MARCH 2025

MIXED SIGNALS

Lessons from CBC's experience in Hamilton

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Summary

For two decades, Hamilton has sought a local CBC radio station, and the response is a cautionary example of the public broadcaster's ad hoc approach to communities at a time when it needs to forge stronger ties with Canadians. With broad community consensus, leadership from city hall, members of parliament, and the community itself has rallied CBC to enter Hamilton's local media market. CBC responded with a digital local service delivered on CBC's website, instead of acquiring a radio frequency, which were scarce in the region. The Hamilton digital service was billed as an innovative new model of local CBC that could be replicated across Canada. However, this potential remains unfulfilled as the digital model does not provide the same level of service as traditional local CBC radio delivered elsewhere. Meanwhile, calls for local CBC radio have increased as the private media market has been consolidated or has left Hamilton altogether. With the shrinking of privately delivered local news and programming, there is an opportunity for the CBC: it could take over one of the now available frequencies and deliver what Hamiltonians have sought for decades—local news and information on par with other communities across Canada. This report summarizes the key initiatives that Hamilton has undertaken in ongoing attempts to secure a local CBC. Hamilton is the 10th largest city in Canada, yet it remains underserved. This report offers lessons for the CBC to better fulfill its mandate at a time when shrinking news outlets reveal a prime opportunity for Canada's public broadcaster.

Introduction

As the national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada has a broad mandate to serve Canadians and to "reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions."[1] The role of the CBC in local communities has long been a strong element of the public broadcaster's success, and it presents a key opportunity in the future, in light of the weakening market for private local broadcasting across Canada. While the CBC is present in many of the larger cities across Canada, there are still important gaps in cities and communities, large and small. Through its history, CBC has taken an inconsistent approach to regional service, at times expanding and other times contracting its presence. As a result, the local and regional approach has large gaps where communities are underserved. One such example is the city of Hamilton. The recent history of CBC in Hamilton is a telling case study of missed opportunities and future potential for renewing the relevance of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Hamilton context

The Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) is home to 827,398 people. It is the third largest CMA in Ontario (after Toronto and Ottawa), and the 10th largest city in Canada. The population is roughly on par with Winnipeg and Quebec City. Hamilton is located at the western tip of Lake Ontario, adjacent to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Hamilton's CMA includes the cities of Grimsby and Burlington, while the neighbouring Toronto CMA includes Brampton, Markham, Mississauga, Pickering, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan.

Hamilton media history

Founded in 1816, Hamilton is one of Canada's industrial powerhouses and the centre of steel production in the country. The city has a proud history and unique identity as well as being at the forefront of industrial, technological and economic change through the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the context of communication media generally, Hamilton's history is equally impressive. The city was home to the Southam family and the origins of what would become a newspaper empire that spanned the country. In television, it is home to CHCH, founded by Ken Soble in the 1950s—a leader in local and Canadian content production until the 1990s. In radio, CKOC has the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating radio station in Canada, on the air since May 1, 1922. It became a CBC affiliate in 1936 and would be an affiliate of the CBC's Trans-Canada Network until 1962. In addition, Hamilton was home to 900

CHML, a private local radio station that served the community in local news and programming for close to a century. Despite this proud history of local media, CBC/Radio-Canada does not have a local broadcasting presence in the city.

Beginning in the late 1990s and consistently until this year, the city's private media landscape has been beset by a series of media consolidation and ownership changes, moving the ownership of these local media assets further from the community, which has resulted in stripping local news and information reporting. The most recent challenge was the abrupt closure of 900 CMHL in August 2024. This closure came amidst a larger sell off of local broadcasting assets by Canadian media companies.

Hamilton and CBC/Radio-Canada

Compounding the diminishing local news and information provided through private broadcasters through the last 20+ years of media consolidations is the fact that Hamilton has always been underserved by local CBC radio. Where other communities of commensurate size (e.g. Quebec City or Winnipeg) could rely on their local CBC stations to provide local coverage, this has not been the case in Hamilton, thus leaving one of Canada's top 10 cities without a reasonable and fair level of service from the public broadcaster.

In the context of local public radio, Hamilton has long been the largest city in the country without local CBC radio (see Table 1). Two factors have informed this situation. First, historically, Hamilton is located in a very congested broadcast media landscape with a scarcity of available frequencies (situated between the Toronto media market and Buffalo in northern New York State). Second, Hamilton is on the periphery of the broadcast service area for the local Toronto CBC radio station (99.1FM) and thus it was assumed that Hamilton could be adequately served by the existing programming from CBC Toronto.

