economic realities. Noting that he cannot recall the broadcaster ever airing a serious, *sustained attack on Canadian cultural nationalism* itself, Watson (1988) exposes ongoing struggles over meaning-making and power asymmetries that continue to shape how Canadian culture is articulated in public debate.

The CBC has long been framed by political and public figures as an institution for preserving and promoting Canadian cultural expression *vis-à-vis* American cultural influence,

which is, in many ways, a vital function. Yet, Watson (1988) suggests that although the broadcaster is consistently pro-Canadian culture, it never interrogates hegemonic narratives of cultural nationalism. Implicitly, the author argues that if the CBC is to genuinely reflect a collective sensibility *of all the taxpayers*, it should embrace more critical perspectives. Incidentally, Watson (1988) declares, “All is fair in love, war, and broadcast politics” (p. 13), vividly positioning broadcasting policy as a site of ideological conflict.

Cultural Sovereignty in Continuity: The Platform Era

The 1991 *Broadcasting Act*, which governed for decades, declared that the Canadian broadcasting system “shall be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians”; provide, through its programming, “a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty”; serve to “safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada”; reflect Canadian “attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity”; and serve “the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men, women and children” (*Broadcasting Act*, S.C., 1991, c.11). The means to these ends were distribution undertakings: radio and television. Global streaming services then emerged as cultural policy disruptors with the turn of the century (Davis & Zboralska, 2017), capturing the attention of domestic audiences.

With fundamental differences in advertising models, there is an inherent asymmetry in the political economy of legacy and new media forms. At the origin of every contemporary broadcasting debate is whether such power dynamics justify state intervention, and if so, how. Previous legislation offered no moral, aesthetic, or ideological reason for streaming services to promote Canadian culture within a transnational platform economy that espouses digital capitalist logics (Davis & Zboralska, 2019). As Cooling (2023) emphasizes, “The programming on these

platforms is strategically selected to capture a *global* audience, maximizing profit via mass consumption, whereas in Canada, national broadcasters are mandated, through legislation, to prioritize capturing the *Canadian* audience by following CanCon regulations” (p. 68).

The 1991 *Broadcasting Act* did not account for online undertakings, and digital platforms do not behave like radio or television. Streaming services are personalized, algorithmically curated, and largely governed by global market forces; certified Canadian content can be readily displaced on these platforms by programming designed for broad, transnational appeal. Panoramic concerns over cultural sovereignty have resurfaced as streaming services profit from Canadian audiences, unburdened by regulations shouldered by traditional counterparts as “the great sea of Americana floods [Canada’s] little garden” (Stursberg, 2019, p. 16).

The *Online Streaming Act* was devised to bring players onto a common regulatory field, and press coverage has revived a nation-building project—casting regulation as a corrective to platform dominance and the asymmetries of global media power. In these discourses, Canadian cultural nationalism is not some antiquated set of beliefs from the pre-patriation era; it is a symbol of soft power that shapes the aesthetics of sovereignty and nationhood, even within a radically different media landscape. Data suggests that the resulting debates in 2018-24 mobilized familiar symbolic gestures and cultural framings, sometimes obfuscating materially grounded policy discussions.

To render the bill rhetorically, in tabling Bill C-11 in the House of Commons on February 16, 2022, Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez performs the political-cultural work of articulation by painting a bleak picture:

Mr. Speaker, imagine a day without art and culture: no music, no movies, no television or books. It would be really boring. This is why I am so happy to speak today about Bill C-

11, the online streaming act. This legislation will update Canada's broadcasting rules to include online streaming services and will require them to contribute in an equitable way to our culture. [...]

We need to take action to address these issues now. If not, they will continue to harm Canadians, chip away our cultural sovereignty and weaken our digital society. This is about making the Internet a better place for all Canadians. [...]

Unlike traditional Canadian broadcasters, platforms profit from our culture but have no obligation to contribute to it. With money leaving traditional broadcasters, day after day, to go to these platforms, this is putting our creators, our industry, our jobs and even our culture at risk. We have to act. (pp. 2319-2320)

Rodriguez prompts Members of Parliament to *imagine a day without art and culture*, going on to justify the economic and subsequent cultural goals of Canadian broadcasting policy. To achieve these ends, Rodriguez emphasizes the need for *platforms to contribute in an equitable way to Canadian culture*, stopping them from *chipping away at Canada's cultural sovereignty*.

Matthew Arnold's 1869 famous work, *Culture and Anarchy*, asks us to interrogate the ideologies of the social class obsessed with wealth, power, and material success. Arnold (1869) argues that culture helps us "by means of its spiritual standard of perfection, to regard wealth as but machinery" to a greater end of achieving ideals of morality and intellectualism. Arnold (1869) rhetorically asks if "any amount of wealth [would] be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it" (p. 20), urging societies to pay close attention to the overwhelming pervasiveness of superficiality and materiality, to instil within us critical awareness of how culture can operate as resistance. In a stunningly similar vein, Rodriguez's

rhetoric frames the *Online Streaming Act* not merely as a policy modernization but as a desperate cultural obligation.

For Rodriguez, Canadian broadcasting, articulated to nation-building and cultural sovereignty, is compromised by the wealthy, powerful platforms that embody the materialism Arnold (1869) cautions against. Both Arnold and Rodriguez stress the necessity of culture—encompassing ideals of morality and intellectualism as a means of resisting economic forces that, if given free rein, risk desecrating national culture to nothing more than a shallow commercial exchange (an interesting convergence of thought across divergent political-cultural contexts, though both reinforce Eurocentric hierarchies). I do not intend to suggest that Rodriguez is entirely wrong, or that Bill C-11 is unjustified; rather, what is striking is how he so quickly collapses the bill's meaning into resisting American cultural influence, painting the *Online Streaming Act* merely as a mediation of defensive cultural nationalism.

Rodriguez's predecessor, Steven Guilbeault, shared the same vision when discussing Bill C-10, explicitly attributing power to the theory of American cultural imperialism:

We all know that the American cultural invasion is powerful and that it can steamroll any culture on the planet. (Guilbeault, 2021, p. 8353)

That is why we are taking action. The Broadcasting Act was enacted in 1991, before the Internet, smart phones and online platforms. Its regulatory framework is frozen in the past. On the one hand, we have Canadian companies that play by the rules and invest in our Canadian stories. On the other, we have online broadcasters that operate outside any regulatory framework and make money off the system with no obligation to give back. No, resistance is not futile. (Guilbeault, 2020, p. 2061)

To claim, “We all know that the American cultural invasion is powerful and that it can steamroll any culture on the planet” (Guilbeault, 2021, p. 8353) is to invoke a commonsense assumption, a shared understanding, without much regard for the politics of Canadian broadcasting policy—shaped not only by political economic pressures but also ideological fights over power and symbolic nationhood.

The practice of articulation demands “selective work *vis à vis* the many common senses, involving both the selective mobilisation of some aspects and the obverse: the selective demobilisation of other elements by rendering them silent, ridiculous, unrealistic, out of time or place and so on” (Clarke, 2015, p. 6, *emphasis original*). Guilbeault selectively mobilizes the subject pronoun “we” when speaking of *the American cultural invasion*, inadvertently positioning himself within a defensive discourse reminiscent of elite Anglophone nationalists in twentieth-century Canada (Raboy, 1990)—highlighting how seemingly neutral pronouns can operate as sites of active articulation.

One article in *The Toronto Star* from May 17, 2021, includes comments from Guilbeault and Janet Yale, Chair of the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel:

[Yale] argues that the CRTC should be able to make [streaming platforms] contribute to Canadian cultural pursuits, a move which the government hopes will level the playing field for broadcasters based in Canada, which already have to do that. [...]

When asked about experts and opposition MPs who have voiced criticisms of the bill in recent weeks, Guilbeault said, “my goal is not to please these people.”

“I’m working to ensure that my kids and grandkids ... will be able to continue discovering Canadian artists and Quebec artists and Indigenous artists, and that our culture won’t be swallowed by Hollywood. That’s why we’re doing this.” (Leavitt, 2021, p. 9)

Guilbeault lends credence to the theory of American cultural imperialism, arguing that Canadian culture will be *swallowed by Hollywood* without cultural policy like the *Online Streaming Act*; however, as Canada negotiates with forces of neoliberal globalization, transnationalism, and platform economies, its broadcasting regime must address the nuances of cultural expression, resisting cultural nationalist tropes in policy processes and practice. Cultural policy continues to lag behind the realities of market-driven transformations, with legacy regulatory strategies, including CanCon and simultaneous substitution, seeming more like nostalgic artifacts than meaningful instruments of cultural sovereignty.

It is within public discourse where cultural forms are constructed as objects for policy intervention through what Michael Dorland (1998) terms “an economy of talk” (p. 14). Dorland (1998) observes that government commissions and other policymaking apparatuses function to legitimate certain epistemological approaches to culture within policy circles. Kevin Dowler (1996) further contends that this economy of talk has historically operated as a defence against American cultural imperialism in Canada, treating the threat as ongoing even though this theory is largely outdated (see Globerman, 1991). I propose that when elite figures continuously resist the cultural dominance of the U.S. using narratives of anti-imperialism, it has an adverse effect of invoking hegemonic assumptions rooted in official bilingualism, multiculturalism, and heritage, when public discourse *should* focus on coherent, reflective policy reform.

Further problematizing the politicization of Canadian culture, an opinion piece in *La Presse* published on May 17, 2021, interrogates the two visions of Canadian culture as dichotomized by political parties:

Selon des conservateurs – surtout ceux du Canada anglais –, on s’attaquerait à un faux problème. Ils se réjouissent de la somme record des productions télé et cinéma au pays.

Dans leur vision comptable, ils accordent la même valeur à une œuvre hollywoodienne tournée à Niagara Falls qu'à un film réalisé, scénarisé et joué par nos artistes. Pour eux, la culture est un produit comme un autre, le contenu canadien est une lubie de bureaucrate et le libre marché doit régner. (Journet, 2021, para. 26)

Les bloquistes, néo-démocrates et libéraux réclament plus de transparence et de visibilité pour la culture d'ici. L'Assemblée nationale entière les appuie. (Journet, 2021, para. 28)

A related editorial published on May 11, 2021, in *Le Devoir*, “Contre l’hégémonisme culturel”, discusses Francophone culture and Québec’s cultural sovereignty while exposing Anglophone critics for distorting the *Online Streaming Act* debate into a crusade for freedom of expression and the free market:

Réglementer les géants du Web afin qu’ils contribuent au dynamisme de la production culturelle québécoise est un objectif éminemment louable. Se soumettre à l’hégémonisme culturel américain au nom de la liberté, comme certains le conçoivent au Canada anglais, est contraire aux intérêts de la nation québécoise qui prône la diversité culturelle et défend une vitalité artistique qui est l’expression même de notre liberté. (Dutrisac, 2021, para. 8)

While for some, the concepts of state intervention and the Internet do not naturally cohere—perceived as anachronistic in the context of borderless networks—such newspaper articles reveal how cultural sovereignty is still contested after almost 100 years. In press coverage, competing interpretations of nation-building, Canadian culture, and digital regulation are actively negotiated.

An editorial from 2023 by Louise-Maude Rioux Soucy in *Le Devoir*, titled “Une souveraineté culturelle 2.0”, emphasizes a material political concern regarding Heritage Minister Rodriguez’s discursive framing of the safeguarding of cultural sovereignty:

Ce n'est pas pour rien que M. Lacombe a pris la peine d'ajouter qu'il « est hors de question que l'avenir de la culture québécoise se décide à Ottawa » et que les Québécois ne peuvent pas se permettre « d'être de simples spectateurs » dans ce débat. On plussoie, notre avenir collectif en français en dépend. (Rioux Soucy, 2023, para. 10)

From this critical perspective, without an explicitly pluralist approach, efforts to preserve and promote *cultural sovereignty 2.0* risk reinforcing Canada's own hegemony centred in the nation's capital, perpetuating the marginalization of Francophone and other diverse cultural communities whose experiences and interests are not always reflected in dominant frameworks. To address these challenges, critical inquiry into cultural sovereignty and hegemony must centre the lived realities of non-hegemonic communities, especially as nationalist ambitions collide with the realities of digital-age broadcasting, global streaming platforms, and market-driven content distribution (Cooling, 2024).

The difficult relationship between centralized cultural authority and pluralist representation is particularly evident in the legislative details of Bill C-11. Several clauses of the *Online Streaming Act* specifically amend the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* to advance the status and use of both official languages, as summarized in the Charter Statement tabled in the House of Commons on April 1, 2022. For instance,

Clause 3 would update the broadcasting policy to indicate that programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should reflect and support Canada's linguistic duality by placing significant importance on the creation, production and broadcasting of French language original programs, including those from French linguistic minority communities.

