



**NEWS MEDIA SERVING  
THE PUBLIC INTEREST**

STRATEGIES OF MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE,  
DES COMMUNICATIONS  
ET DE LA CONDITION FÉMININE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

A WORD FROM THE MINISTER .....	5
<b>1. OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Working group report on journalism and the future of news media in Québec .....	6
Prior initiatives in Québec .....	8
Similar inquiries abroad .....	8
France .....	8
United Kingdom .....	9
United States .....	9
French Community of Belgium .....	9
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) .....	9
<b>2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1 A NEW MODEL OF NEWS MEDIA REGULATION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1.1 PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF JOURNALISTS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Professional status of journalists: the cornerstone of the <i>L'information au Québec : un intérêt public</i> .....	11
Proposal to create a professional title for journalists submitted by Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) .....	11
Position of the media industry regarding the professional status of journalists .....	12
Professional status of journalists in France and Belgium .....	12
<b>QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.1.2 STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE QUÉBEC PRESS COUNCIL (QPC) AS A DISPUTE RESOLUTION PANEL .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Overview .....	13
Issues .....	14
<b>QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.2 GREATER DIVERSITY OF VOICES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.2.1 PROPOSED REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL NEWS PLATFORM .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Overview .....	15
A new mandate for Télé-Québec .....	16
<b>QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.2.2 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY MEDIA .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Overview .....	17
Operational assistance program for community media .....	17
Online media .....	18
<b>QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>18</b>



# A WORD FROM THE MINISTER



Public interest media, or general-interest news content based on investigations and in-depth reporting, is key to sparking debate and making enlightened decisions on major social, political, and economic issues. It is thus one of the pillars of a healthy democracy.

For several years now, technological innovation, changes in business models, and shifts in how individuals receive their news have been significantly transforming the way media agencies operate. These transformations, in turn, have affected the work methods of news professionals, particularly journalists, and some believe these changes may have an impact on the availability of high-quality and diverse public interest media across Québec.

That is why, in November 2009, I tasked Ms. Dominique Payette with conducting a consultation regarding the future of news media in Québec in the context of technological changes. In its January 2011 report entitled *L'information au Québec : un intérêt public*, the working group on journalism and the future of news media in Québec presents many recommendations, some involving legislation, others proposing sizable financial support, and several calling for action by ministries and agencies other than Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine.

After consulting the media industry and the other ministries and government agencies concerned, I am now in a position to announce my ministry's strategies in response to Ms. Payette's report.

These strategies are centered on the implementation of a new regulatory system for Québec media and encouragement of a greater diversity of voices.

In order to ensure that there is a general consensus behind these specific strategies, in fall 2011, I intend to hold public consultations in various regions across Québec with an expanded public to solicit the viewpoints of the media industry, representatives of social, political, and economic sectors, and individuals interested in the state of news media in Québec.

I invite you to browse through this consultation paper and share your thoughts with me. I also warmly welcome the possibility of face-to-face discussions on these significant issues with all those who wish to make their voice heard.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. St-Pierre', written in a cursive style.

MINISTER OF CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN,  
Christine St-Pierre

# 1. OVERVIEW

Following the 2008–2009 crisis in journalism in Québec that led, among other things, to newsroom closures, layoffs, lock-outs at daily newspapers, and contention over labor union contract renewals elsewhere in the media industry, the Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women thought it wise in November 2009 to task Ms. Dominique Payette with conducting a study on the future of news media in Québec in the context of technological changes. The goal of this initiative was to analyze the state of professional journalism, the accessibility and diversity of local and regional news sources, the state of news media in Québec, the use of proper French in the media, and the challenges tied to new media and technology.

## Working group report on journalism and the future of news media in Québec

In order to carry out this task, Ms. Payette formed a working group on journalism and the future of news media in Québec. The group's report, entitled *L'information au Québec : un intérêt public*, was published on January 26, 2011. The report and related documentation are available (in French only) on the working group's website: <http://www.etatdelinfo.qc.ca/>.