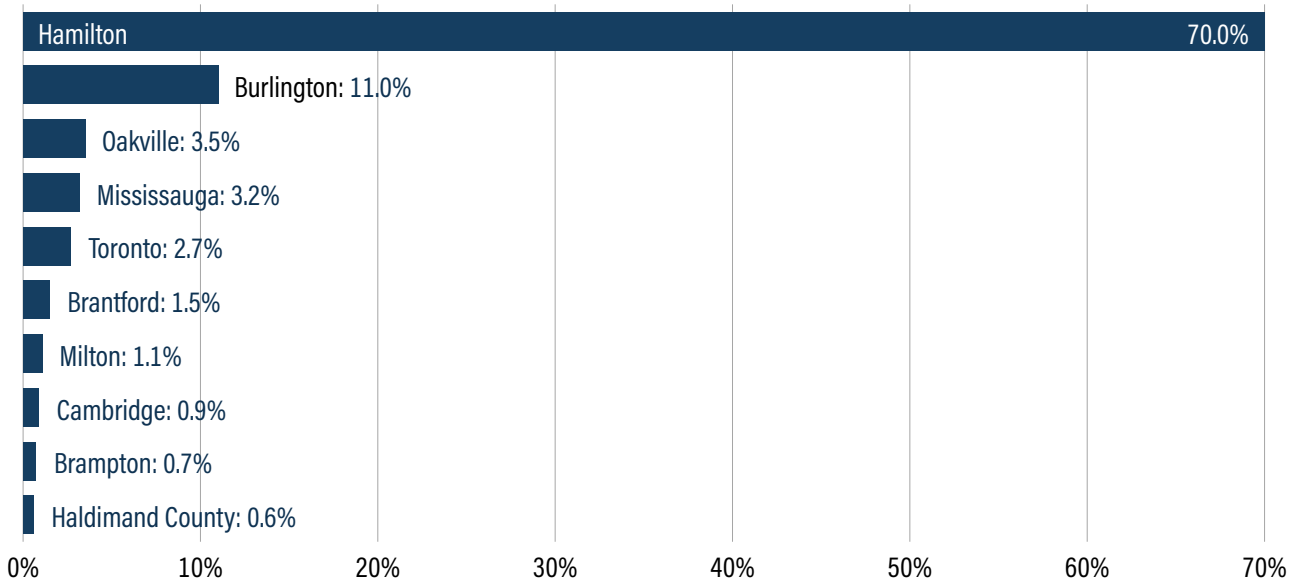
It is important to emphasize just how ill-informed this assumption is, as CBC's Toronto content is of limited relevance to the Hamilton region due to the low level of integration between the two cities. As noted, Hamilton is not part of Toronto's CMA and the 2021 Census commuting statistics demonstrate that less than three per cent of Hamiltonians commute to Toronto for work. The vast majority (70 per cent) of residents live and work in Hamilton.

Table 1 / Local CBC radio stations in Canadian cities

City (CMA)	Population (2022)	Local CBC Radio One station
Toronto	6,582,012	Yes
Montreal	4,374,055	Yes
Vancouver	2,853,203	Yes
Calgary	1,586,947	Yes
Ottawa–Gatineau	1,568,019	Yes
Edmonton	1,499,878	Yes
Winnipeg	875,837	Yes
Québec	858,197	Yes
Hamilton	**827,398**	**No**
Kitchener–Waterloo	626,735	Yes
London	585,834	Yes
Halifax	498,943	Yes
Windsor	452,394	Yes
Victoria	426,397	Yes
Saskatoon	335,938	Yes
Regina	260,515	Yes
Kelowna	239,748	Yes
St. John's	224,712	Yes

Source Statistics Canada, cbc.ca

Figure 1 / Top 10 commuting destinations for Hamilton



Source Statistics Canada, Census 2021.

A timeline for 20 years of Hamilton advocacy

As the private media landscape shifted over the last 20 years, Hamilton residents, city councils[2] and other political representatives[3] have advocated for diversity in the local media environment through regulatory channels, such as at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) and directly to the CBC. Central to this advocacy was recognizing that CBC/Radio-Canada, as a public broadcaster, plays a unique role in providing local broadcasting services to cities across the county, and that this role only becomes more relevant as consolidation and divestment increases in the private sector. The following timeline outlines citizen and political activities encouraging CBC/Radio-Canada to better serve the Hamilton region.