Clause 5 would specify that the Commission must regulate and supervise the Canadian broadcasting system in a manner that takes into account the different characteristics of

English and French broadcasting and the different conditions under which broadcasting undertakings that provide English and French programming operate. [...] **Clause 6** would require the Commission, in exercising its powers under the Act, to enhance the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities and support their development. [...] Under **clause 10**, the Commission’s power to make orders would include imposing conditions on the carrying on of broadcasting undertakings with respect to the proportion of original French language programs and the discoverability of original French language programs. (Department of Justice Canada, 2023, paras. 32-33, *emphasis original*)

These provisions explicitly foreground Canada’s official bilingualism and provide essential support for the protection of linguistic minority communities, while simultaneously reflecting—and, in some respects, reaffirming—the longstanding assumption that cultural sovereignty is synonymous with the preservation of state-sanctioned languages and identities.

While supporters of cultural policy endorse the notion of cultural sovereignty—and I believe we should—the persistent tension lies in how to implement it clearly and collectively, ensuring that the full plurality of Canadian cultural expressions can be supported equally within the broadcasting system, which now encompasses the Internet. As Frederick J. Fletcher (1998) observes, “The problem [of Canadian industry and identity] has been of particular concern here because of our geographical and cultural proximity to the United States, the world’s greatest exporter of cultural products, and our own internal divisions, especially the existence of two distinct media audiences” (para. 1). Broadcasting policy must therefore navigate the complex interplay between external pressures, internal cultural and linguistic tensions, and competing industry interests and globalization. The espousal of a distinct national identity is certainly more complex in the context of media globalization and transnationalism.

Regulation and the Politics of Representation

Gregory Taylor's (2022) opening remarks to the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications regarding the *Online Streaming Act* challenge the prevailing myth that broadcasting and "old media" are dying, emphasizing that "those who argue C-11 is regulatory mistake protecting a media relic of another age in the modern digital era likewise miss the mark that broadcasting still matters" (para. 4). Taylor (2022) argues that "keeping the current Act as is a recipe for turning over the Canadian system, built over a century, to economic powers beyond our control" (para. 9). Taylor (2022) further clarifies, "I'm not concerned about an elusive Canadian identity, I'm worried about political sovereignty" (para. 9). I agree with Taylor: the preoccupation with defining a singular Canadian identity is largely unproductive and should not dominate policy debates. Indeed, political sovereignty *should* be the primary concern for broadcasting policymakers and regulators, and from a critical cultural perspective, it is important to reckon with how broadcasting policy debates frequently evoke commonsense assumptions about that elusive construction of Canadian identity, especially *vis-à-vis* concerns of American cultural imperialism.

In 1996, Michael Dorland wrote that the nation-state is "plagued by recurring problems of national identity, both internal and external [...] produced by the shifting currents of Canada's perpetually problematic economic, cultural and political relations with its principal continental neighbour" (p. 348). This fragility persists. Benedict Anderson (1983) famously defines a nation as "an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 15). Building on Anderson, Stuart Hall (1999) argues that "we form an 'imagined community' because we share an idea of the nation and what it stands for, which we can 'imagine' in our mind's

eye” (p. 4). Political discourse, naturally, plays a major role in shaping shared imaginations, as the arena where soft power is exercised over citizens.

While the thematic categories of “Diversity / Representation” and “Francophone Culture” are directly affected by questions of cultural sovereignty and nationalism, they are identified here as distinct analytical frames. This distinction allows for the isolation of lines of argument that do not pertain directly to nation-building and cultural preservation. Instead, the themes serve as vectors through which cultural objectives are materially or aesthetically accepted, rejected, or negotiated, specifically in relation to definitions of Canadian content, the representation of marginalized groups, and the articulation of Québec’s linguistic and cultural differences.

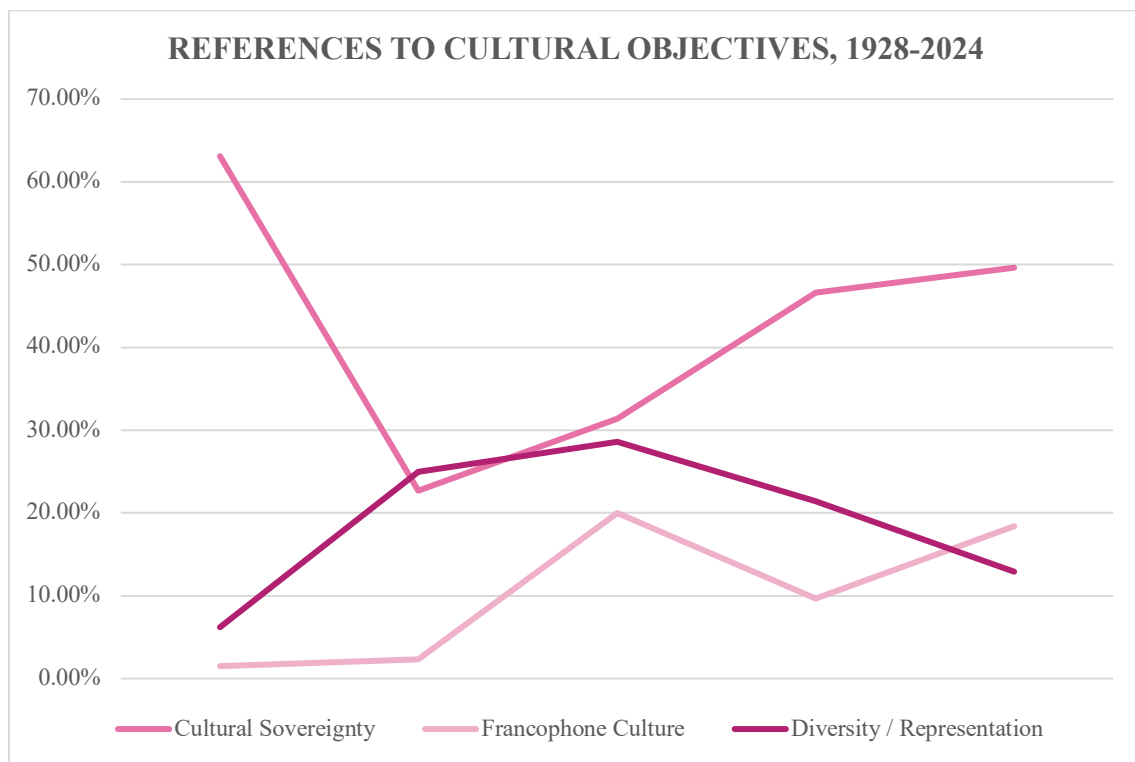


Figure 4 References to Cultural Objectives in Newspapers, 1928-2024

The sharp decline of cultural sovereignty rhetoric in the mid-century coincides with the rise of the two more discernible thematic concerns. These themes surface as discursive responses to evolving federal policies, demographic shifts, and regional tensions. Rather than mere

subcomponents of cultural sovereignty, they represent differentiated frames of interpretation that gain traction as views of national identity become less cohesive and more pluralistic, with layered histories, cultural nationalism, and intersectional identities defined by community and place. Their temporal peaks mirror historical moments that have altered the realms of Canadian policy and cultural expression. Thus, “Diversity / Representation” and “Francophone Culture” emerge as thematically distinct yet temporally reactive responses.

Representation and Regional Cultures: Historical Foundations

In 2013, Odartey-Wellington argued that, alongside changing demographics of the country, the focus of federal policy shifted to cultivating a cohesive, multicultural nation, with broadcasting regulators acting as the “gatekeeper of Canada’s airwaves” (p. 126). While an initial imperative of Canadian broadcasting policy in the 1920s and ‘30s was to overcome geopolitical barriers, a dispersed population, and American cultural imperialism to foster nationhood, this preoccupation finds renewed expression in the 2000s.

Speaking to questions of representation and regionalism, Eve Haque (2012) argues that the national formulation of Canada’s official policy of multiculturalism—replacing biculturalism in 1971 under the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau—entrenched a “racial order of difference and belonging through language in the ongoing project of white settler nation-building” (pp. 4-5), creating the paradox of Canadian multiculturalism. Coinciding with the first *Official Languages Act* of 1969 under Trudeau’s government—a symbolic and pragmatic recognition of the right to communicate in both English and French—discussion of Québec and its distinct culture peaks at 20% in 1968-76. As Marcel Martel (2019) argues, “Far from being a turning point, the passage of the Act demonstrates, instead, that it was part of the federal government’s approach to changing its symbolic capital, an approach that began in the 1930s” (p. 209), and therefore a

continuation of the nation-building project. Similarly, during the implementation of Trudeau's official policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework in 1971, discussion of cultural and regional representation in broadcasting peaks at 28.6% in 1968-76. Both themes persist in 2018-24, appearing in 18.4% and 12.9% of newspaper articles, respectively.

The article "Canadians Want More Programs About Themselves", published in *The St. Catharines Standard* on March 13, 1970, features an interview with Sidney Newman, then-new director of the CRTC's broadcast programs branch and a Canadian who had previously risen to lead the BBC's drama section.

"Canadian artists have been made to feel depressed because so much stuff is imported from the United States and elsewhere," he says. "But these people, given a chance, will emerge. There's a tremendous excitement in TV. We can have so much fun with ourselves.

"Radio stations keep screaming that they're the voice of such-and-such a community. But if that's really the case, we're just damned apes of the Americans because nearly everything you hear on radio is American." [...]

"You see, Canadians read Canadian newspapers, even though, in many cases there may be American papers available and even though these may in some cases be better.

"Now, if Canadians want to read about themselves they'll also want to see more of themselves, and it's this interest that broadcasters must capitalize on.

"We have to get rid of this trauma we have about competition from the Americans and start our thinking anew. To hell with the status quo. Why not change it?" (Doyle, 1970, p. 19)

Newman rearticulates collective cultural identity in Canada to something hegemonic yet fractured—it is *traumatized* and *depressed*, but potentially emergent, contingent upon expressions of cultural nationalism, cultural representation, and rejection of the national-popular *status quo*.

Newman's rhetorical move, *we're just damned apes of the Americans*, actively binds the value of cultural representation and moral authority to the objectives of broadcasting policy. Newman defines Canadians as imaginative and creative—who *can have so much fun with themselves*—yet stunted by ideological warfare over power and hegemony. Newman urges readers, policymakers, and broadcasters to embrace an adaptive regulatory philosophy of cultural production, highlighting the desire for Canadians to *see more of themselves*. There is a certain pathos in this appeal—a yearning for recognition from the very powers and structures being decried.

The call for Canadians to *see more of themselves* is complicated by deep-seated political-cultural tensions tied to linguistic duality and the inequity of cultural recognition. An opinion piece by journalist Joan Irwin of *The Montreal Star* from October 28, 1970, details a communications seminar held by the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists, “devoted to the total concept of Canadianism in the mass media and the arts in general” (p. 78). Recounting a pointed political intervention from broadcaster Laurier LaPierre that foregrounds this friction, Irwin (1970) writes,

French-speaking Canadians, [LaPierre] said, know themselves a little, but English-speaking Canadians know little of the reality of themselves and don't understand French Canadians. His conclusion was that Canadian broadcasting is irrelevant because it is administered by second rate bureaucrats. (p. 78)

Whereas Newman articulates broadcasting to a potentially vibrant site of cultural recognition, LaPierre refuses to ignore the politicization of and asymmetries within broadcasting policy—accusing *second-rate bureaucrats* as hegemonic. LaPierre's concern about the mediation of the linguistic duality of Canadians represents structural inequities in the regulation of cultural expression, challenging nation-building narratives that legitimate state intervention while

obscuring ideological struggles—in this case, between Anglophone and Francophone Canadians. 1968-76 is also a period of peak debate (61.4%)—a moment of discursive dynamism in policy development as moral, aesthetic, and institutional changes occur.

An editorial from the preceding period in *The Calgary Albertan* dated November 22, 1952, voices the major criticism of the government's television policy at the time:

Private television will be allowed, apparently, only where the CBC isn't operating. The CBC is already broadcasting TV in Montreal and Toronto, is working on Ottawa, and is planning stations for Winnipeg, Vancouver and Hamilton. Presumably private TV will be banned in these cities. If it is, that will be one bone of contention.