The working group detailed a series of findings, leading it to conclude that the current state of the news media is worrisome and thus warrants government intervention.

### Findings included the following:

- News agencies are facing a structural crisis complicated in 2009–2010 by the economic crisis, which led to a significant drop in advertising in the media.
- The advertising market is turning away from public interest reporting of generalist and socio-political news, particularly at the local and regional level, which is the most costly to produce but is essential to democratic debate.
- The lack of interest by a significant portion of the population, and consequently by advertisers, in public interest reporting has led several news agencies to rely on public interest media produced by other newsgatherers, reducing the number of journalists employed to produce this type of content.
- In the short term and in the current state of affairs, public interest reporting does not seem to be advertisers' preferred way to reach out to their target audience in the new digital media.
- Economic pressures on news agencies also have repercussions on journalists' work conditions, including by
  - » Not allowing for quality work according to journalistic standards (fact-checking) because of tight production deadlines
  - » Causing the hiring of increasing numbers of independent journalists, whose work conditions have worsened in the last 20 years
- Economic constraints tug at news agencies and their journalists and make them more vulnerable to market pressures.

- The widespread use of the Internet offers news agencies new opportunities to make quality news reporting accessible, but to date, the Internet has not been a channel for original news content adhering to journalism standards. Furthermore, a significant portion of Québec's population still does not have Internet access, and those who do either find it too costly or do not have high-speed access.

**In fact, the report states that the status of the news and journalism industry in Québec is characterized by:**

- Inconsistent accessibility to a diverse range of news content across the province, varying by region and by individual
- Imbalance between journalists and news agency leaders, and between professional journalists and other amateur or professional newsgatherers

The significant consolidation of print and electronic news agencies is another key phenomenon in the current state of the Québec media industry.

Though Ms. Payette's report recognizes the undeniable economic advantages of consolidated ownership of the media, it also stresses the potentially negative consequences (e.g., lack of a varied and diverse range of news sources, monopolization of the advertising market, and homogenization of news content).

The report also remarks on the lack of laws and regulations to limit the consolidation of news agencies in Québec. This is partly due to the constitutional balance of power (radio broadcasting companies fall under federal jurisdiction), but it is also partly due to Québec's free market economy that entrusts the production of a collective good (news) to private businesses operating under a principle of free trade, which must be protected.

To round out this summary of Québec's media industry, we would add that the advertising revenues of general interest television stations and daily newspapers have taken a downturn while Internet-based revenues have risen. Moreover, daily newspaper and magazine readership has dropped along with radio audiences, while television viewing has increased, particularly in the case of specialty channels. However, Quebecers are spending more time on the Internet, notably to access news content.<sup>1</sup>

.....  
<sup>1</sup> Daniel Giroux, "Les médias en quelques statistiques," in Institut du Nouveau Monde, *L'État du Québec 2011*, Montréal, Éditions du Boréal, 2011, 422–428.

## Prior initiatives in Québec

The issues raised in the report *L'information au Québec : un intérêt public* have been the subject of many other analyses over the last 10 years.

Amongst them, two were undertaken by the Government of Québec itself. The National Assembly's Committee on Culture held a public hearing in February and March of 2001 on the effects of the shifts in ownership in the media and telecommunications industry on the quality, variety, and accessibility of news content as well as on Québec culture. Filed in November 2001, the Committee's report<sup>2</sup> presents various recommendations especially directed at the news media and aiming, among other things, to increase transparency and accountability as well as the quality and diversity of news content.

In addition, in fall 2002, the Minister of State for Culture and Communications formed an advisory committee, chaired by Ms. Armande Saint-Jean, on the quality and diversity of news content. This committee was tasked with submitting recommendations on potential Québec government intervention in the news media industry. In its report<sup>3</sup> published in February 2003, the advisory committee recommended a number of government measures, which were not heeded.