Timeline

2004: CRTC recognizes broadcasters' need to provide local content to Hamilton

In 2004, Hamilton city council passed a motion calling on the CRTC to remedy a lack of diversity in local television in Hamilton.[4] The motion led to the City of Hamilton intervening at CRTC public hearings related to the ownership transfer of a television station that was licenced, originally, to service Toronto *and* Hamilton in local programming. The CRTC ruled in favour of the City of Hamilton, noting that "It [CRTC] considers that Toronto One's local programming should appropriately reflect the particular needs and interests of Hamilton residents and will expect the new licensee to demonstrate the specific efforts it has made in this regard when it applies for renewal of the Toronto One licence in 2008."[5] Thus setting a precedent that broadcasters with a mandate to serve Hamilton must provide specific local content to the city, not simply extend Toronto content to the Hamilton region.

2005: Hamilton council advocates directly to CBC

Expanding on the 2004 motion, the city passed a second motion in 2005 specifically calling on CBC/Radio-Canada to establish a local presence commensurate with other Canadian communities of similar size.[6] The motion spurred a series of communications between Hamilton's mayor, council and the leadership of CBC over the next several years.

2011: CBC releases regional expansion plan

CBC releases the *2015: Everyone, Every Way* plan, with the goal of closer ties with underserved areas across Canada. The broad, five-year plan would increase its local and regional news and enlarge its digital presence with new services and websites. Coverage of the plan's announcement cited "Upcoming expansions will entail giving some CBC regional offices new equipment to deliver radio, TV and digital programming. The CBC will also create "micro" news websites for large communities, for example, the large Montreal suburb of Longueuil. Hamilton is another city under consideration for local coverage on the Internet."[7]

2011: CBC announces local digital service for Hamilton

In late 2011, CBC/Radio-Canada announces a commitment to local service to Hamilton through a digital solution. Kirstine Stewart, then executive vice-president for CBC English Service, enthused in a talk to the Broadcast Executives Society in Toronto:

> "We are announcing today at CBC, a new Hamilton local service and people are thrilled about it. It's our opportunity to actually service an area that we could never service before. We are going to use new technology, digital means. If you are waiting for the traditional television or radio station, that's not going to happen—that wasn't a solution for us in Hamilton but Hamilton is excited to know that they are actually going to be getting the service that uses mobile and online digital information, the kinds of things they have been asking for and that we are ready to supply. There will be a station, but it will be a trimedial one with a distinctly digital focus. Again, we are going to give people, like those 37% of Canadians who are looking for news in their hands, we are going to give it to them as they want it—news about their own communities. We want Hamilton, for us, will actually be the centre of innovation for the CBC and we are going to learn from it, how we can serve Canadians better across the country."[8]

2012: Friends of Canadian Broadcasting poll about Hamilton support for local CBC Hamilton service

In February 2012, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting released results of a survey that included opinions from Hamiltonians and Canadians about CBC.[9] Some of the notable findings were that Hamiltonians strongly supported the establishment of a CBC radio station to cover local affairs. Additionally, Hamiltonians were less satisfied with the CBC's coverage of their local affairs than Canadians living elsewhere. Finally, 30 per cent of Hamiltonians strongly wanted to see CBC strengthened in their region, a result that was significantly greater than those living in the rest of Canada.

2012: CBC Launches a digital CBC presence in Hamilton

CBC launches the Hamilton digital service, describing it as a place for "local news, weather, traffic and information about things to do around the Ontario city. All content on CBC Hamilton can be accessed through desktop, tablet or mobile devices. A customizable map is a prominent feature of the service — visitors can zoom in to their neighbourhood and find out what's going on around where they live. The service, based in an office on James Street North, will feature contributions from CBC reporters, a well-known local journalist and local bloggers."[10]

2013: Hamilton political representatives call on CBC to improve digital service

In December 2013, a city councillor and Hamilton NDP members of parliament wrote again to the CBC, pushing the national broadcaster to provide service commensurate with other similarly sized cities. In their communication, the MPs noted that the CBC Hamilton digital presence had not lived up to its promise, as clearly demonstrated by the CBC's own comments related to the digital service at CBC's licence renewal hearing at the CRTC in 2012. At the hearings, Kirstine Stewart spoke again about the potential that CBC Hamilton's digital services could provide the city. She notes that this service is "a virtual newsroom because they

have no television or radio frequency in Hamilton, but they do have five people located in Hamilton on the ground, three of which are journalists and videographers who can make video programming and also audio programming that goes on the CBC Hamilton website and delivered digitally."[11]