And even if it isn't, who is paying for the CBC television in these selected cities? The people of Canada, all the people of Canada, through the money voted by Parliament to the CBC for this work. Yet the results of this expenditure benefit only the people in those half-dozen cities. The local communities will have to support all the other TV broadcasting. Calgary will be paying for television in Toronto, but Toronto won't be paying a cent toward television in Calgary. (*The Calgary Albertan*, 1952, p. 4)

The editorial resists the state's articulation of public broadcasting to the 'public interest', given corporeal discrepancies in regional representation and infrastructural access. Voicing a Western Canadian critique of the centralized broadcasting model that privileges metropolitan centres in Ontario and Québec at the expense of broader national inclusion, an ideological binary is constructed between the people of Canada: *all the people of Canada* (paying) and *those half-dozen cities* (benefitting). Accordingly, 1952-59 sees the collapse of support (down to 7.5%) and surge of discontent (up to 45%) as the federal government navigates questions of ownership and funding, marking a crisis of faith in broadcasting policy and its nationalist imaginaries. These findings align

with MacLennan's (2010) radio broadcasting research, which examines how the introduction of radio into the domestic space created resistance to regulation by 'pirates', listeners, and licensed broadcasters across all regions of Canada, motivated by unresolved conflicts over localism, regionalism, language, and content.

Although the thematic frequency of "Diversity / Representation" decreases marginally to 21.4% in 1980-91 from 28.6% in 1968-76, this period marked the inclusion of provisions for an Ethnic Broadcasting Policy and a Northern Native Broadcasting Policy following the state's recognition of geopolitical stratification, having materially excluded communities by way of infrastructure and access into the '50s. A public notice from the CRTC, which appeared in several newspapers, including outlets in New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Québec, and Yukon, from July 1985 states,

The CRTC published today broadcasting policy guidelines that reflect Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity (Public Notice CRTC 1985-139). This follows an extensive consultative process that included a series of public hearings throughout Canada in March 1985. [...]

On 1 October 1984 the Commission called for public comments on "A Proposal for an Ethnic Broadcasting Policy for Canada". This call was in response to a growing demand to increase ethnic broadcasting services, the use of new communications technologies, the scarcity of broadcast frequencies, the limited channel capacity of some cable systems, and the evolving nature of the Canadian Broadcasting System. (CRTC, 1985b, p. 30)

The public notice responds to discontent over an institutional, static construction of Canadian identity—seeking to support one tied not to mythic unity, but to the practical plurality of lived experiences in the nation-state. Removed from debates over the efficacy of these regulatory

guidelines, the inclusion of this Public Notice in newspapers across Canadian regions gave clearer consciousness to questions about whom policy must serve and whose voices have been systemically sidelined.

Another public notice from the CRTC, titled “Northern Native Broadcasting”, was published across regionally diverse papers, including outlets in New Brunswick, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, British Columbia, and Yukon in April of 1985:

In their discussions with the [CRTC’s Northern Native Broadcasting Committee], the [Northern Native Broadcast Access Program-funded] societies have stressed the need for a fundamental change in the philosophy of the CBC’s northern services, to allow for more regional native access during appropriate periods. They also indicated that, consistent with the government’s Broadcasting Policy, northern native people should have fair access to distribution systems to maintain and develop their cultures and languages. Some native representatives are of the view that the best way to ensure fair access would be to amend the Broadcasting Act to entrench the right to native programming in the Canadian broadcasting system. (CRTC, 1985a, p. 23)

Six years later, Section 3(1)(d)(iii) of the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* would formally recognize “the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society, and the space place of aboriginal peoples within that society” (*Broadcasting Act*, S.C., 1991, c.11).

When radio broadcasting was introduced to the Far North in the early twentieth century, there was a hegemonic dominance of English-language communication, and this pattern repeated with the expansion of television in the 1970s (MacLennan, 2013; Valaskakis, 2002). Roth (2005) consequently emphasizes that the rights of Indigenous peoples in the nation needed to be symbolized through legislation, carefully attuned to Indigenous sovereignty. Roth (2005) argues

that without the 1991 Act, Indigenous peoples would have experienced intensified backlash from contrarians, falsely claiming that they lacked legal and cultural grounds for special inclusion in the national system. Critically, Roth (2005) highlights how it would be impossible for Indigenous peoples' self-representation in broadcasting—or for Indigenous broadcasts—to coexist with Euro-Canadian broadcasts in the North without “weav[ing] the notion of diversity into the overall fabric of policy” (p. 122). Cultural resurgence at this time was certainly powerful, symbolized by Nunavut's creation along with the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) in 1999.

Despite the CRTC's efforts at public engagement during this period, criticism hit its highest level in the press at 31% amid a failed 1980 Québec Referendum as well as the collapsed negotiations of the Meech Lake Accord in 1987 and the Charlottetown Accord in 1992; these influenced discourses on federalism, bilingualism, and regionalism on a broader geographical scale. As Kyle Conway (2017) argues, “Canadian identity politics had grown considerably more complex in response to the focus on Quebeckers, First Nations people, minorities, and other Canadians who did not fit neatly in the French/English dichotomy and demanded that their voices be heard, too” (p. 786). Unfortunately, non-hegemonic representation on Canadian screens has remained scarce due to the 1991 Act's vague and somewhat hollow use of the term “multicultural” (Conway, 2017, p. 786). The cultural nationalist undertones of broadcasting policymaking draw attention to persistent ideological dynamics tied to Canadian federalism, bilingualism, and multiculturalism that have influenced national identity since the twentieth century. Roth (2005) also emphasizes that contemporary broadcasting policymakers and regulators have “not only inherited [a] legacy of racist images and histories but have had to contend with opinions formed in the sociocultural and political contexts of racism and distorted communications” (p. 41).

Representations and Regions: Contemporary (Re)framing

In recent years, the theme of “Diversity / Representation” drops to 12.9%: its lowest point since 1928-36, despite broader societal efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. This finding further reinforces how contemporary debates over broadcasting policy are too often anchored in unproductive, unreflective nationalist logics. Francophone cultural discourse reasserts itself as a more prominent theme at 18.4%, however, nearly matching its 1968-76 peak. Of the 101 news stories originating in Québec between 2018 and 2024, 84 are supportive or discursive, indicating that French-language press coverage of the *Online Streaming Act* is generally less negative than that found in English-language papers.

Journalist and author Alain Saulnier wrote an opinion piece for *Le Devoir* published on February 3, 2024, supporting the findings of an expert report that advised Québec's Minister of Culture and Communications, Mathieu Lacombe, on actions to counter the dominance of digital giants. Saulnier (2024) writes,

Nos films, nos téléseries et nos créations musicales en français n’y sont pas facilement accessibles. En fait, nos contenus culturels ne font pas le poids puisque seuls les grands patrons des puissances numériques, majoritairement américains, imposent les leurs. C’est ce que j’écrivais dans mon livre *Les barbares numériques*. Résister à l’invasion des GAFAM. La situation est alarmante, soulignent les auteurs de *La souveraineté culturelle du Québec à l’ère numérique: rapport du comité-conseil sur la découvrabilité des contenus culturels*.

Comment convaincre les moins de 35 ans de s’imprégner de culture francophone si les plateformes ne leur offrent que rarement des contenus d’ici en haut des listes. On le voit, l’avenir de la langue et de la culture françaises est menacé, car ce que nous imposent les

YouTube, Netflix, Amazon, Prime Video, Apple TV et Disney+, c'est la voie d'évitement.
(paras. 2-3)

À mon avis, il me semble que l'ensemble des forces politiques et culturelles, peu importent les allégeances partisans, devrait soutenir le gouvernement du Québec afin qu'il joue un rôle primordial dans la défense de la langue et de la culture. C'est ce qu'on appelle la souveraineté culturelle. (para. 11)

As opposed to something symbolic or abstract, this piece frames Canadian cultural sovereignty as ensuring the visibility and accessibility of French-language content on popular streaming platforms—a regional articulation of policy priorities to linguistic survival. Furthermore, by calling for cross-partisan support for the Québec government, cultural nationalism is rearticulated as a form of collective resistance against algorithmic power.

Saulnier (2024) sees the state of Francophone media as in crisis, invoking signifiers of emergency to describe the Francophone cultural space within digital infrastructures: “*la situation est alarmante*”, “*nos contenus culturels ne font pas le poids*”, “*l’avenir de la langue et de la culture françaises est menacé*”, and so forth. Saulnier, author of a book that defines GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) as *digital barbarians*, ideologically positions *us vs. them*, aligning with a critique of capitalist logics and the commodification of culture by columnist Paul Journet (2021) in *La Presse*: “Et que vaut la culture? Est-ce un produit comme un autre, l'équivalent d'un toaster haut de gamme?” (para. 32, *emphasis original*). These political-cultural questions and tensions unfold on the same nationalized terrain, emphasizing ongoing negotiations of regional distinctiveness and nationhood.

Policy debates are played out through nation-state apparatuses—not always truly *national* in their pursuits (Clarke, 2023)—which makes public dialogue ever more vital in holding political

powers accountable. The opinion piece “Artists, musicians defend bill to update Broadcasting Act”, published in *The Globe and Mail* on May 28, 2021, features interviews with five Canadian artists on Bill C-10, highlighting wide support for the regulation of online streaming services and frustrations with the politics attached to broadcasting policy in the digital age. Actor Jean Yoon, well-known for playing the role of Umma in the show *Kim's Convenience*, both on stage and on screen, argues,

A nation that doesn't tell its own story doesn't know who it is. Within Canada, there are so many different communities that haven't had an opportunity to share their stories. So how are we to understand each other if we don't know who we are? National identity is not just defined geographically; it's obviously not just defined in terms of some sort of bloodline, especially in a country like Canada, but it's always in flux. [...] Canada's identity is that of constant change, constant adjustment and inclusion and discovery, because we are a nation composed of people from all over the world. [...]

How we consume culture now is over the internet. My concern is if regulation doesn't bring some of that revenue back into the Canadian Media Fund, one of biggest forms of distribution is systemically under-contributing to Canadian culture. [...] It's not a level playing field, but also it's not sustainable if we expect to have Canadian television, Canadian news, Canadian films, Canadian music. [...]

As a Korean-Canadian, I'm seeing people get excited about Korean drama and K-pop. This wave of cultural product that's sweeping over the world has been a government policy. The South Korean government made a long-term commitment to developing culture and celebrating Korean culture. To grow something you need water; to build cultural industries you need money. (*The Globe and Mail*, 2021, paras. 14-17)

Jean Yoon explicitly articulates Canadian national identity to plural, dialogical processes of cultural production—*always in flux*—that negotiate both national belonging and the multiplicity of diverse communities and stories.

Seeing beyond geographic or political constraints, Yoon argues that the absence of diverse storytelling undermines cultural objectives of nationhood, framing policy (the *Online Streaming Act*) as a material precondition for cultural expression—because *to grow something, you need water*. The conventionally compartmentalized sphere of economics is inextricably linked to broader sociocultural imperatives surrounding identity and inclusion, with C-10 as a subversive pursuit of autonomy and culture. Yoon’s voice, as a Korean-Canadian actor, embodies lived experience, presenting a counter-hegemonic narrative on national pursuits while intertextually indicating how Canada might learn from non-Western governance structures.

Importantly, the emphasis on counter-hegemonic and inclusive cultural practices does resonate in the final version of the *Online Streaming Act*, which calls on the Canadian broadcasting system to serve and reflect the lives of *all Canadians*. Bill C-11 replaces subparagraphs 3(1)(d)(iii) and (iv) of the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* with the following clause, that the Canadian broadcasting system should,

(iii) through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests of all Canadians — including Canadians from Black or other racialized communities and Canadians of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and ages — and reflect their circumstances and aspirations, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of

Canadian society and the special place of Indigenous peoples and languages within that society. (Bill C-11, 2023, p. 5)

The effort to recognize diverse groups more equitably within Canada’s cultural industries—both on and behind the screen—opens the possibility for rearticulating cultural policy beyond hegemonic notions of cultural sovereignty (Cooling, 2023).

Culture, Community, and Policy Construction

Cultural works hold social, cultural, and political value, and “[s]ocieties whose current realities are not adequately explored, reflected, debated, and contested through works that are widely available, and create a substantial body of shared knowledge, will increasingly become democratic in name only” (Audley, 1994, para. 2). As Augie Fleras (2011) argues, “To the extent that mainstream media have proven diversity-friendly by embracing superficial differences yet difference-averse in rejecting deep differences and politicized diversities, the distinction is critical” (p. vii). Policy discourses, too, must seek to acknowledge, rather than ignore, deep differences and politicized diversities.

Yet, even within political-cultural efforts to foster inclusivity and pluralism, broadcasting policy debates are naturally contentious, reflecting asymmetries in whose voices, interests, and interpretations of cultural objectives are prioritized. Tensions are also inherent between the structured way of talking and thinking about cultural sovereignty and the regional and community-based desires that influence policy and perception, particularly in today’s digital age. Nonetheless, the material revisions in Bill C-11 are a welcome step forward, though more space must be held for generative, policy-specific discourses—a possibility that can emerge when cultural objectives are conceptualized less as abstract principles and more as pragmatic possibilities.