Other consultations were also carried out by the journalism industry. From February to June 2008, the Québec Press Council (QPC) visited each of Québec's 17 regions to get a feel for the opinion of the public and community organizations regarding the state of news media in Québec. The report was published in October 2008.<sup>4</sup>

Later, in fall 2010, Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (Québec's professional journalist federation) surveyed Québec journalists by email to find out their opinion on the current journalism crisis in Québec.<sup>5</sup>

## Similar inquiries abroad

It is of interest to note that in recent years the same issues discussed in the working group's report on journalism and the future of news media in Québec were also examined elsewhere, including in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the French Community of Belgium, as well as by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

## France

In fall 2008, France created États généraux de la presse écrite<sup>6</sup> in an effort to find solutions to the economic difficulties facing French print news media that are seemingly linked to technological change (i.e., competition from the Internet and free newspapers) and to specific newspaper distribution problems in France.

2 The report *Mandat d'initiative portant sur la concentration de la presse* is available on the Québec National Assembly website at [www.assnat.qc.ca](http://www.assnat.qc.ca).

3 The report *Les effets de la concentration des médias au Québec* is available on the MCCC website at [www.mccc.gov.qc.ca/](http://www.mccc.gov.qc.ca/).

4 The document *L'état de la situation médiatique au Québec* is available on the QPC website at [www.conseildepresse.qc.ca](http://www.conseildepresse.qc.ca).

5 For more details on the outcome of the FPJQ journalist consultation, visit the FPJQ website at [www.fpjq.org](http://www.fpjq.org).

6 For more details, visit the *États généraux de la presse écrite* website at [www.etatsgenerauxdelapresseecrite.fr](http://www.etatsgenerauxdelapresseecrite.fr).



## United Kingdom

In 2009–2010, the British House of Commons' Culture, Media and Sport Committee launched a major inquiry on the future of local and regional media in response to concern about the impact on the local and regional media of changing consumer behavior as well as the shift to electronic media and new technologies. In its April 2010 report the Committee noted that a number of the solutions to these issues were proposed by media agencies themselves.<sup>7</sup>

## United States

In the United States in January 2010, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) undertook a study on the future of the media and the news needs of local communities in the digital era. The resulting lengthy report<sup>8</sup> released in June 2011 offered a rather optimistic view of the effects of the ongoing digital news media revolution, citing new phenomena of hyper-local news coverage and citizen journalism.

## French Community of Belgium

Also in January 2010, the French Community of Belgium launched États généraux des médias d'information,<sup>9</sup> which will likely continue until 2012 and which touches on issues similar to those explored by Ms. Payette's working group.

## Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

In 2009–2010, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also tackled the future of the news industry and the Internet. The major issues raised in its report<sup>10</sup> include stimulating newspaper readership, freedom of the press, journalist training and work conditions, quality and accountability of online news, the role of public sector broadcasters, diversity of the media and competition, advertising regulation, and intellectual property rights.

7 The committee's *Future for local and regional media* report is available at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

8 The report, *Information needs of communities*, is available on the FCC website at [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov).

9 Further information is available on the États généraux des médias d'information website at [egmedia.pcf.be](http://egmedia.pcf.be).

10 OECD, *News in the Internet Age: New Trends in News Publishing*, Paris, November 2010, 160 pages.

## 2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

From February to May 2011, Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine held a series of bilateral meetings to consult with the media industry, including with news agencies, representatives of journalists, and associations and universities that specialize in the field in order to obtain feedback on Ms. Payette's report recommendations.

At the same time, government ministries and agencies were invited to examine the feasibility of the report recommendations that fall under their jurisdiction. Some of them continue to review a few particular recommendations.

All of these actions together have led to proposed strategies in response to the recommendations of Ms. Payette's report, which are the subject of this public consultation paper.