2013: City of Hamilton intervention regarding potential radio frequency to serve Hamilton

The City of Hamilton intervened, again, at the CRTC as part of a process reviewing the consolidation of BCE (Bell Media) and Astral. Part of this deal was for Bell Media to divest of several local radio stations, including one that could potentially serve Hamilton as a local CBC station. CBC had long signalled that a key stumbling block to providing local radio service in Hamilton was the lack of available frequency. The city noted that the divestment of local frequencies by Bell Media presented an opportunity to fulfill the longstanding promise to Hamilton.

In a letter to the CBC president, city representatives suggested that one of the available frequencies "should be used to provide local CBC service for Hamilton. It's now up to you, the national public broadcaster, to seize this rare opportunity to acquire a frequency for the Hamilton region to fulfill the long-awaited promise of local radio service in our region."

In response, a CBC spokesperson noted at the time that "In the scenario outlined, CBC would have to acquire a station and then operate the new frequency as a CBC property—the costs involved would be prohibitive for us… We will continue to look for ways to improve the service we provide Hamiltonians. As technology evolved, we are now able to serve this community in new and innovative ways through our local digital service."[12]

2014: CBC Hamilton survey

A 2014 survey of Hamilton residents found that a majority of respondents were CBC listeners and that they were aware of the digital service, but 70 per cent indicated that the local Hamilton digital service was not meeting their expectations of the national broadcaster. Additionally, 91 per cent of respondents wanted to see local audio programming on par

with other communities, such as Toronto or Kitchener-Waterloo. Finally, close to 90 per cent of respondents also indicated they were eager to see alternative methods of delivering local audio service, including live streamed daily programming.[13]

2018: CBC Radio for Hamilton community campaign

In 2018, the CBC Radio for Hamilton campaign was launched. This was another citizen-led attempt to get CBC to establish a local radio station and included public mobilization across the city and on social media. This campaign also included engagement with city council and sought to push the CBC to acquire a frequency to deliver a Hamilton radio station and/or use digital means to provide streaming local current affairs programming though multiple online channels and available via different devices (e.g. computers, tablet, smartphones).[14]

2019: A unanimous city motion endorsing a CBC radio station

Following the success of the CBC Radio for Hamilton campaign, city council once again expressed its unanimous support for commensurate service for Hamilton from CBC/Radio-Canada by calling on the mayor to again write to CBC with the request.[15]

2024: BCE divestment of local stations, Global closure of CHML

In 2024, another round of private local radio station changes occurred. The first was the announcement that BCE intended to divest of a number of radio stations in Southwestern Ontario, including four radio stations serving the Hamilton and Niagara regions, such as 102.9 FM in Hamilton.[16] Additionally, in August 2024, Global announced that it was shuttering 900AM CHML, Hamilton's long-running local private news and current affairs radio station.[17]

In response to the announced closures of private local radio in 2024, the Hamilton community engaged CBC again, encouraging the public broadcaster to acquire a licence for an available local radio frequency to serve Hamilton. In response to the suggestion that CBC acquire 900 AM CHML, CBC's executive vice-president noted that:

> "CBC has long wanted to provide more local content for Hamilton. The scarcity of radio frequencies in the area has always been a challenge, which is why we launched CBC Hamilton, our first digital-only station, in 2012. We are proud of what we have been able to do to provide local news and information to the community."
>
> "We are certainly aware that Corus Entertainment recently closed its Global News station, 900 CHML, in Hamilton. It is unclear what Corus's plans are with respect to its station in Hamilton."
>
> "A change in ownership would require an application to the CRTC and be subject to a public process where stakeholders can have their say. I can tell you we will be following the next steps closely and carefully considering what's possible at our end."[18]

2024: CBC announced expanded local digital service across Canada

Throughout the latter part of 2024, CBC/Radio-Canada made announcements of increased local digital service in a number of ways, including 14 local CBC Radio One audio streams, four additional daily local podcasts to accompany another seven weekly podcasts in communities across the country.[19] When asked if Hamilton, the "inaugural" CBC digital service, would be included in this expansion of local digital content, CBC's Senior Managing Director, CBC Ontario Region responded:

> "Thank you for your enthusiasm for a CBC radio station in Hamilton. As you noted, we are now streaming 19 local CBC Radio One audio streams in our News App. We are really excited about this change. While it's a new development, these streams are of existing radio programs across the country. We have not created any additional programming through this effort. The goal with this particular work was to make our existing content available in more places."