CHAPTER FIVE

Signals from Above and Below: Culture, Industry, and Regulatory Philosophy

In today's digital age, discourse surrounding Canadian broadcasting policy is no longer restricted to traditional media channels. Social media like Reddit are especially sensitive to lived realities and perspectives that are often obscured or omitted in mainstream press coverage. Users engage critically with policy (mis)information, interrogate the legacy of CanCon regulations, and highlight asymmetries between and among cultural actors, industry players, and platform and policy infrastructures. By contrast, press coverage of Canadian broadcasting policy largely reflects bureaucratic and institutional framings. These journalistically mediated voices provide insight into official policy narratives, which are predominantly created through top-down processes rather than audience-driven experiences. Reddit, in turn, operates as a distinctly polyvocal space where users actively accept, reject, and negotiate the implications of broadcasting policy from below.

For some Canadians on Reddit, Bill C-11 does signify a necessary intervention to restrain foreign tech platforms and promote Canadian creators, reflecting a defensive cultural nationalism that recalls anxieties first articulated in the 1920s. Others regard the legislation as government overreach into the digital sphere, expressing concerns that regulation could distort algorithms, suppress content, or infringe upon freedom of expression—a modern-day requiem for twentieth-century policy. Still, certain Canadians express cultural ambivalence, either feeling disengaged from Canadian programming or viewing CanCon quotas as increasingly outdated. This chapter, therefore, builds on the preceding analysis of cultural nationalism by examining how Internet regulation is articulated within digital dialogues. It situates this participatory discourse alongside newspaper coverage to explore how Canada's normative regulatory philosophy is advanced in alignment with industrial objectives and enacted through strategies negotiated across journalistic

and participatory arenas, highlighting the ongoing tensions between principled cultural ambitions and the pragmatic challenges of policy implementation in the digital age.

Speaking Power: Stakeholder Voice and Public Debate

Stakeholder representation in Canadian press coverage shows a surprising degree of continuity over time, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

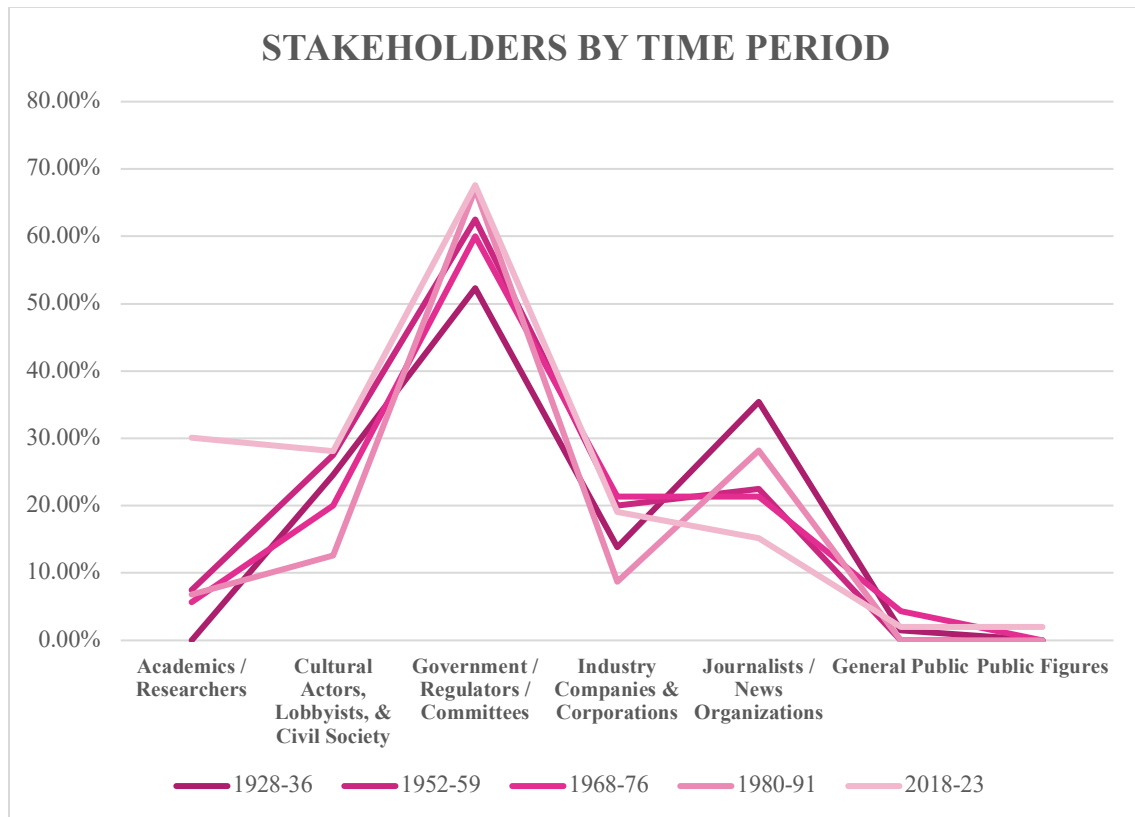


Figure 5 Stakeholders by Time Period in Newspapers

Voices of the Canadian public, public figures, cultural workers, and civil society remain consistently marginal in press coverage, even as academic engagement in this discursive space has grown. This space continues to be marked by institutional dominance and limited public inclusion. Yet, increases in oppositional sentiment since the 1920s reveal that the legitimization and implementation of cultural and economic claims are even more controversial in the digital age— even for actors long embedded in these debates. Within the enduring dichotomy between ‘expert’

and ‘amateur’, news-mediated public discourse on streaming regulation reflects the limitations of Canada’s ostensibly pluralist policymaking system.

Raboy (1995) and Des Freedman (2008) investigate the politics of pluralism in broadcasting policy, noting how public access to the policymaking process is vital to the democratization of the public sphere, where interests fight for influence and power with the ideal of social cohesion. Raboy (1995) and Freedman (2008), however, both highlight the unequal distribution of power in a pluralist system, wherein well-organized political, social, and industry figures and groups enjoy greater access to influence. Understanding this dynamic helps contextualize journalists’ reliance on elite sources: those equipped with technical know-how, decision-making power, or in-depth knowledge of the broadcasting industry. Politicians, regulatory authorities, and members of commissions and appointed committees are represented at an average rate of 61.88% across the five time periods.

The inclusion of Reddit data in this research thus addresses a major gap in polyvocal discourse. Ordinary Canadians are, after all, the primary consumers of broadcasting; their views deserve attention and analytical weight.⁷ As Freedman (2008) notes, corporations that accumulate economic power are well-positioned to exercise market authority as hegemonic gatekeepers of cultural expression. Concentration within the cultural industries enables influential players to exert anti-competitive control over the media landscape, ruthlessly and without the consent of those affected (Winseck, 2020), including producers, distributors, and, importantly, audiences.

Kenneth Rogers (2013) describes the power of medium specificity as a “utilitarian essentialism—a strategic adoption of a philosophical position taken up for political ends” (p. 3). In the same sense that early video was defined by liveness, immediacy, and feedback, Reddit—as

⁷This thesis reproduces quotes verbatim from publicly available Reddit data without correction.

an open, digital space—also works to “produce an alternative space for rational discourse” that can “counteract the erosion of [the public] sphere” (Rogers, 2013, p. 3). Reddit’s medium specificity lies not in any single technological affordance, but in its capacity to structure discourse through pseudonymous participation, nested comment threads, and a reputation-based voting system. These functionalities foster a form of engagement from Canadian publics that is at once affectively charged and temporally punctuated, unlike the unidirectional flow of traditional news media. In this way, Reddit shares a form of utilitarian essentialism, functioning as a tactical space where communities coalesce in response to, and in resistance against, political information and press narratives.

Beyond Binaries: Reddit, Newspapers, and Public Discourse

The sentiment distribution across three threads in three different subreddits discussing Bill C-11—in r/OutOfTheLoop, r/AskACanadian, and r/ontario—displays a polarized but impressively discursive environment, seen in Table 5.

REDDIT SENTIMENT	2022-23
<i>Supportive</i>	18.4%
<i>Critical</i>	36.9%
<i>Discourse / Debate</i>	44.7%

Table 5 Reddit Sentiment, 2022-23

As with historical press coverage of Canadian broadcasting debates, the largest proportion of Reddit posts (44.7%) fall under “Discourse / Debate”, indicating that these select fora primarily functioned as community-based spaces for dialogue and deliberation, rather than filter bubbles of unconditional support or opposition imbued with confirmation bias. Critical posts with targeted or nuanced commentary (36.9%) outweigh supportive ones (18.4%) by almost exactly 2:1.

Reddit fora proved much more generative in negotiating policy meanings than expected. Table 6 and Figure 6 quantify the frequency with which seven themes appeared in the fora.

REDDIT THEMES	2022-23
<i>Culture vs. Industry vs. Platformization</i>	37.8%
<i>Cultural Sovereignty</i>	17.9%
<i>CanCon</i>	36.8%
<i>Diversity / Representation</i>	1.8%
<i>Freedom of Expression / Anti-Intervention</i>	17.9%
<i>Policy (Mis)information</i>	22.7%
<i>Satire</i>	9.3%

Table 6 Reddit Themes, 2022-23

“Culture vs. Industry vs. Platformization” is the most frequently coded theme at 37.8%, revealing a dominant preoccupation with power asymmetries between content creators and artists, the traditional broadcast industry, and online streaming services, indicating that Reddit users actively engage with the tangible dimensions of media policy. “Cultural Sovereignty” at 17.9% signals that political-cultural discourses persist, although Redditors invoke anachronistic narratives less frequently than found in newspapers. “CanCon”, coming in at a very close second (36.8%), reflects public awareness of regulatory strategy and engagement with the CRTC’s legacy. A somewhat high degree of policy (mis)information (22.7%) highlights confusion and attempts at clarification regarding the bill’s provisions.

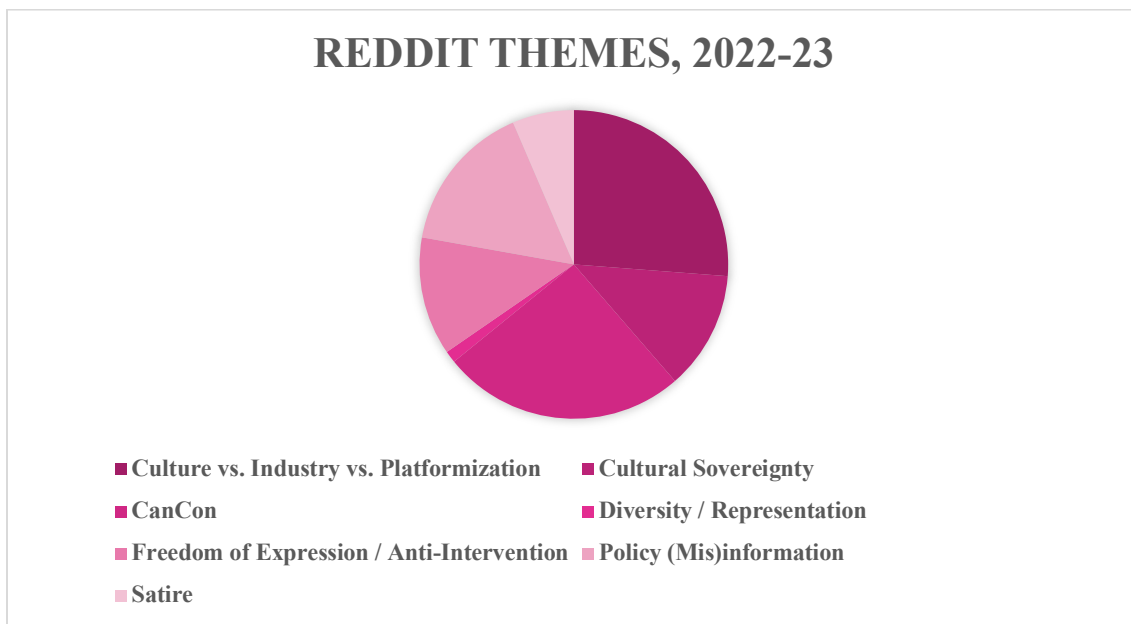


Figure 6 Reddit Themes, 2022-23

The remaining themes, “Freedom of Expression / Anti-Intervention” (17.9%) and “Satire” (9.3%), illustrate how some Reddit users responded to perceived government overreach with humour or direct skepticism, contributing to oppositional sentiment. Equity-based commentary and cultural reflections on broadcasting policy played a minimal role; the theme of “Diversity / Representation” is marginal, at only 1.8%.

As noted in Chapter Four, Table 2 (reproduced below) demonstrates that press coverage from 2018 to 2024 often frames Bill C-11 in relation to cultural sovereignty (49.6%)—a discourse directly tied to the cultural objectives of broadcasting policy—whereas matters of expression, democracy, and politics (67.2%) reflect a wider sociopolitical framing.