### **The accepted strategies are as follows:**

- Creation of a new regulatory system for Québec news media:
  - » Through the adoption of a professional status for journalists
  - » By strengthening the Québec Press Council, whose mission as a dispute resolution panel is to promote compliance with ethical standards regarding media rights and responsibilities
- Support for a greater diversity of voices:
  - » By tasking Télé-Québec with examining the feasibility of an online regional news media networking project in partnership with community, cooperative, and independent media
  - » By updating government support of community media in each of Québec's regions

These various recommendations will be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

The Fall 2011 expanded public consultation thus aims to obtain feedback from all key players of the media industry (businesses, journalists, associations, and universities) and from media consumers, including the general public, regarding the selected strategies under the responsibility of the Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women.

The consultation will take place in various regions of Québec to ensure that all viewpoints are heard, including those of social, political, and economic stakeholders. The consultation will also reach out to the media industry itself, particularly the regional print and electronic news media, which is working to meet the news-related needs of Quebecers and the various aforementioned stakeholders.

## 2.1 A NEW MODEL OF NEWS MEDIA REGULATION

### 2.1.1 PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF JOURNALISTS

The media habits of Quebecers are changing with the coming of new media. Like the media industry itself, the way that Quebecers get their news is also radically changing, particularly among younger adults age 18 to 34 who opt for non-traditional news sources.

However, the increasing number of news platforms does not guarantee better news quality. Readers must be able to judge the basis for the content they are receiving. It is thus important to distinguish professional journalists, who are obligated to work in the public interest, from amateur newsgatherers and bloggers. Professional journalists must be required to follow high ethical standards in order to ensure the accountability and quality of disseminated news. Their work must be underpinned by principles and values.

#### **Professional status of journalists: the cornerstone of the *L'information au Québec : un intérêt public report***

In response to these major concerns examined in Ms. Payette's report, the working group recommends adopting legislation on the professional status of journalists in Québec. This recommendation is the cornerstone of the report. According to the working group, this legislation is necessary to help the public distinguish between professional journalists and other newsgatherers and to protect working conditions, especially among independent and non-unionized journalists.

However, this is not a recommendation to create a professional order of journalists that would restrict access to the profession. Indeed, this legislation must not prevent anybody from practicing journalism; rather, it should recognize those who practice journalism according to certain criteria, to be defined. It has also been suggested that the new act grant benefits or privileges to those who are officially recognized as professional journalists.

The working group notes that the government's role should be limited to supporting the creation of a professional status for journalists. They stress the importance of keeping the government, news agencies, and journalists separate in order to ensure the independence of the media and journalists. The working group thus proposes that professional journalist representative bodies have control over the professional title, including determining the criteria for granting it, creating a professional code of ethics, and deciding on the penalties for noncompliance with the rules established. It has also been suggested that a review board be created so that the decisions of the professional organization may be appealed.

#### **Proposal to create a professional title for journalists submitted by Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ)**

The work of Ms. Payette's working group led FPJQ to reconsider the idea of a professional title. The new realities of identity, the media crisis, and the rise of social media and citizen journalism have made journalists more open to the creation of professional title. A proposal to this end was thus submitted to FPJQ members through an online referendum in April 2011.

Of the 58% of FPJQ members who responded, 86.8% were in favor of creating a professional journalist title, managed by FPJQ, through independent committees that would be fully representative of the diversity of the media industry.

Under the FPJQ proposal, the government would play only a minimal role, that of delegating to the media industry through legislation the exclusive right of bestowing the title of professional journalist. The proposal also emphasizes that the practice of journalism is protected by the right to freedom of expression and that this activity must remain free and open to all citizens even though journalists—working in compliance with shared ethical guidelines—may take on the reserved title of professional journalist in order to distinguish themselves from citizen journalists, bloggers, and other newsgatherers in order to clear up the public’s confusion.

Among the other advantages of creating a professional title for journalists, journalists would be in a better position to fight against internal and external pressures that conflict with their social mission to report the news and defend their rights more effectively, including with respect to the confidentiality of sources. Finally, the FPJQ proposal would require those bearing the title of professional journalist to follow a professional code of ethics.

### Position of the media industry regarding the professional status of journalists

Many of those consulted in the media industry were in favor of adopting a professional status for journalists.