> "At the moment there is no plan to move forward with a radio program or station in Hamilton, but we will continue to look for opportunities in the future."[20]

2025: Frequency for 900 CHML becomes available

In January 2025 the CRTC revoked Corus' licence for 900 CHML, at Corus' request.[21] This means that the frequency is free to be licenced to another broadcaster, like the CBC. In March 2025, the Mayor of Hamilton communicated with the new president and executive vice-president of CBC to urge the public broadcaster to apply to acquire the licence.

Lessons from Hamilton

The Hamilton case study, and the details of the 20-year timeline of community activism, points to a fundamental lack of accountability within CBC/Radio-Canada as it relates to local and regional service to communities. This lack of accountability was highlighted recently by Canadian Heritage Minister Pascale St. Onge in her announcement related to the future of CBC/Radio-Canada. In her press conference on February 20, 2025, Minister St. Onge stated:

> "One of the goals when it comes to governance is to bring this public broadcaster closer to people and that's something we have heard. People have a perception that the public broadcaster isn't listening to them. That it is not receptive to hearing their points of view."
>
> "The Canadian population supports the CBC but wants it to be better and want to be connected with their public broadcaster. This is one of the critiques we consistently hear. Some people feel that the public broadcaster is too opaque and far from their reality and their needs."[22]

In response to these concerns, the Minister proposes amendments to the *Broadcasting Act* "to require that the Corporation include public consultation on issues related to its priorities and strategies in the context of its corporate plans. The amended Act could require CBC/Radio-Canada to indicate in its corporate plans how it satisfies the public consultation requirement, including the results and ways in which these results influence its decision-making and operations."[23]

There are several ways that this lack of accountability is illustrated in the Hamilton example: First is through a lack of coherent and equitable policy and associated strategies to support local and regional service, second is a lack of innovative digital strategy to support and supplement local and regional service and finally, a lack of leadership in building the needed community relationships to better serve communities across Canada.

Need for clear local and regional policy and strategy

While the 1991 *Broadcasting Act* outlines general terms for serving the regions, CBC does not appear to have a clear and public local/regional policy for providing broadcasting services across Canada. Questions like: What governs CBC's decision to provide service in select Canadian communities over others? What informs their decisions to expand to one community and not another? What are the broadcaster's priorities in providing public broadcasting services to all Canadians in regions across the country?

These questions were highlighted by Richard Stursberg, former head of CBC's English Services. Stursberg uses the Hamilton example to make his point about this lack of coherence:

> "The CBC local shows[24] are strangely distributed in Canada. Tiny places like Corner Brook, Goose Bay and Gander, Newfoundland, have their own local shows. So too do Thompson, Manitoba; Sydney, Nova Scotia; and Saint John, New Brunswick. At the same time cities like...Hamilton have no local radio shows. The situation is particularly odd if we compare New Brunswick to Hamilton. New Brunswick has three local radio shows (Moncton, Fredericton and Saint John) and a local TV show (Fredericton). Hamilton has no local radio or TV shows, despite having a population larger than all of New Brunswick."[25]

More recently, Stursberg reiterated this lack of coherence in local/regional policy, again citing the Hamilton example:

> "Similarly, is there a principle that requires equity of service to the different communities in the country? If so, why does Charlottetown, with a population of 44,000 have a radio service and Hamilton, with a population of 580,000 have none?"[26]