THEMES BY TIME PERIOD	1928-36	1952-59	1968-76	1980-91	2018-24
<i>Cultural Sovereignty</i>	63.1%	22.7%	31.4%	43.69%	49.6%
<i>CanCon</i>	0.0%	6.8%	14.3%	24.3%	28.9%
<i>Francophone Culture</i>	1.5%	2.3%	20.0%	9.7%	18.4%
<i>Diversity / Representation</i>	6.2%	25.0%	28.6%	21.4%	12.9%
<i>Market Power & Industrial Outcomes</i>	36.9%	43.2%	28.6%	45.6%	37.5%
<i>Cross-Border Trade</i>	3.1%	18.2%	17.1%	4.9%	5.5%
<i>Policy Process</i>	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	1.9%	1.6%
<i>Expression, Democracy, & Politics</i>	6.2%	43.2%	22.9%	41.7%	67.2%

Table 7 Themes by Time Period in Newspapers

This dramatic rise—from 6.2% in the 1920s and ‘30s—eclipses industrial concerns and nearly surpasses the total frequency of mentions of cultural objectives (“Cultural Sovereignty” at 49.6%, “Francophone Culture” at 18.4%, and “Diversity / Representation” at 12.9%) in the twenty-first century. Although “Market Power & Industrial Outcomes” occurs with high frequency (37.5%) in 2018-24, it is still subordinate to the two most frequent themes. Issues of platform economies and cultural industries are indeed salient, yet they are neither consistently prioritized nor clearly framed as problems to be addressed before cultural objectives can be achieved. Additionally, “CanCon” increases in 1980-91 (24.3%) from previous decades, reflecting controversies under Brian

Mulroney's Conservative government and coinciding with the release of the Applebaum-Hébert report. "Policy Process" is consistently peripheral, exclusively procedural in nature, but contributes to a more representative sample. "Expression, Democracy, & Politics" increases notably from only 6.2% in 1928-36 to an exceptional 67.2% in 2018-24, suggesting both an increasingly fractured media landscape and an increasingly anxious public sphere.

Contemporary Reddit data reveal a distinct prioritization of public concerns. "Culture vs. Industry vs. Platformization" is the most frequently invoked theme (in 37.8% of 397 posts), surpassing even political-cultural and rights-based matters. While the theme of industrial outcomes appears in 37.5% of newspaper articles in 2018-24, Redditors see digital realities—as shaped by the government's normative regulatory assumptions—take centre stage. Reddit discourse around policy (mis)information (22.7%; distinct from freedom of expression) further underscores a more technically engaged, participatory orientation, with users often interrogating the structural and regulatory dimensions of broadcasting reform over its elusive, symbolic stakes.

From CanCon Survival to Consumer Sovereignty

Redditors, interrogating the nexus of culture, industry, and platforms, clearly articulate Bill C-11 in relation to the very issue it seeks to modernize: namely, the untenability of the Canadian content funding models in the digital age (Taylor, 2022). CanCon regulations for radio broadcasting came into effect on January 18, 1971, as both a long-term economic strategy and a cultural vision for the future of the nation-state—a mediation of defensive nationalism (MacLennan, 2019) enacted under the *Broadcasting Act* of 1968. According to Armstrong (2016), the *Broadcasting Act* of 1968 "represents a watershed in broadcasting legislation and the beginning of the modern era in the history of Canadian broadcasting policy" (p. 41), as the framework is not unlike the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* that governed for over three decades. Like its successor, the

1968 Act “was an objectives-based statute, with a statement of policy objectives declared by Parliament, based on the notion that broadcasting in Canada plays an essential role in the *maintenance and enhancement of Canadian sovereignty and identity*” (Armstrong, 2016, p. 41, *emphasis added*).

When the CRTC was established in 1968, replacing its predecessor, the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG), Pierre Juneau—a dedicated cultural nationalist—became its first chairman and remained in that position until 1975. Recognizably ‘Canadian’ criteria have been around in some form or another since the 1920s, but CanCon represents a deliberate—arguably arbitrary—strategy to realize economic and cultural goals within the Canadian broadcasting system. As a strategy, CanCon requirements embody a normative regulatory philosophy rooted in supporting Canada’s political sovereignty and as articulated by politicians and supporters, its often-elusive cultural identity. In the domestic music industry, this materialized in the CRTC’s MAPL system (acronym: music, artist, lyrics, performance), used to define a ‘Canadian’ song. CanCon regulations were soon extended to audiovisual broadcasting in 1984, and since 1995, eligibility for ‘Canadian’ status has been determined by a six-out-of-ten points system—a standard administered by the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO).

A newspaper article in *The Calgary Albertan* from June 3, 1970, features an interview with Juneau, then-chair of the CRTC, in which he reinforces and defends the regulatory philosophy underlying Canadian content regulations:

We’re just saying that Canadian programs should have a little more room. Canadian programs are always in a minority on our own air waves and we’re saying that Canadians should have a little more room to express themselves on their own air waves. That’s not control. If it is, there’s not one democratic country in the world that doesn’t do it. [...]

We've got to sometime stop hesitating and go ahead and do the things and believe we can do them. (*The Calgary Albertan*, 1970, p. 4)

Juneau's discursive appeal articulates CanCon not as an act of soft censorship, but as a necessary tactic to cultivate domestic capacity and assert national authority within a media landscape otherwise saturated by American programming. Canadian content should be understood as a strategy to achieve the dual objectives of broadcasting policy—specifically, the alignment of industrial prosperity with narratives of culture and nation-building. Juneau's comments reveal how imaginaries of national cultural expression are translated into material policy mechanisms, linking symbolic architectures of the nation-state with provisions for everyday broadcast operations.

Fast forward to the present: with the *Online Streaming Act* casting a regulatory net over platforms such as Netflix, a 2022 discussion in the r/OutOfTheLoop subreddit under a post titled “What's going on with bill C-11?”, initiated by a self-identified Canadian, raised questions about CanCon regulations and their differential impacts on cultural expression and consumer choice. One comment reminds other Redditors that Canadian broadcasting policy does not exist in a vacuum:

Another thing to point out is that this isn't really a new thing.

The Massey Commission on Arts in the late 1940s and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission of 1972 were all efforts to try to keep arts and media in Canada, uniquely Canadian. Since then, something like 40% of Radio broadcast media had to be Canadian owned and 50-55% of television and cinema had to be Canadian produced or had been worked on by Canadians. This kept with the times and included new streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon.

This had various effects on preserving Canadian culture.

However YouTube is unique because it is more independently creator based. It makes Federal regulation much more complicated as we see now. (u/Corporal_Canada, 2022)

The user subtly gestures towards the persistent dichotomy of modernization versus antiquation that structures most debates over the *Online Streaming Act*. Throughout the nation's history, amendments to broadcasting policy have been made precisely to navigate changing power dynamics and technological milieus for cultural production, distribution, and consumption while asserting ideologies of the nation-state. Yet regulating a borderless communicative entity is unprecedented, complex, and arguably anachronistic, as the normative regulatory philosophy originally abstracted for radio and television broadcasting must now account for the material realities of the digital age.

The new challenge of federal regulation was addressed in anticipation of the Royal Assent of Bill C-11 in March 2023 by the Department of Canadian Heritage. In the style of a “Q&A” on the *Online Streaming Act*, it was clarified that “[t]he focus of the *Online Streaming Act* is on the streaming services (e.g., Netflix, Crave, Spotify) that Canadians use every day to access their favourite music, television or films” (Canadian Heritage, 2023). The Department proceeded to confirm,

Certain social media platforms (e.g., YouTube) may also be required to support and promote Canadian stories and music. This would apply where these social media services act as substitutes for other broadcasters, including streaming services. However, only the social media service would have regulatory responsibilities—and only with respect to commercial content distributed on its service. [...]

Everyday use of social media by Canadians, digital-first creators and influencers would not be regulated by *the Online Streaming Act*. (Canadian Heritage, 2023)

It is worth noting that this accessible, technical information from Canadian Heritage would likely have been well-received during the early debates over Bill C-11. Nonetheless, *how* exactly the CRTC's regulatory plan will address YouTube's promotion of Canadian stories and music remains to be seen.

One section of Reddit dialogue reveals critical perspectives specifically focused on Canadian broadcasters and consumer sovereignty:

The fact that any great and any not so great Canadian show got a chance to be made at all is due to Canadian law providing both the opportunity and a chunk of funding for these types of programs. (u/MFoy, 2022a)

That whole Canadian comedy boom in the 80s? Due in part to the opportunities provided by this law. It didn't make these people any funnier, but it gave them the platform to show how funny they were, which is just as important. (u/MFoy, 2022b)

This is why American Woman by Lenny Kravitz is technically CanCon and inescapable to this very day if you're listening to terrestrial radio in Canada. (u/TylerInHiFi, 2022)

They're trying to ensure Canadian content has a chance to be successful against the massive amount of non-Canadian English content.

Does it help? Super debatable, there's easily as many examples of way overplayed Canadian content leading to the end of bands, as there are examples of Canadian artists who make it outside of Canada because of a song that charted here. (u/MorningCruiser86, 2022)

These comments illustrate that Redditors not only recognize the structures supporting Canadian content but also engage critically with their processes, limits, and consequences. Users debate the effectiveness of funding and exposure strategies, acknowledging the tensions between ensuring

cultural representation (principle) and grappling with the practical realities of audience reception, market dynamics, and international competition (pragmatism).

Global streaming platforms in Canada have appealed to domestic subscribers by offering extensive freedom of choice, guided by algorithms trained on the viewing data of transactional audiences. The CRTC's traditional tactics, such as encouraging 'pick-and-pay' television packages, reflect a similar model of media consumption built around enhanced consumer sovereignty (Wagman, 2017). With the enactment of the *Online Streaming Act*, the CRTC must confront the inherent tensions between principle and pragmatism: balancing protectionist priorities to sustain and reproduce cultural constructions of the nation-state with the practical realities of transnationalism, technological affordances, and the capitalist logics of digital platforms. Addressing the concern over algorithmic interference, one user adds,

Ultimately, I'm worried about what will be deemed as ""Canadian content"" that will be pushed into the recommendations. [...] I don't want channels being recommended to me due to any regulations. I like what I watch, and watch what I like. (u/thebaggedavenger, 2022a)

Redditors recognize the normative regulatory philosophy underpinning Canadian content regulations and negotiate both the ideological and technical issues with Canada's contemporary efforts to shield itself from American cultural dominance, while also weighing the implications of state intervention in an otherwise creative, dynamic market.

Certain currents of contemporary press coverage similarly reflect divergent discursive formations of CanCon and consumer sovereignty. In a 2023 opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail*, J. Kelly Nestruck employs humour and self-deprecating wit to articulate nostalgic anxieties to the decline of distinctly Canadian cultural programming in the streaming era. Nestruck (2023) poses

the rhetorical question, “Can Bill C-11, the proposed federal online streaming act, save my son from the nefarious influence of *Peppa Pig* and *Bluey*?” (para. 1), ultimately concluding that he is “skeptical that [the bill] can turn back time to [his] two-channel youth, when Mr. Dressup ruled supreme, or to a time when the CBC better understood that its purpose in cultivating Canadian identity started with kids” (para. 20). Framing C-11 as an unlikely antidote to his child’s wandering Australian British accent, juxtaposed with an anecdotal recollection of 1980s Canadian public broadcasting, Nestruck’s political-cultural critique interrogates an all-too-familiar anxiety about the declining visibility of Canadian cultural identity in children’s broadcasting.

Nestruck’s (2023) piece reflects a soft cultural nationalist articulation, framing the erosion of *Canadianness* as a symptom of institutional and market failure. Its ideological legitimation is in symbolic representation and structural memory rather than the material mechanisms of policy. While Nestruck’s article offers one critical example of lamenting national identity amid content diffusion and the waning influence of state intervention, Redditors—in user-moderated spaces where digital publics convene—consistently voice user-driven perspectives on online streaming service regulation.

Platforms and Precarity

Early proponents of the Internet regarded it as a space of utopian optimism, celebrated for its potential to facilitate cultural diversification and democratize media production and consumption on a global scale. Perhaps nowhere is the Internet heralded as a liberatory space more than in author, lyricist, and cyberspace activist John Perry Barlow’s (1996) *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*:

Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave

us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.
(para. 1)

Barlow presents an early, idealistic vision of the Internet as a communicative space fundamentally removed from the federally regulated and corporately influenced terrain of traditional mass media. He pits the logics of technological scarcity, where limited bandwidth and spectrum justify state intervention and centralized authority, against the perceived abundance of the Internet, imagined as something borderless and boundless. This binary depicts the Internet as a site where barriers to entry are dismantled and cultural bottlenecks bypassed. Yet, as the digital age has evolved, this initial optimism has been disappointed by new forms of algorithmic control, economic precarity, and corporate concentration. Bill C-11, in attempting to retrofit Canadian broadcasting policy for this platformed reality, operates within this political economic tension—between the promise of abundance and a “requiem for the long tail” (Napoli, 2016), which platforms have engendered.