### Professional status of journalists in France and Belgium

Journalists have had professional status in France and Belgium for many years. It is worthwhile to discuss examples from these countries in order to inspire reflection, while keeping in mind that these models cannot be fully applied in Québec.

In 1935, France adopted a professional status for journalists. A professional journalist is defined as any person whose main, steady paid work is the practice of his profession in one or more news publishing houses, dailies or periodicals, or news agencies and who draws his primary income from these activities. French legislation provides that all those who are directly involved in the news reporting process, such as translators, stenographers, copy editors, illustrators, and photojournalists, also be qualified as professional journalists, with the exclusion of advertising agents and those who collaborate only on an occasional basis.<sup>11</sup>

To oversee this professional status, Commission de la carte was created. Its main task is to provide a professional journalist identity card to those who meet the set criteria. The Commission, which equally represents labor and management, is made up of eight employer representatives chosen by the representative bodies of executives of newspapers, news agencies and audio-visual communication businesses, and eight professional journalist representatives elected by card-carrying professionals.

In Belgium, journalists acquired professional status in 1963. A professional journalist is defined as one whose primary remunerated profession consists of participating in writing and/or editing for daily or periodical newspapers, broadcast news programs, documentaries, or news agencies dedicated to generalist news. A professional journalist must also have been consistently practicing for at least two years and cannot have stopped practicing for more than the last two years.<sup>12</sup>

Commission d’Agrégation de première instance confers the title of professional journalist. This commission that equally represents labor and management consists of four representatives of the Belgian General Association of Professional Journalists and four representatives of the Belgian Newspaper Publishers Association.

11 Articles L7111-3, L7111-4, and L7112-1 of French *Code du travail*.

12 *Loi du 30 décembre 1963 relative à la reconnaissance et à la protection du titre de journaliste professionnel* (M.B. 14.01.1964).

## QUESTIONS

1. What kind of news-related personnel should be qualified as professional journalists (e.g., reporters, columnists, cameramen)?
2. Should the granting of professional status be based on certain requirements? If so, what should the requirements be?
3. Should professional journalist status come with privileges for journalists and their employers? If so, what should these privileges be?
4. Do you think that a professional journalist status will help improve the quality of news reporting?
5. What would be the pros and cons of legally recognizing the status of professional journalist?
6. Who should oversee the professional status of journalists? If an organization is established to this end, who should be included in it?
7. How should the proper application of the professional code of ethics be monitored?
8. Should there be penalties for those who falsely claim to bear the title of professional journalist? If so, what? Should there be penalties for those who hold the title of professional journalist but violate the professional code? If so, what?
9. Should there be an appeal structure for those who are denied the title of professional journalist?

### 2.1.2 STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE QUÉBEC PRESS COUNCIL (QPC) AS A DISPUTE RESOLUTION PANEL

#### Overview

The Québec Press Council, created in 1973 following an agreement between journalist unions and media company owners seeking to avoid legislative involvement in media matters, has been based in Montréal since 1997 and is an organization for journalist and media self-regulation. It acts as a dispute resolution panel by examining complaints (70 to 100 a year in recent years) related to truthful and accurate reporting, free access to information, and the free circulation of information in light of the ethical principles and rules of conduct set out in the document entitled *Rights and Responsibilities of the Press*.

The QPC handles complaints about all print and electronic media organizations (including online media since 2002) that publish or broadcast in Québec, whether or not they are QPC members. When a complaint is lodged against a media company, a QPC guideline stipulates that the company is morally obligated to publish or broadcast the decision in question, but this requirement is not always followed.

Over the past years, the QPC has aimed to ensure more efficient handling of complaints—in particular by putting greater emphasis on mediation—in order to spend more time on complaints with a potentially broader ethical or pedagogical scope.

The QPC also plays an advisory role and as such takes public action (issuing opinions, presenting memoranda to regulatory agencies and parliamentary commissions, publishing press releases, organizing colloquia, participating in events) to promote ethical reporting standards and provide fodder for reflection and discussion on the role of the media in a democratic society.