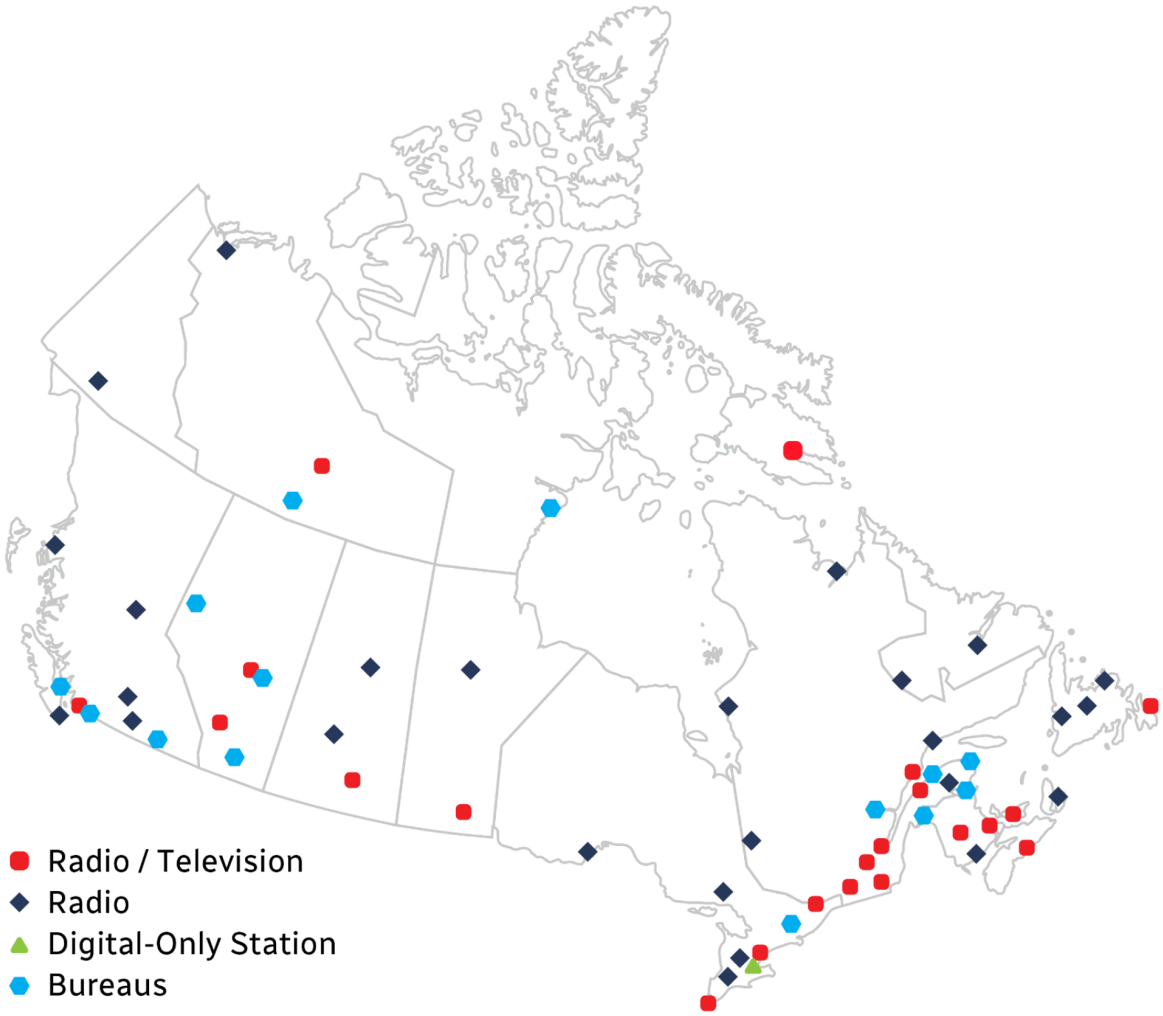
Stursberg's comments reflect the inconsistency of regional broadcasting policy within the CBC. It's important to note that these comments are not intended to suggest that Charlottetown, Saint John, Cornerbrook, Thompson or other smaller communities do not also deserve a CBC presence, but instead, that those larger communities, like Hamilton also deserve service.

Need for a consistent local digital strategy

Another dimension of the lack of accountability can be found in the absence of a consistent local digital strategy, as demonstrated in the Hamilton example. When the CBC Hamilton digital service was launched, Kirstine Stewart, then head of CBC English services, lauded the digital service as "a trimedial one with a distinctly digital focus,"[27] and "the centre of innovation for the CBC and we are going to learn from it, how we can serve Canadians better across the country."[28] Yet, more than 12 years later, the actual content provided remains limited, certainly not on par with other communities, like London or Kitchener-Waterloo, each of which now have full local stations with local radio shows and expanded digital audio services.

