

**2022 Pre-Budget consultations**  
February 24, 2022

**FRIENDS  
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**STANDING UP  
FOR CANADIAN VOICES**



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Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

On behalf of FRIENDS (formerly Friends of Canadian Broadcasting) and the 360,000 Canadians we represent who care deeply about Canadian storytelling, I am pleased to present you with our submission for Budget 2022.

FRIENDS – indeed Canadians across the country – were pleased to see your government’s promise during the election to increase the CBC’s funding by \$400 million over four years, to reduce its reliance on advertising.

For 85 years, CBC/Radio-Canada has been the voice that has tied our country together. From tragedy to triumph, our public broadcaster has been the glue that binds Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Most recently, CBC played an essential role in keeping Canadians safe and informed during the pandemic. Now, with the spread of misinformation, hate and illegal content streaming across our border, Canadians need the CBC more than ever.

While your government has recognized these threats and is actively working on bills to tackle them, attacking the problem is not enough. We need to build the alternative – a place where Canadians can turn to for quality local, national, and international news that reflects Canadian stories through our diversity of voices. The CBC can be all this and more, but only if properly funded.

For decades, the public broadcaster’s mandate and parliamentary appropriation was supported and expanded by successive federal governments from all political stripes. But starting in the 1980s, funding to the public broadcaster was slashed. Every Prime Minister from Brian Mulroney to Stephen Harper left the CBC with even less funding than their predecessor. While your government began investing in the CBC at the beginning of its first mandate, in constant dollars, funding for the CBC on a per capita basis has not been this low since 1961.

Over the years, the CBC has been backed into a corner, striving to remain relevant and fulfill an increasingly complex and urgent mandate across an ever-growing number of platforms, but with fewer public dollars. It is no surprise that the CBC has started to look elsewhere for extra cash. The answer, for now, has come by way of advertising; a transformation of the public broadcaster into a destination for audience-hungry companies selling their products to Canadians. Today, the CBC’s budget is comprised of at least \$500 million a year in advertising and subscription income.



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The commercialization of public broadcasting erodes both the CBC's public service mandate and Canadians' trust in public service media. The result is a CBC that is forced to consider the needs of advertisers instead of singularly focusing on the needs of its shareholders – the Canadian public.

The CBC is one of the most poorly funded among its OECD peers, with only \$33 of per capita funding, compared to the \$88 average among the world's strongest democracies. Your promise of \$400 million over four years is a good first step, but Canada's public service broadcaster should not be driven by an existential funding crisis and an endless fight for survival. It should be able to count on predictable and stable funding that allows it to fulfill its core purpose – ad-free and at no extra cost to Canadians.

In the last federal election, FRIENDS' supporters pledged their vote to parties that would defend the CBC and Canadian storytelling. In support of this, please accept these individual letters from Canadian citizens as a testament to the importance of the CBC.

Their message is simple: fulfill your election promises by increasing the CBC's budget with an aim to make our national public broadcaster ad-free.

Thank you for your time and consideration on these important issues. We look forward to working with your government and are available for further discussions at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marla Boltman".

Marla Boltman  
Executive Director



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**Whereas:** Our national public broadcaster's per capita budget has steadily declined since 1985;

**Whereas:** The CBC plays a vital role in keeping Canadians connected, informed, involved in our democracy and safe;

**Whereas:** The CBC's per capita public funding is among the lowest of OECD countries (see Appendix 1);

**Whereas:** The federal government has committed to increasing the CBC's budget in order to reduce its dependence on advertising;

**FRIENDS recommends:** The government immediately invest to ensure stable, predictable funding for the CBC, with a goal of reaching a \$50 per capita funding for our national public broadcaster.



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**FRIENDS asked Canadians across the country to share their support for increased funding for CBC/ Radio-Canada as part of our submission for the 2022 federal budget.** To read the nearly 1000 letters submitted, please visit <https://friends.ca/citizens-on-the-CBC>

The CBC matters to me because I rely on it for my news, and more importantly, for the analysis and background for the news headlines. CBC has been hugely important to increasing my awareness of, and sensitivity to Indigenous issues, perspectives, and the urgent need for both TRUTH and reconciliation. Unreserved is a great program, and Shelagh Rogers has introduced me to so many Indigenous (and BIPOC) writers on The Next Chapter. And Tapestry. And Ideas. All these programs have educated me so much, and inspired me to put what I have learned into action (policies, programs) in the organizations where I volunteer.