The QPC is a private non-profit organization with voluntary membership comprising three constituent groups. Its board of directors includes seven media company representatives, seven journalist representatives, and seven representatives of the general public; the QPC's chair is always a member of the public.

Media company and journalist representatives are chosen by their peers, while representatives of the public are appointed following a call for nominations.

Since its creation, the QPC has been financially supported by the Québec government at varying levels, as well as by media companies and journalists.

More detailed information about the QPC's operations and activities can be found on its website at <http://www.conseildepresse.qc.ca/index.php?&lang=en>.

## Issues

In 2008 and 2010, the QPC weathered a crisis marked by the withdrawal of certain members, but it continued to reject the idea of legislative involvement in journalistic ethics and agreed to retain its two-pronged mission (dispute resolution panel and advisory role) while focusing its advisory role more on issues of journalistic ethics.

Following this, around 40% of the news consumed by Quebecers is still produced by media companies that are not QPC members, which contributes to undermining this media self-regulatory mechanism.

In her report entitled *L'information au Québec : un intérêt public*, Dominique Payette observes that in Québec like in other western countries, media self-regulatory mechanisms are facing difficulties because they are contested by certain organizations and have lost their credibility with the public and observers of the media scene.

Ms. Payette however recommends that the QPC retain its role as a dispute resolution panel to receive complaints from the public, journalists, and media companies and adjudicate on them.

She believes that the QPC could be given new responsibilities, including proposing a new definition of "media company"; standardizing, along with FPJQ, codes of conduct in light of the new technological environment and the use of social media; and helping educate the media by offering Québec schools a course on media responsibilities and ethics.

Ms. Payette also advocates various measures to encourage all media companies to join the QPC and help fund it.

In addition, Ms. Payette believes the QPC's funding structure must promote its independence, growth, and stability, and she therefore recommends significant and recurring government support.

It appears that the government may help strengthen the QPC's primary role as a dispute resolution panel by giving it recurring annual financial assistance that equals press companies' and journalists' combined funding contributions.

## QUESTIONS

1. Is the QPC appropriately fulfilling its role as a dispute resolution panel by handling complaints related to the quality of reporting in Québec?
2. What improvements, if any, could be made to the QPC's operations to help it better fulfill its role as a dispute resolution panel considering the quality of reporting in Québec?
3. Is the QPC appropriately fulfilling its advisory role considering the situation and the quality of reporting in Québec?
4. What improvements, if any, could be made to the QPC's operations to help it better fulfill its advisory role related to reporting in Québec?
5. What incentives could be envisaged to convince all Québec media companies to join the QPC?
6. Could the QPC's current funding method be changed and, if so, what changes would be desirable?
7. Should the QPC take measures to increase its visibility and influence in the Québec news world? If so, which measures?

## 2.2 GREATER DIVERSITY OF VOICES

### 2.2.1 PROPOSED REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL NEWS PLATFORM

#### Overview

Ms. Payette's report notes significant regional disparities with regard to access to a broad range of local and regional news. The report also notes that the "Montréalization" of reporting exacerbates the divide between remote areas and major centers. Very frequently, the regions are only mentioned in the national media in connection with spectacular news items or plant closings.

It also appears difficult for residents of a given region to stay informed about current events and happenings in other regions, even if the two regions are experiencing similar problems.

Yet regional news plays an essential role on a democratic level and in connection with economic, social, and political development. A survey conducted in 2011 for Centre d'études sur les médias reveals that the respondents are primarily interested in what is happening in their own city and region.<sup>13</sup> Improved access to local and regional reporting would therefore address a common concern for many residents.

.....  
<sup>13</sup> Research report submitted to Centre d'études sur les médias. *La dynamique des publics de l'information 2011*, March 2011.