An extension of the inconsistency that plagued Hamilton's access to local CBC content is that while CBC may outwardly communicate that Hamilton is part of the national network (see Figure 2), it appears that, internally, it is not on the same standing as other CBC communities with traditional broadcasting services. This was made explicit in the fall of 2024 when local and regional digital investments were announced across the country. Hamilton was not only overlooked, it did not even register for investment as a local service. CBC's senior managing director, CBC Ontario Region, noted that "the goal with this particular work was to make our existing content available in more places. At the moment there is no plan to move forward with a radio program or station in Hamilton, but we will continue to look for opportunities in the future."[29] In the context of its position within the leadership of CBC/Radio-Canada, Hamilton exists in this persistent liminal space, both the first digital-only station, but not really a "local" station deserving of expanded local programming and service. Ultimately, this has led to a consistent lack of service for the community, while other local media shrink and close around it.

Figure 2 / CBC national network



Source cbc.ca

Need for leadership and relationship building

As Minister St. Onge's comments illustrate, Canadians are concerned that "the public broadcaster is too opaque and far from their reality and their needs."[30] This is a result of the lack of effort by CBC management to build relationships with local communities and stakeholders or to take concerns raised by underserved communities seriously and provide concrete and commensurate solutions to these concerns.

Over the last 20 years, Hamilton residents and political officials have undertaken a consistent community effort to highlight CBC's gap in service, to which CBC has made some large promises and then consistently under-delivered. Early in the timeline, CBC noted that it would love to have a local radio station in Hamilton, but the lack of local frequencies has prohibited it from doing so. Yet, as successive local frequencies have been freed up through private consolidations and divestments, CBC has not only not pursued these but has communicated to the public that they have no intention of taking the initiative to invest in a local station in Hamilton, as noted by the national broadcaster's spokesperson in 2013, and again by the vice-president of English Service in fall 2024. In each of these cases, CBC has presented itself as a spectator on the sidelines of broadcasting change, rather than an integral part of the solution to secure a frequency to better serve more than 800,000 Canadians in local radio programming. It is also important to note that in the latest round of private local radio divestments, the broadcast frequencies were bought by relatively smaller broadcasting corporations, not the major media conglomerates.

The lessons from the Hamilton case study, including CBC's lack of accountability and leadership, undermine trust in the public broadcaster. While there continues to be support for the role the CBC/Radio-Canada could and should play in Canada and its many diverse communities, it has become more difficult for the public broadcaster to remain relevant through the 21st century. As with many things though, there are still opportunities for improvement, as noted in the next section.

Opportunities

The Hamilton experience provides key lessons for the CBC more broadly. Looking ahead, the case study highlights potential opportunities for the public broadcaster to become more relevant to Canadians in the future:

Develop a local/regional policy for CBC/Radio-Canada

The Minister of Heritage's policy direction on the future of CBC/Radio-Canada was clear about a number of actions that need to be included in new or updated legislation. While the minister highlighted the important role CBC/Radio-Canada can and should play in "in the presentation of news, information and public affairs" and the "distribution of reliable public communication about emergencies,"[31] she did not explicitly

emphasize the importance of a local and regional policy for CBC/Radio Canada to deliver on these requirements. The 1991 *Broadcasting Act* articulates the general policy that CBC must "reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions."[32] The Act also states that "programming provided by the Corporation should be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose."[33]

Yet the public broadcaster does not have a clear policy on how these legislative requirements are met. This is well demonstrated in the Hamilton example, where the lack of a local/regional policy has resulted in an incoherent strategy to serve the community.

CBC/Radio-Canada needs to clearly articulate a local/regional policy with tangible measures that can act as a benchmark from which legislative goals, public consultation, accountability and transparency can be assessed.

Unseized opportunity on digital innovation

CBC's 2012 introduction of a "digital service" in Hamilton, including staff and an office in the city, presented an opportunity to innovate around new ways to deliver local programming. The newsroom had journalists and videographers who could make video and audio programming that could be delivered digitally. At the announcement, it was described as "a trimedial [station] with a distinctly digital focus. It [will] be the centre of innovation for the CBC and we are going to learn from it, how we can serve Canadians better across the country."[34]

Despite resources to innovate, the Hamilton service primarily delivers articles posted to the website, some with short video clips. It is somewhat similar to a news bureau, feeding content to other CBC outlets, or using national content to support local stories. Absent is the local information and current affairs programming, such as a daily morning show or afternoon show, that other stations provide, which create a stronger daily local connection between CBC and the local community. Demand for this type of programming is consistently cited by the public and elected officials and is even more relevant in Hamilton with the closure of its only local private news/talk radio station 900 CHML.

CBC should fulfill the original promise of the Hamilton digital service and provide the full range of programming of a local station, through the digital means available. This Hamilton model could be an innovative and cost-effective way to expand CBC local services to other communities across Canada.