While Barlow (1996) framed the Internet as a sovereign-free utopia, removed from regimes of government regulation, contemporary debates over C-11 reveal how the regulatory dreams and desires of *Governments of the Industrial World* are reimagined in platformed domains. Although governing cultural bodies in Canada became less hyper-focused on preserving and promoting hegemonic assumptions of identity through subsidized arts and media by the turn of the twentieth century (Druick & Deveau, 2015), with many cultural industries shifting towards a post-national export economy (Edwardson, 2008), the recent broadcasting amendment signals the reassertion of a normative regulatory philosophy.

Recently, the CRTC advanced the initial phase of its regulatory framework for implementing the *Online Streaming Act*. After consulting more than 360 detailed submissions and holding a three-week public hearing with over 120 groups involved, the CRTC has decided to

require online streaming services to contribute 5% of their Canadian revenues to support the Canadian broadcasting system. These financial obligations will begin in the 2024-25 broadcast year and are expected to provide approximately \$200 million per year in new funding for local news on radio and television, French-language content, Indigenous content, and content created by and for equity-deserving communities, official language minority communities, and Canadians of diverse backgrounds (CRTC, 2024, paras. 4-5). The CRTC's announcement is removed from cultural nationalist rhetoric that has often characterized public debates over the legislation, foregrounding equity, diversity, and local representation as primary goals.

In a nested comment thread reacting to the CRTC's decision, one Redditor explains, "All this is, is extending existing Canadian laws about media - from the 70s originally - to streaming platforms. That's it [...] In the *50 years* since this law came in, not once has it ever been an issue" (u/ShopliftingSobriety, 2022). In the same comment, u/ShopliftingSobriety (2022) responds rhetorically to another user, "So to be clear you got "isolationism" from "5% of content on streaming services has to be Canadian in origin?". While mundane, this framing rearticulates the regulatory project as less of a nation-building, political-cultural project, but to a non-disruptive, commonsensical extension of a longstanding cultural policy, stripped of controversy or overhaul. For this Redditor, C-11 is nothing more than a regular update to modernize an outdated framework—a perspective that reflects a broadly pragmatic and neutral view of policy, rather than a specifically critical or ideological stance. The user draws on a lineage of broadcasting policy dating back to the '70s, minimizing contemporary anxieties by invoking a sense of familiarity and continuity.

Another Redditor shows a more celebratory stance towards Canadian content regulations, framing them through the lens of cultural nationalism. Broadcasting policy is positioned not as

passive or necessarily natural, but actively generative: “why Canadian names like Celine Dion, Justin Bieber, Ryan Reynolds, etc all are globally famous” (u/LiterallyARedArrow, 2022). They add, “This law has always existed to protect our culture from being too American [...] the consequences of the bill historically have been “Maybe you hear the same song on the radio more often”, or “Maybe the directory shows you stargate more often”” (u/LiterallyARedArrow, 2022). Here, domestic policy is portrayed as the ground upon which Canadian talent gains traction before being exported internationally. Affluence, cultural regulation, and recognition are neatly articulated to intervention in the broadcasting system. The user embraces C-11’s goal of addressing economic precarity for Canadian artists on algorithm-driven platforms, narrating a simple path from CanCon to celebrity across decades.

One Redditor also invokes nostalgia and collective memory as a discursive element. They write, “For radio and television broadcasting, at least, [broadcasting policy] has been beneficial for raising our cultural profile. I’m old enough to remember the low-budget dark ages of Canadian TV before the Broadcasting Act of 1991” (u/CCDestroyer, 2022). This rhetorical gesture marks two moments, the *before* and *after* of modern broadcasting policy, with affectively-charged references to “Orphan Black, Trailer Park Boys, Schitt's Creek, Kim's Convenience, Wynonna Earp, Heartland, Anne with an E (aka just “Anne” to Americans, based on Anne of Green Gables), the Alias Grace miniseries, and Letterkenny” (CCDestroyer, 2022). The list functions as a retrospective justification for present policy: state intervention and cultural capital are entangled with national-popular productions, and a lack thereof is articulated to a *low-budget dark age* of cultural expression.

Through these examples of dialogic discussion, the *Online Streaming Act* is constructed as a necessary measure to address precarity in the context of platform economies, albeit to varying

degrees and through differing perspectives. They combine cultural and economic rationales in a way that contrasts with newspaper coverage, which often addresses economic objectives generically and with less pith. Redditors, by contrast, support their arguments with industrial references and detailed personal reasoning; their framings, however, coexist uneasily with the regulatory challenges of digital abundance, as media organizations reposition themselves “to capture the hearts and eyeballs of viewers who have never had so much to distract them” (Raboy & Bonin, 2008, p. 79). The CRTC seems to be doing its best to reconcile a normative regulatory philosophy with its former *laissez-faire* approach, moving away from a culture of post-nationalist globalization in which it responded “as required to industry needs, not wishing to impede what has been perceived to be a creative and dynamic sector with significant potential for Canada” (O’Neill, 2006, p. 184).

Negotiating the Norms of Regulation

Still, the normative foundations of Canadian broadcasting policy, rooted in commonsense assumptions about what the state *ought to do*, remain as complex as they were last century. Tensions emerge not only over programming exhibition and expenditure requirements, but also over the unsettled and, often, reactive nature of state intervention itself. It is only reasonable to question what role the government should play in shaping broadcasting and cultural expression in a radically different digital age. Polarized ideas of regulatory overreach versus legitimate cultural protectionism have long been accepted, rejected, and negotiated—resulting in a byproduct dichotomy between intervention as public interest or paternalism.

Again, *these tensions are not new*. On June 5, 1954, *The Leader-Post* in Regina, Saskatchewan, covered a heated House of Commons debate over television policy, during which

Conservative Opposition Leader George Drew criticized the CBC's monopoly on broadcasting and regulation, vilifying public broadcasting for its hegemonic tendencies:

[Drew] said all the organization and apparatus is in existence in the CBC for thought control. No individual may broadcast on a national network without CBC permission. The matter of thought control "is a serious thing because if there is one thing the dictatorships of the earth want, it is thought control. Here is the medium through which that very thing is done." The CBC with its control over sound radio and television has the only one medium through which there can be freedom of expression over networks in Canada. That is what I am opposed to" ("Drew attacks TV policies", 1954, p. 12).

As broadcasting policy and cultural policy more broadly have long been articulated to cultural sovereignty and even cultural hegemony (Cooling, 2024), Drew's perturbed remarks—drawing conspiratorial comparisons between the CBC and authoritarian regimes—expose how sovereign imaginaries fracture along lines of media regulation. His invocation of *thought control* and centralized oversight reflects a perception of regulation not merely as governance but as a moral and political battleground, revealing how notions of cultural sovereignty can be deeply entangled with fears of structural overreach and abuse of power found in *the dictatorships of the earth*.

Decades later, in digital spaces including Reddit, similar anxieties are articulated—but refracted through the lenses of digitalization and globalization. One user expresses concern about policy opacity and its implications for transnational media flows:

The biggest thing that would help would be some clarity from the government on what will be considered Canon on youtube, if individual channels will be able to be recommended, if the algorithm will change, and so on. Until we hear more, I'm skeptical. Partially because

I'm worried this will set a precedence for other countries and the internet starts to close off.
(u/thebaggedavengerb, 2022b)

Although this comment predates Canadian Heritage's clarification of its stance on extending regulatory oversight to platforms such as YouTube, it conveys a common discursive pattern: not of outright rejection of regulation due to cultural imposition or market interference, but of ambivalence and concern regarding political transparency. Any move toward restricting the Internet, and for the Internet to *start to close off*, would break the promises of a liberal democracy.

For others, ambivalence, worry, and a lack of understanding are the result of legislative inaccessibility:

the text of the bill is rather hard to follow compared to some of the other proposed legislation, so I can't focus and start to understand it myself. Therefore I'm stuck with hoping the views expressed in news articles are a truthful depiction of the bill. I feel like I know very little about it in general other than one can compare it to the canon rules that already exist, but extended to the internet. (u/draemn, 2023)

This comment does not challenge the state's cultural obligations per se but criticizes its failure to clearly communicate Bill C-11's implications for creatives and consumers in a platform-mediated epoch. Such reflections from everyday Canadians reveal an epistemic gap in contemporary broadcasting legislation, leaving audiences to navigate between legacy policies and emerging digital infrastructures, often interpreting regulatory intent and anticipating impacts on their cultural and economic participation without clear understanding. As Jonathan A. Obar (2010) argues, "as 'expert language' and technological discourse further define the boundaries of policy deliberations, those who attempt to affect change with 'everyday' language increasingly find themselves marginalized" (p. 2).

Within the same forum, other Redditors reiterate that cultural protectionism remains a critical concern for the nation-state in the present day. Support for Bill C-11 is expressed, once again, through an articulation of cultural identity to geopolitical power:

It's to make sure our Canadian Culture remains intact. We do have a unique cultural identity. The US tv shows and movies dominate the scene so much that many Canadians think that our laws are the same and that we have amendments like that do. Also it makes sure we financially support programs that nurture Canadian talent. We would get lost otherwise simply because of the population imbalance. We need it. (u/qsouthsue, 2023)

This Redditor echoes earlier cultural nationalist logics: that without intervention, Canadian culture will be subsumed by an Americanized one. While none of these Reddit posts are nearly as alarmist as George Drew's mid-century rhetoric in the press, for some Canadians, accepting or rejecting broadcasting policy is reliant not only upon cultural or economic objectives, but on its philosophy, clarity, and political economic stakes.

Speaking to Canada's normative regulatory framework—that the state ought to support cultural expression by developing policy and strategy—one user expresses ambivalence towards preserving and promoting the aesthetics of Canadian nationhood. Their comment reflects the tensions between traditional cultural objectives and the uncertainties of the digital age:

Eh, [Trudeau's] somewhat right somewhat wrong. Canada as a nation has only existed for a little, so we're not protecting much history, especially since much of the history of the real original Canadians has been lost. We have very shallow culture, things like accents, thoughts on the US, politeness, butter tarts, hockey definitely, etc. But as our country becomes more than just french and english immigrants, our culture has become more of a stew of various places, especially in urban areas like Toronto or Edmonton.

So I agree with Trudeau that our culture is a mosaic of other cultures, but the mosaic is in a big maple wood Canadian frame. (u/felldownthestairsOof, 2023)

More than a monolith, Canadian culture is not a single idea but a fluid construct, shaped by imagination. The Redditor resists a nationalist conception of Canadian identity and expression (as something cohesive and coherent) as they rearticulate it to a symbolic container—a *maple wood frame*—through which that cultural diversity is accepted, rejected, and negotiated. The user does not dismiss the value of cultural protectionism, but implicitly questions what, exactly, is being preserved beyond shallow things like *accents, thoughts on the US, politeness, butter tarts, and hockey*. The post encapsulates prevailing (mis)understandings of the *Online Streaming Act*; although Canadians may broadly endorse streaming regulation, some remain unclear about what forms of cultural production it is intended to safeguard and how.

Where George Drew feared *thought control* in 1954, these Canadians criticize policy for its lack of transparency and due diligence. Both sets of discourse centralize the nation-state as it performs a fraught balancing act between cultural expression and cultural governance. As Winseck (2024) succinctly summarizes, the *Online Streaming Act* contains “powerful levers that require fair carriage for broadcasting, whether over the air, cable, or the Internet” and “important funding mechanisms as well as obligations for regulated streamers to disclose information that has previously been kept under wraps” (p. 21); however, only “*if done right*” will the bill “advance public interests, communication rights, and democratic values” (p. 21, *emphasis added*).

Re: Freedom of Expression

Terry (2020) reminds us how questions of freedom of expression and censorship date back over a century in cultural policy. For instance, in one act of soft censorship dating back to 1919, the provincial film office in British Columbia established a mandate to foster industrial objectives

for Canadian industry and trade as well as education (Terry, 2020). Amending the *Moving Pictures Act* in 1920, the British Columbia Patriotic and Educational Picture Service, under the Department of the Attorney-General, was created, and a quota provision was adopted to require theatres in British Columbia to air fifteen minutes of films approved by the Picture Service. This requirement was to support the production and exhibition of patriotic, instructive, educative, and entertaining films in the Dominion (Gasher, 2002, as cited in Terry, 2020). The early emphasis on promoting and regulating Canadian film production finds a clear parallel in contemporary efforts to prioritize Canadian content within a digital media landscape, highlighting the continuity of the state's role in mediating cultural expression.

