

Subsection 6.—Federal Government Radio Communication Services

Radio in Canada traces its origin to the year 1900 when wireless telegraphy was introduced and placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works. The first commercial radio circuit was established between Chateau Bay, Que., and Belle Isle in the Strait of Belle Isle in 1901, replacing an underwater cable which was difficult to maintain. In the first days of radio there did not appear to be any necessity for special legislative control, but the growth of this new medium of communication was very rapid and the Wireless Telegraph Act of 1905 became the first legislation in Canada controlling radio communication.

Radio regulation and radio coast station services were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works until 1909, at which time they were transferred to the Department of Marine and Fisheries where they remained until 1930, with the exception of the period 1914-22 when they were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Naval Services. In 1930, when a separate Marine portfolio was established, they became a Branch of that Department and then in 1936 a Division of the Air Services Branch of the newly formed Department of Transport. In 1936 an aviation radio service was organized within the Radio Division, and to it in 1948 was transferred the Government Telegraph and Telephone Service, which had been under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works since 1879. In 1950, the name was changed to Telecommunications Division, and later to Telecommunications and Electronics Branch.

The radio activities of the Telecommunications and Electronics Branch may be summarized as follows: (1) the administration of national and international radio laws and regulations and of regional agreements, involving the issuance of radio licences, inspection of radio stations, certification of radio equipment, examination of operators, assignment and monitoring of frequencies, study of radio wave propagation, compilation and settling of international accounts for radio messages, investigation and suppression of inductive interference to radio reception; and (2) construction, maintenance and operation of radio communication stations and radio aids to marine and air navigation.

The national and international radio laws and regulations and the regional agreements administered by the Telecommunications and Electronics Branch include: (1) the Broadcasting Act; the Radio Act and Regulations made thereunder; the radio provisions of the Canada Shipping Act and Ship Station Radio Regulations; (2) the International Telecommunications Convention and Radio Regulations annexed thereto; the Articles of the International Civil Aviation Convention applicable to aeronautical radio requirements; that part of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea applicable to radio requirements for ships; the Inter-American Telecommunication Convention; the Inter-American Radio Agreement; the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement; the Convention between Canada and the United States of America relating to the operation by citizens of either country of certain radio equipment or stations in the other country; and the Agreement between Canada and the United States of America for the promotion of safety on the Great Lakes by means of radio.

Licensing and Operation.—In all branches of radio, basic control is exercised over the right to establish a station, assignment of frequencies, operator standards, operating procedure, and general regulations concerning the manner in which radio stations are used.

Under the Broadcasting Act, the Board of Broadcast Governors regulates the establishment and operation of broadcasting networks, the activities of public and private broadcasting stations and the relationship between them, in the interest of providing a national broadcasting service of high standard, basically Canadian in content and character. While the Minister of Transport is the licensing authority under the Radio Act, the Broadcasting Act requires that applications for broadcasting station licences or for any change in an existing broadcasting station be referred to the Board of Broadcast Governors for its recommendation before being dealt with by the Department. Reasonably complete and technically acceptable applications are therefore referred to the Board of Broadcast