

Subsection 8.—Radio and Television Broadcasting*

Broadcasting in Canada has developed over a period of some forty-six years as a combination of public and private enterprise. Since the opening program from the first radio station was beamed into a few Montreal homes in 1918, the role of the radio and television program in the daily life of the Canadian family has grown to startling prominence. Today, radio service reaches 98 p.c. and television service over 94 p.c. of the Canadian population.

To have become such an integral force in the daily life of the nation, broadcasting had to learn the needs of the people and how to serve them. Two 'official' languages forming two distinct cultures had to be served independently but without diminishing the concept of national unity. Dozens of other smaller groups, distinct in culture and frequently dwelling in the same radio or TV coverage area but in separate communities with widely divergent program interests, had to be served. Physical problems of distance and geography had to be overcome. It requires some 360 radio transmitters and 105 TV stations and satellites to reach a population distributed across a 4,000-mile southern frontier, through seven time zones and a variety of topographical and climatic regions, and scattered northwest through thousands of square miles to the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Not only do these people have local service that is a reflection of life in their own districts, but by means of 15,000 miles of land-lines for radio networks and 8,500 miles of microwave circuits, for television nearly every Canadian may, at the same time, listen or watch as an event of national interest takes place.

Since 1932, a publicly owned body, now known as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, created to develop a national service, has worked with the private or independent station-owner to establish this service. A more recent addition (1958) is the Board of Broadcast Governors, which consists of three full-time members including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and 12 part-time members; the function of the Board is to "regulate the establishment and operation of networks of broadcasting stations, the activities of public and private broadcasting stations in Canada and the relationship between them, and provide for the final determination of all matters and questions in relation thereto" (See also p. 825.) The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation consists of a President and a Vice-President and nine other directors appointed by the Governor in Council. It is accountable to Parliament through a Cabinet Minister designated by the Governor in Council and is empowered to establish and maintain program networks and stations. (See also pp. 840-844.)

The Broadcasting Act also requires that, before dealing with any application for a licence to establish a broadcasting station (private or public) or for an increase in power, change of frequency or change of location of a broadcasting station, the Minister of Transport must receive a recommendation from the Board of Broadcast Governors. The same requirement exists with respect to the making of a new regulation or the effecting of changes in the Regulations under the Radio Act. Before making the appropriate recommendation to the Minister of Transport, the Board considers all such applications at a public hearing at which the applicant, licensees and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation are given the opportunity of being heard.

Under the provisions of the Radio Act, the Minister of Transport must also receive a recommendation from the Board before dealing with any application to change the ownership or control of any share of capital stock in the licensee of a broadcasting station which is incorporated as a private company. The Board of Broadcast Governors has established a policy that any such application, which would result in a change of ownership or control of a licensee, would be referred to a public hearing before a recommendation is made to the Minister. Applications of this kind not involving a change of ownership or control may be dealt with by the Board or the Executive Committee of the Board at a regular meeting.

* Textual information in this Subsection was supplied by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Board of Broadcast Governors and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters; statistical data were prepared by the Public Finance and Transportation Division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.