As an apparatus, cultural policy continues to uphold the economic and cultural mechanisms necessary to sustain political sovereignty in evolving global contexts; the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* set this out plainly in subparagraph 3(1)(d)(iv), enshrining that the system should “be readily adaptable to scientific and technological change” (*Broadcasting Act*, S.C., 1991, c.11). To secure consent of the governed when regulating this system, citizens' fundamental freedoms must not be violated, nor should democratic practices be disregarded. Regulation of online streaming services in the digital age affects Canadians not only as content consumers, platform users, and media creators, but also as *citizens* participating in a liberal democratic society.

In “Private Broadcasting and the Path to Radio Broadcasting Policy in Canada”, MacLennan (2018) examines one of the most contentious early radio broadcasting debates in the House of Commons: the 1920s controversy surrounding the International Bible Students' Association (IBSA) and issues of religious censorship. This discursive event exemplifies how regulatory authority over broadcasting has been intertwined with public anxieties regarding

freedom of expression and government overreach. Recurring patterns of press outrage continue to impact contemporary debates over broadcasting legislation in Canada.

An early twenty-first-century regulatory dispute at the CRTC similarly demonstrates how issues surrounding freedom of expression and regulatory norms have persisted in the modern era. The CRTC's most polarizing, publicized broadcasting decision occurred in 2004, when the Commission denied the broadcast licence renewal application by Genex Communications Inc. for the French-language commercial radio station, CHOI-FM Québec (CRTC, 2004). Forty-seven complaints of harassment, personal attacks, offensive on-air comments, and hate speech were filed with the CRTC by 1998 against Jean-François Fillion, host of CHOI-FM's morning show, *Le monde parallèle*. After a series of public hearings on CHOI-FM's alleged non-compliance with specific radio broadcasting regulations as set out in the 1991 Act (CRTC, 2002; CRTC 2004), on July 13, 2004, the Commission denied Genex's application for the renewal of the broadcast licence due to "the licensee's inflexible behaviour, its lack of acceptance of its responsibilities and the lack of any demonstrated commitment to rectify the situation" (CRTC, 2004, para. 141). Later, on September 1, 2005, the Federal Court of Appeal dismissed Genex's appeal of the CRTC's decision, and on June 14, 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed Genex's application for leave to appeal (Armstrong, 2016).

From 2004 to 2005, CHOI-FM used freedom of expression as a defence before the CRTC and the courts (Gingras, 2008). A rare decision by the CRTC to deny CHOI-FM Québec's licence renewal ignited significant public dissent. Enraged listeners of CHOI-FM circulated petitions, plastered CHOI bumper stickers on their cars, and wore CHOI pins to protest the Commission's decision (Boutin, 2004, as cited in Gingras, 2016). Shortly after the decision, fifty thousand supporters marched the streets of Québec City to fight for the radio station, and seven thousand

protesters rode a five-hour bus to Ottawa during a storm to demonstrate on Parliament Hill (Krauss, 2004, as cited in Armstrong, 2016). Anne-Marie Gingras (2008) argues that Genex’s legal team strategized a specific conception of freedom of expression—one presented to the courts, the media, and the public as an absolute, unrestricted right. Genex’s lawyers, along with radio hosts and fans, created a false dichotomy between cultural expression and censorship. This binary ignored the complexities of broadcasting regulation and enabled a shallow, sensational narrative to spread across media outlets (Gingras, 2008). In its ruling on Genex’s appeal, the Federal Court ruled that the case could not be “transformed into a crusade for freedom of expression without substantially distorting it” (*Genex Communications v Canada*, 2005, para. 41).

I suggest that widespread opposition to revising the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* to encompass online streaming services was likewise transformed into a crusade for freedom of expression, including within newspaper articles. The theme “Expression, Democracy, & Politics” surged in 2021 press coverage over perceived threats to individual freedom of speech. Although some stakeholders in the press veered into conspiratorial or hyperbolic territory—even framing the bill as *Orwellian* (see O’Toole, 2021)—the following discussion does not engage with polarized extremes. Instead, this section engages with measured and temporally relevant public debate.

Anxieties over freedom of expression intensified when Bill C-10 removed an exemption that would have excluded user-generated content posted to social media sites from regulation by the CRTC. The theme appeared in 48% of articles from the 2018-24 period, with 74 of those 271 articles published in 2021. The bill’s original draft included three social media exemptions: section 2.1 protected individual users, while section 4.1 exempted programs and platforms broadcasting only user-generated content. In the spring of 2021, the government removed section 4.1, asserting that section 2.1 alone sufficiently safeguarded freedom of expression. The decision generated

controversy, delaying passage; although the bill cleared the House of Commons, it stalled in the Senate when fast-tracking was refused. The sudden removal of section 4.1 brought the draft bill closer to the policy imagined in the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review (2020) report, which recommended that social media platforms be excluded under the report's definition of media content undertaking "except to the extent that they enable the sharing of audio or audiovisual content, or alphanumeric news content" (p. 132).

In an article in *The National Post* from April 2021, former CRTC regional commissioner and Vice Chair of Communications, Peter Menzies, is quoted, denouncing the removal by the Canadian Heritage Committee. Menzies states, "Granting a government agency authority over legal user generated content [...] doesn't just infringe on free expression, it constitutes a full-blown assault upon it and, through it, the foundations of democracy" (Karadeglija, 2021, para. 3). Menzies's statement carried significant weight in the press. Multiple news outlets cited his remarks, amplifying the concern that Bill C-10 would effectively undermine democracy by curtailing users' Charter-protected right to freedom of expression.

Additionally, the most vocal critic of the *Online Streaming Act*, Professor Michael Geist, Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-Commerce Law at the University of Ottawa, called C-10's removal of section 4.1 "an unconscionable attack on the online free expression of Canadians" (Pardy, 2021, para. 5). University of Calgary law professor, Emily Laidlaw, further clarified:

The government does not propose to regulate users directly. But it does propose to regulate the platforms that then must regulate users.... In other words, by outsourcing the obligation to private companies, the state does indirectly what it can't do directly. (Pardy, 2021, para.

6)

The invocation of Article 1 of the Charter—that “reasonable limits” to freedom of expression are only to be imposed by the government in “demonstrably justifiable” cases of interference with Canada’s “free and democratic society” (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 1982)—is serious. While the Minister of Justice later reviewed C-11, the successor to C-10, and did not identify any conflicts with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (with new amendments to clarify its position on user-generated content), important critiques from Menzies, Geist, and Laidlaw underscore how the bills’ approach to regulating platforms can, in an instant, raise legitimate structural and practical concerns about freedom of expression. The Canadian government has officially deemed these fears resolved following the Royal Assent of Bill C-11, but it is precisely where regulatory clauses remain flexible, vague, or open-ended that public concerns and (mis)understandings are created.

Debates over freedom of expression and state intervention are especially reflective of ideological values inherited from the Enlightenment period. Self-governance necessitates political collectivity and exposure to *a marketplace of ideas*. Habermas’s (1989) famous work on the structural transformation of the public sphere examines the development of the space where “private people come together as a public”, separate from public authorities (p. 27). The public sphere concretizes relations between human rationality, the requisite for accessible media, and a democratic political system attuned to citizens’ social problems and their solutions. It is a space where democracy flourishes, a mode of constraining political authority to ensure the autonomy of the individual comes before state limitations.

In the Canadian context, the governed (the public) give consent to the law with the expectation that those in power will impose only minimal restrictions; however, legal fears originally specific to Bill C-10 were carried over to C-11, despite its new provisions to address

concerns about user-generated content. Université de Montréal professor Pierre Trudel, research director of the Federal Task Force on Broadcasting (1985-1988) and director of Université de Montréal's Public Law Research Centre (1990-1995), wrote an opinion chronicle for *Le Devoir* to address concerns over autonomy in the (digital) public sphere, state limitations on individual freedoms, and the persistence of misinformation surrounding the then-new Bill C-11. Trudel (2022) writes,

Mais lorsqu'on prend la peine de le lire, on constate que le projet de loi C-11, tout comme la loi qu'il modifie, commande expressément au CRTC de respecter la liberté d'expression et de tenir compte des contextes des milieux francophones. De même, la législation ne vise pas les individus qui interviennent en ligne. Elle s'applique aux entreprises dont l'activité a un effet démontrable sur la réalisation des objectifs de la politique de radiodiffusion énoncée dans la loi. (para. 7)

Trudel anchors his discourse in the technical reality of the bill, explaining how the *Online Streaming Act* targets streaming infrastructures, *not* individuals directly, and that freedom of expression remains protected under Canadian law. His emphasis that protections are clearly delineated in the bill's text—*lorsqu'on prend la peine de le lire*—highlights frustration with the perpetual misunderstanding and political distortion of the bill, which is not intended to censor Canadians. Trudel rearticulates broadcasting policy from an abstract symbol of culture and nationhood to something material and structurally grounded to challenge narratives of Canada as an authoritarian nation and to foster rational debate. Similarly, Redditors focused their commentary on pragmatic matters of culture, industry, and platforms (35.8%), with freedom-related concerns or conspiratorial accusations appearing in only 17.6% of posts.

Public Discourse, Principle, and Practice

Taylor (2013) argues that older rationales for national media regulation are destabilized by disruptive technologies. With transnationalism, platform economies, and cross-border media flows, “there are disjunctures between the idea of the state as in principle capable of determining its own future and the existence of a global hierarchy of power, a world economy, [...] international law and treaty commitments which together operate to condition and constrain the actions of individual liberal democratic states” (Held & McGrew, 1993, p. 265). The *Online Streaming Act*, now in its implementation, must not simply modernize the Canadian broadcasting system; it must do so in a way that carefully negotiates cultural expression, global policy norms, corporate power, *and* public trust. Indeed, this is no easier today than it was last century (it is, arguably, more challenging).

Clarity of policy does not necessarily equate to clarity of meaning. Hall (1980) reminds us that meaning is never fixed at the moment of transmission; it is always negotiated at the point of reception. Public perception, textual interpretation, and regulatory execution all complicate how broadcasting policy debates unfold. This chapter examined the broader challenges of regulating online streaming services in the digital age, revealing how competing articulations of broadcasting policy—across cultural, economic, and regulatory principles and practices—are constantly negotiated and (re)shaped through public discourse from above and below.

CONCLUSION

Tuning In: Canadian Broadcasting Policy in the Twenty-First Century

Broadcasting policy has long positioned itself as a reflection of Canada's *cultural fabric*; however, that fabric has always been unevenly woven, and today, it is increasingly frayed. Examining the arguments for and against streaming service regulation exposes the unsettled legacy of Canadian broadcasting, while offering critical insight for cultural policymakers navigating an era defined by media abundance, transnational media flows, and platform economies. Newspaper coverage, policy excerpts, and digital fora collectively provide a snapshot of the language used to accept, reject, and negotiate broadcasting legislation since 1928, with the *Online Streaming Act* standing as its most contentious intervention to date.

Employing content analysis, document analysis, and critical discourse analysis—framed through Stuart Hall's (1985) theory of articulation—this thesis argued that contemporary efforts to modernize Canadian broadcasting policy remain inextricably bound to unresolved, and at times anachronistic, tensions inherited from the previous century, particularly those concerning nation-building, cultural expression, and abstract assumptions and material consequences of regulation. The state's entrenched cultural-nationalist stance—reminiscent of early twentieth-century rhetoric—not only reflects Canada's historical struggle to define itself cohesively but also intensifies the challenge of imposing analogue-era policy onto global digital platforms. Broadcasting policy, as a cultural apparatus of the nation-state, is discursively constructed, symbolically reproduced, and institutionally reinforced, but its meaning and legitimacy are always contingent on perspectives and perceptions of political economic and cultural realities.

This thesis unfolded across five chapters. Following the introduction to contemporary broadcasting policy debates and their historical contexts, Chapter Two outlined the mixed-methods

approach guiding the research. Content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and document analysis were used to examine reconfiguring discourses of cultural nationalism, economic and infrastructural concerns, and regulatory norms across newspaper coverage, Reddit fora, and political excerpts from a critical cultural perspective. Chapter Three provided a historical and thematic literature review, tracing the evolution of Canadian broadcasting policy since the 1920s through narratives of cultural sovereignty, normative intervention, and changing sociopolitical contexts. Positioned chronologically, the literature review suggests that contemporary debates surrounding the *Online Streaming Act* both reflect and refract dominant imaginaries from twentieth-century policy discourses, while also identifying a gap in recent scholarship on how Canadians discursively construct meanings in relation to broadcasting legislation in the digital age.

Chapter Four traced the historical trends of cultural nationalism in Canadian broadcasting rhetoric, setting the stage with Graham Spry's iconic articulation before the 1932 Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting. Through analyses of press coverage and parliamentary discussion, the chapter revealed when and how national assumptions of cultural sovereignty and other culturally-fixated discourses have appeared in response to perceived threats—particularly American cultural dominance—across sociopolitical and regulatory milestones. These discourses expose perhaps irreconcilable conflicts around the mediation of Canadian culture and nationhood, between stakeholder interests, and over media governance. Chapter Five turned to contemporary discourses, analyzing newspaper coverage and Reddit dialogues to uncover how cultural, economic, and regulatory narratives are differently articulated between and among institutional and participatory spaces.