## A new mandate for Télé-Québec

The working group led by Ms. Payette proposes using Télé-Québec to increase news offerings for residents. It has recommended that Télé-Québec be tasked with developing a regional news networking project online through the use of community, cooperative, and independent media content and resources from Québec.

Public channels can effectively be used more to increase news offerings for Quebecers by pooling existing resources. A Web platform project could combine the efforts of a number of cooperative, community, and independent media groups across Québec. Télé-Québec could develop an inter-regional platform for regional media networking. The new platform could combine audio, photo, print, and video content. Local news could first be grouped together on a regional platform and the regional platforms created in this way could communicate amongst themselves to promote the interregionalization of news.

As recommended by Ms. Payette's working group, the Québec government has already given Télé-Québec a budget to assess the feasibility of such a project and identify the resources needed to implement it. The Télé-Québec team assigned to this project has begun consulting with potential partners. Work is expected to continue for one year and the project should be completed in late 2011.

This consultation paper should help promote reflection on the project and clarify certain issues that must be taken into account.

### QUESTIONS

1. Do you think Quebecers from other regions fully understand the conditions in your region?
2. What type of news (political, economic, social, cultural, sports, etc.) should be presented on the new platform?
3. Which key media should be invited to participate on the platform page dedicated to your region?
4. What topics or issues should be discussed on your region's platform page?
5. Would you like theme-specific pages or thematic sections to be created on the platform? If so, which themes should be covered?
6. Would you like blog sections to be included on the platform to facilitate discussion?
7. Should the new platform include smartphone and digital tablet applications?
8. What role should social networks play on the platform?
9. How can this platform support your daily work (training, equipment, resources)?



## 2.2.2 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY MEDIA

### Overview

The first community media appeared in the early 1970s in response to popular demand and a collective effort by communities that wanted accessible and democratic communication media in rural areas and urban centers alike.

Further to this initiative, a governmental assistance program for these emerging media was set up in 1973. The government recognized the importance for communities at the time to have local news sources and local means of expression created by and for their population. Today, over 150 community media outlets throughout all regions of Québec are supported by Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine.

Through radio, television, and print outlets, community media provide information about the various aspects of the community they represent and help develop its regional identity. Their democratic management and non-profit status distinguishes them from other media. Community media are supported first and foremost by their members and various local stakeholders, which support them logistically and financially. This support is a concrete manifestation of the community's participation in the life of the organization.

Most community media are members of one of three provincial associations—Association des médias écrits communautaires du Québec (AMECQ), Fédération des télévisions communautaires autonomes du Québec (FTVCA), and Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec (ARCQ)—and help enrich and diversify local and regional news offerings in an environment of high media concentration.

### Operational assistance program for community media

#### Program objectives include helping community media to

- Promote public accessibility and public participation in community media
- Improve local and regional news offerings
- Contribute to local and regional development
- Help promote the French language, as applicable

Media organizations interested in receiving financial support from Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine must demonstrate that they meet the criteria that define a community organization in accordance with the community action reference guide (Cadre de référence en matière d'action communautaire) published by Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome et aux initiatives sociales (SACAIS).

They must also meet certain minimum requirements for original content and local and regional news production. The amount given to each media organization is calculated based on data related to its volume of original productions.

## Online media

Community media that broadcast exclusively online are not eligible for the program. A committee was established in 2005 to examine the overall issue of community media. The exclusion of media that broadcast exclusively on the Internet was part of the recommendations that were applied in 2007. At the time, this decision was justified by the fact that it was difficult to demonstrate the community basis of a media outlet that broadcast internationally rather than within a particular geographical area. The committee sought to preserve the community nature of media.

### QUESTIONS

1. In forty years, the communications industry in Québec has changed significantly and community media has had to adapt to new conditions. How do you perceive the mission of this type of media today and how do you envision its future role and broadcast modes?
2. The community media assistance program supports collective initiatives to acquire communication media. Is the issue of media access still relevant with the arrival of new media?
3. Is government support still appropriate? Should it be updated to take into account the new communication issues that characterize today's media industry?