KAE ELGIE, WATERLOO ON

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For decades, the CBC has been our public broadcaster; it has been the glue that binds Canadians from coast to coast to coast by providing a Canadian perspective on news at home and abroad. The CBC has played an important and critical role in reporting on the pandemic, keeping Canadians informed on statistics across the country and advice from health authorities in Canada. Today more than ever, we see the spread of misinformation, hate and illegal content streaming across our border. Again, we need the CBC more than ever to provide us the safe, reliable and authoritative space in which to receive our news. I am very pleased that the government recognizes its important role and will provide the necessary funding to ensure its stable role in Canadian society. Thank you!

GERALYNE DIONNE, MONTREAL QC

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La Société Radio-Canada est importante pour moi parce que c'est notre lien avec la francophonie nationale!

GUY DUPERRÉAULT, SASKATOON SK

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Je veux être traité comme un citoyen et non comme un consommateur.  
Radio Canada et CBC m'ont aidé dans mon développement comme citoyen.  
J'ai eu la chance de grandir quand Radio Canada et la CBC étaient mieux appuyés et moins influencés par une vision commerciale. La radio Radio Canadienne a résisté, mais la télévision a succombé malheureusement aux dictats commerciaux et idéologiques. Plus que jamais, nous avons besoin d'un réseau qui renforce notre 'conversation' citoyenne et démocrate.

**MICHAEL ASHTON, MONTRÉAL QC**

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The CBC matters to me because it is the only truly national institution which reflects the Canada I know and love and is always a source of reliable independent news and journalism. I have had the privilege of travelling extensively throughout our country and lived in 5 of its provinces. CBC programs always explore stories of national and local interests from all perspectives while trying to avoid political bias. And yes, it is a fifth column holding our political and economic institutions accountable because it enables the average citizen's voice to be heard. Nationally, and during my international travels CBC has brought Canadian democratic and humanistic values into my home – values that make Canada stand out as a shining beacon amongst the nations of the world in putting people first. If you want my vote then you and your political party must vote for retaining and properly funding our wonderful CBC.

**JUREK ROMANIEC , KINGSTON ON**

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We must have an independent vector for all Canadians to air their opinions on the issues of the day and to be able to be heard and to listen nationally. We need an instrument to convey humour, satire and good entertainment from time to time. God knows it certainly can't be found on any other radio/TV medium I've heard in many years! It is a national treasure, and we as a nation have given, traded or sold too many of them in the last few decades! The CBC is one vessel that carries our nation's essential raison d'être sea to sea to sea. Let's nourish it not throttle it!

**DAVE ROBERTSON , SEABRIGHT NS**

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The CBC matters to me because Canadians need the CBC more than ever. It is the public square that brings us together, instead of driving us apart. And it needs to be properly funded to fulfill this important role. I support the CBC, because it connects us from coast to coast and it's essential to the preservation of Canadian culture.

**SILVIA CHIARAMELLO, WINNIPEG MB**

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I trust the news from the CBC, but more than that, I love what the CBC empowers us to do together. The stories we tell, the art we create, the music we produce, the culture we share and the connections we make are all stronger and more vibrant with the support of a well-funded, independent public broadcaster. Most of us don't know the half of it, but we've created some of the world's best-loved media, even with one of the smallest public broadcasting budgets. What could we do with funding comparable to those of other developed nations?

WYNNE WHITTEN-HOLMES, EDMONTON AB

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Je veux avoir une information crédible, dénudée de commercialisme et intérêts privés. Je voudrais avoir plus d'informations qui touchent notre monde francophone. On pourrait aussi remplacer les annonces publicitaires malvenues, de par le nombre alarmant de voitures qui nous présentent un monde irréel et polluant; par des contenus sensés, intéressants; tel que le fait TV5 par exemple ! SVP, halte à la commercialisation forcée de Radio-Canada.

GABRIEL FUGULIN, MONTRÉAL QC

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The CBC matters to me because it is a recognizable part of Canadian culture that serves "all" Canadians in most time zones. Its mandate to inform, enlighten and entertain; to contribute to the development of a shared national consciousness and identity; to reflect the regional and cultural diversity of Canada; and to contribute to the development of Canadian talent and culture and helps inform Canadians across the country about important national matters is critical to preserving the Canadian identity!

SUHAIL MARINO, VANCOUVER BC

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I listen to many different programs and news on CBC radio every day, and I also watch CBC TV for news, documentaries, etc. Without this source of informed, responsible, intelligent, and PUBLIC media coverage, my life would be impoverished.

HOWARD WOODHOUSE, SASKATOON SK

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## Appendix 1

### Per capita public funding for C\$ per inhabitant public broadcasters, 2018 (C\$)†

\*At \$33 per capita, Canada ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 20 Western countries in terms of per capita public funding for PSBs.

Source: Nordicity analysis of annual reports of public broadcasters;  
† Excludes any commercial revenue earned by public broadcasters.