Opportunity to strengthen CBCs traditional broadcasting services in light of market failure in the private local broadcasting market

One of the original reasons for CBC providing a "digital service" for Hamilton was the lack of available radio frequencies in the region. However, over the years successive waves of media consolidation have presented opportunities to acquire radio frequencies in the Hamilton market. Not only has the ownership of frequencies changed hands, but the viability of the private commercial radio model has diminished over time. In addition, consolidation has also reduced the level of local competition, especially in news and current affairs radio. With the closure of AM 900 CHML, there are essentially no news and current affairs radio stations left in Hamilton.

The Hamilton experience with media consolidation is not unique and has played out in one form or another in every community across Canada, thus presenting CBC with a tremendous opportunity for expansion.

CBC should take advantage of local frequencies becoming available and the diminishment of the commercial radio model. CBC could expand its footprint in markets where private radio is shrinking and innovate to provide local content through a blend of traditional terrestrial and digital delivery.

Capitalizing on public support in underserved markets

For 20 years, Hamilton residents and elected representatives at the municipal and federal levels have advocated through regulatory and official channels to have CBC deliver service commensurate to other communities across the country. The local support for CBC is consistently demonstrated through public polling, city council motions, and communications between federal officials and CBC representatives. In response, CBC has provided some local coverage, but still not to the level that exists in other communities larger and smaller, prioritizing other investments time and time again.

When looking to expand and add resources: CBC should listen to where community support is strong. Invest in communities where CBC is wanted and needed.

Conclusion

As CBC/Radio-Canada navigates an increasingly fragmented and shrinking local media environment, it needs to expand its footprint to better serve more Canadian communities. However, ongoing efforts to establish a local CBC Hamilton radio station highlight the need to strengthen the public broadcaster's approach to communities across Canada. It needs to seize opportunities by investing at the local and regional level, where it is better able to connect directly with Canadians, to better reflect these communities both to themselves and to the rest of the country.

Notes

1 *Broadcasting Act*, Section 3 (1)(m)(ii), https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/b-9.01/FullText.html.

2 Hamilton City Council passed motions in 2004 and 2005 in support of local media diversity and encouraging a CBC presence in the city. Additionally, council made written and in person interventions to the CRTC on a number of occasions including in 2006, 2009, 2013.

3 Hamilton area NDP members of parliament sent a letter to CBC President Hubert Lacroix in December 2013 calling on the national broadcaster to provide commensurate local service to Hamilton, as it does elsewhere in the country, including via a radio station and through digital media options.

4 Hamilton City Council. Motion 7.2, Diversity of Local Television Broadcasting. Aug. 12, 2004.

5 *Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2004-503*, paragraph 21, retrieved from https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2004/db2004-503.htm.

6 Hamilton City Council. Motion 7.1, Local CBC Presence, May 25, 2005.

7 *Globe and* Mail, "CBC's new five-year plan to emphasize local and regional coverage", February 1, 2011, retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/cbcs-new-five-year-plan-to-emphasize-local-and-regional-coverage/article564966/.

8 Speech by Kirstine Stewart to Broadcast Executives Society, Nov. 1, 2011. Video available on CBC to launch new Hamilton digital service, retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/cbc-to-launch-new-hamilton-digital-service-1.1125956.

9 *Public opinion in Hamilton & the rest of Canada concerning the CBC*, February 2012, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, https://legacy.friends.ca/files/PDF/cbchamilton-report.pdf.

10 "CBC Hamilton service officially launches," May 10, 2012, CBC, retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/cbc-hamilton-service-officially-launches-1.1127602.

11 Letter to CBC President Hubert Lacroix, from Hamilton area NDP MPs, December 4, 2013.

12 O'Brien, Gregg, 2013, "CBC says it can't purchase a Toronto radio station to serve Hamilton," Cartt.ca.

13 The CBC Hamilton survey was conducted by the Centre for Community Study in 2014. It was part of a community-driven effort to improve CBC service to Hamilton.

14 "CBC radio station for Hamilton is long overdue," June 15, 2018, *The Hamilton Spectator*, https://www.thespec.com/opinion/contributors/cbc-radio-station-for-hamilton-is-long-overdue/article_8cbfb8fc-03fc-51e6-96fa-e8fd9813b23b.html.

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We acknowledge the Anishinaabe Algonquin People whose traditional unceded, unsurrendered territory is where this report was produced.

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