The originality and relevance of this research relate to its timing: the Canadian government has actively reformed its broadcasting policy for the first time in over three decades. Interrogating

the political-cultural work of articulation provides a critical lens through which to examine both continuity and change in broadcasting policy debates from the twentieth to the twenty-first century—listening specifically to *what* Canadians are saying, *how* they are saying it, and *when*. MacLennan (2018) argues that “the largely unregulated early years of Canadian radio were vital to development of broadcasting policy” (p. 13); this thesis affirms that the unregulated early years of the Internet were also vital to developing perspectives on how this new medium should be governed. Consequently, we return to one fundamental question: *Can a policy framework designed for the traditional broadcasting era survive the platform age?* As broadcasting transcends national borders across the globe (MacLennan, 2016) and the boundaries between traditional and new media continue to blur, the CRTC has been tasked with navigating a complex, dynamic media landscape under the *Online Streaming Act*.

This thesis proposes that contemporary broadcasting policy debates in Canada are not dead, rather, somewhat haunted by abstract, commonsense assumptions about who we are as a nation and how our culture should be preserved and promoted. The 1928 to 1936 period witnessed the most unanimous support for radio legislation in press coverage, but a clear consensus on how to enact broadcasting policy in Canada—whether for radio, television, or now, online streaming services—has never fully materialized and, erring on the side of pessimism, likely never will. Contemporary debates in Canada reflect and refract historical, multi-faceted ideologies regarding the economic and cultural objectives of broadcasting policy, even as they confront ruthless new challenges posed by digital platforms. The *Online Streaming Act* may be a necessary step towards policy modernization in a time of digital platforms; however, it may equally be read as a requiem for a century: a continuation of efforts within the nation-state to mediate cultural expression as the Internet eludes geographical borders, symbolic boundaries, and sovereign limits.

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Appendix A – Newspaper Codebook: Themes

THEME	DEFINITION	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<i>Cultural Sovereignty</i>	Discourse on the role of broadcasting policy in shaping Canadian nationhood.	Reference to Canadian culture, identity, stories, or expression; asserting cultural independence or resisting American or platform dominance; and/or the need for public broadcasting.	Language purely focused on economic objectives without cultural construction.
<i>CanCon</i>	Discourse on Canadian content (CanCon) regulations or the legacy of the CRTC’s framework.	Reference to the CRTC’s CanCon quotas or requirements or commentary on the value or shortcomings of CanCon rules.	Discussion of Canadian programming without acknowledgement of the CanCon strategy. *CanCon first emerges in 1952-59. In earlier periods, CanCon was coded whenever “Canadian content” was mentioned due to the term’s relative novelty and significance as a regulatory strategy. In 2018-24, only CRTC-specific references were coded to avoid oversaturation given its often incidental mention.
<i>Francophone Culture</i>	Discourse on Québec's linguistic, political, and/or cultural representation in policy and/or programming.	Reference to Québec's sovereignty, jurisdiction, or distinctiveness; Evaluation of policy's engagement with distinct Francophone needs.	Generic mention of English- and French-language content. *Not all French-language articles default under this theme.
<i>Diversity / Representation</i>	Discourse on the representation of Indigenous, multicultural, regional, or other non-hegemonic identities.	Call for or reference to diversity in policy and regulatory decision-making, content accessibility, and/or programming.	Brief mention of diversity in Canada without naming communities or advancing an equity-based frame.

<i>Market Power & Industrial Outcomes</i>	Discourse on economic, structural, and/or commercial concerns in the broadcasting industry.	Reference to commercialization or domestic competition; market structures; specific funding obligations; and/or economic data.	Cultural or ideological concerns; purely procedural or legislative commentary; and/or discussion of content regulation without economic stakes.
<i>Cross-Border Trade</i>	Discourse on U.S. trade, commerce, or legal obligations in relation to Canadian broadcasting.	References to trade agreements or cross-border barriers to competition; American responses to Canadian broadcasting policy or vice versa; allegations of violating trade law.	Cultural and ideological references to Americanization or commercial influence; General discussion of cross-border media flows without legal friction.
<i>Policy Process</i>	Reports on legislative and procedural developments.	Reference to parliamentary or Senate procedures or policy timelines.	Any article where regulatory detail is secondary to cultural debates, economic stakes, or ideological framing. *Not to be co-coded with articles under any other theme.
<i>Expression, Democracy, & Politics</i>	Discourse on democratic processes, partisan dynamics, and/or parliamentary and regulatory operations.	Reference to government overreach or censorship; content discoverability; and/or freedom of expression; Presence of ideological or procedural commentary on political or regulatory conduct and/or public participation in policymaking.	Generalized information about content availability without reference to expression or access; Mention of standard government or political debate without framing as partisan or democratic; Structural or procedural details without other framing.

Appendix B – Newspaper Codebook: Sentiment

SENTIMENT	DEFINITION	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<i>Supportive</i>	Articles that lend more space to positive rather than negative perspectives on broadcasting policy or its objectives, even if concerns are acknowledged.	Headlines or ledes framing policy as necessary, beneficial, or favoured; Emphasis on cultural or economic strengths; Majority of supportive quotes or references.	Strong disagreements or dominant critiques; Balanced or ambivalent tone.
<i>Critical</i>	Articles offering specific criticism of policy mechanisms or implementation, without rejecting its objectives, intent, or existence, or articles that convey predominantly negative views on broadcasting policy or its objectives, suggesting it is fundamentally flawed, unnecessary, or harmful.	Concern about enforcement, scope, consequences, shortcomings, or ambiguity; Suggestions for amendments to address existing concerns; Use of accusatory or conspiratorial language; Contrarian sources.	Descriptive-only reports or largely supportive or balanced framing / sources; Does not necessarily need to be constructive to be critical.
<i>Discourse / Debate</i>	Neutral or descriptive articles outlining multiple perspectives without evaluative judgment, or articles balancing positive and negative perspectives relatively equally without leading conclusions.	Fact-based summaries; Report on hearings or consultations; Quotes or viewpoints from different sides.	Editorial bias; Source framing that skews the discussion / balance (failure to give salience to two or more sides).

Appendix C – Newspaper Codebook: Stakeholder Group

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	DEFINITION	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<i>Academics / Researchers</i>	Individuals affiliated with universities or think tanks who contribute expert analysis or commentary.	University professors, research fellows, or policy/industry analysts.	Op-eds by non-researchers or individuals without research credentials.
<i>Cultural Players, Lobbyist Associations, & Civil Society</i>	Organizations and individuals who represent cultural, social, and industrial civic interests.	Arts councils; Artists/creators as individuals or collectives; Equity-seeking organizations; Advocacy groups or lobbyist associations representing the public or industrial sector; Associations submitting briefs, letters, or making recommendations; Organizations participating in public consultations.	Individuals or entities acting primarily in a commercial capacity; Elected or appointed government representatives.
<i>Government / Regulators / Committees</i>	Federal, provincial, or commission officials responsible for legislation, oversight, decisions, or regulation, as well as individuals on government-appointed committees.	MPs, Ministers, Opposition Critics, commission officials, or members of broadcasting committees, including former officials in these categories.	Individuals or committees that are not accountable in any way to government.
<i>Industry Companies & Corporations</i>	Corporations and commercial entities involved in broadcasting production and/or distribution.	Streaming services, public or private broadcasters, or broadcasting sector executives.	Cultural or media creators (individual or collectives).
<i>Journalists / News Organizations</i>	Media personnel or publications providing editorial analysis, reporting, or opinion.	Reporters, columnists, editorial boards, cultural critics, or named publications.	Influencers or bloggers without journalistic credentials.

<i>General Public</i>	Unaffiliated individuals expressing personal views.	Commenters, letter writers, or non-credentialed contributors.	Individuals who are publicly known or representatives of institutions, associations, or businesses.
<i>Public Figures</i>	High-profile individuals not affiliated with a specific group but influential due to career, status, or platform.	Celebrities, influencers, or authors.	Journalists or officials speaking in their professional capacity.

Appendix D – Reddit Codebook: Themes

THEME	DEFINITION	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<i>Culture vs. Industry vs. Platformization</i>	Captures the dynamics between cultural expression, the Canadian broadcasting industry, and platform dominance in the digital-era.	Reference to trade-offs between Canadian culture, industry viability, and/or platform governance; streaming platforms and their role in shaping cultural or industrial outcomes; and/or broadcasting policy and its impact on the nexus of Canadian culture, traditional industry, and digital platforms.	Posts that mention culture solely in relation to cultural sovereignty (without referencing the nature of production or distribution in the digital age).
<i>Cultural Sovereignty</i>	Discourse on the need to protect or promote Canadian culture, identity, or stories through policy, processes, and/or programming.	Reference to Canadian broadcasting needing protection from American influence; Nostalgic references to past programming or early broadcasting; Support for or against policy, processes, and/or programming for political-cultural reasons such as nationhood or identity.	Economic, industry, or platform-based arguments without a distinctly cultural framing.
<i>CanCon</i>	Discourse on the relevance, clarity, or evolution of Canadian content (CanCon) rules.	Mention of CanCon or its origins, definitions, effectiveness, or shortcomings; Confusion about what counts as Canadian content.	Cultural or industrial debates that do not mention CanCon explicitly.

<i>Diversity / Representation</i>	Discourse on Indigenous, French, multicultural, or minority voices in broadcasting policy, processes, and/or programming.	Reference to representation of marginalized communities, artists, or creators; Note on the bill's impact on diversity, inclusion, or access.	Generic references to content variety or personal preferences without equity-based framing.
<i>Freedom of Expression / Anti-Intervention</i>	Discourse on freedom of expression, access to digital content, and/or nefarious state intent.	Reference to freedom of speech or expression; censorship; algorithmic manipulation; government overreach; and/or Orwellian control/elite abuse of power.	Critique of policy without attributing malicious intent or democratic concern. *Not co-coded exclusively with <i>Policy (Mis)Information</i> . Freedom of expression is treated as a separate concern, even if resulting from the spread of misinformation.
<i>Policy (Mis)Information</i>	Posts demonstrating confusion or misinterpretation of the bill's scope or regulatory impact, or posts providing information, clarification, or correction.	Question about what Bill C-11 does or does not regulate; Inaccurate statement or correction of other users; Frustration over lack of transparency or policy inaccessibility.	Does not need to provide an official reference or source to information when sharing knowledge. *Not co-coded exclusively with <i>Freedom of Expression</i> .
<i>Satire</i>	Use of humour, sarcasm, or exaggeration about the bill, over institutions, or towards other Reddit users.	Post that mocks the bill, policymakers, regulators, or other users using jokes or irony; Meme or parody-style argument.	Posts that are critical, humorous, or extreme but delivered earnestly.

Appendix E – Reddit Codebook: Sentiment

SENTIMENT	DEFINITION	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<i>Supportive</i>	Posts that express approval or endorsement of policy or broader goals of broadcasting regulation.	Clear statement of support for broadcasting policy or its objectives; Praise for protection, fairness, or modernization; Defence against criticisms of policy.	Supportive posts mixed with substantial critique are subject to interpretation based on relative balance of information.
<i>Critical</i>	Posts that convey outright rejection or disapproval of policy or posts that offer specific criticisms of policy.	Repeal or rejection of policy; Claim or accusation that policy is harmful, unnecessary, outdated, or overreaching; Critique of sections or mechanisms; Shares identifiable civil, cultural, or industrial concern(s).	Predominantly supportive posts.
<i>Discourse / Debate</i>	Posts that are neutral, balanced, or primarily descriptive or ambivalent responses without an evaluative stance.	Relays information or summarizes arguments; Question or clarification about policy without a clear position; Ambivalent dialogue with other users or commentary; Meta-discussion of debate itself.	Posts that reveal clear evaluative judgment.

Appendix F – Intercoder Reliability: Newspaper and Reddit Sample

To assess intercoder reliability, a purposive subsample of each dataset was double-coded by a trained coder and me. Given the interpretive nature and thematic density of this study, the subset consisted of 50 newspaper articles (9.3% of the total population) and 40 Reddit posts (10.1% of the total population). Articles and posts were selected by their assigned number (10 per time period) using a randomized numerical generator to ensure an unbiased, representative portion of the dataset. Holsti's (1969) percentage agreement test revealed an intercoder reliability score of 0.94 (or 94% agreement) for the newspaper subsample and 0.990 (or 99% agreement) for the Reddit subsample. These results demonstrate a high degree of consistency across interpretive, categorical, and evaluative coding layers in both newspapers and digital fora.