



Brief

Submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport
and Communications regarding the importance of
Radio-Canada to Nova Scotia's Acadian community

Halifax, Nova Scotia
October 21, 2014

1. Incorporated on October 14, 1968, the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse was established to promote the vitality and overall development of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community with the help of its members, namely, French-language regional, provincial and institutional organizations.
2. Our organization is a true federation composed of 28 regional and sectoral agencies and clients working to advance the federation's mission.
3. The federation fulfils its mission by acting as the main spokesperson for the Acadian and francophone population of Nova Scotia; by facilitating cooperation and partnership among all the agencies working in Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community, while respecting each agency's mandate; by offering services and programs that address the needs of its members; and by supporting its members in promoting the vitality and development of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community.
4. Radio-Canada is central to the federation's communications portfolio. In fact, Acadians and francophones in our province are very aware of the important role the public broadcaster plays in their lives: they know that no private broadcaster would be able to amass the necessary capital needed to broadcast radio and television programming and maintain a Web presence in remote areas where audience ratings are lower. Radio-Canada is the only broadcaster that can provide quality, French-language services to Nova Scotia's Acadian community.
5. Although the Acadians and francophones in the province acknowledge Radio-Canada's importance, our community is far from satisfied with its services, especially when it comes to the coverage of events in Nova Scotia.
6. One part of Radio-Canada's mandate is especially relevant to the Acadian and francophone communities as a whole, namely:
 - a. to reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions;
 - b. to contribute to shared national consciousness and identity.
7. In 2007 and 2009, the Société Nationale de l'Acadie published the findings of studies into regional representation on the national radio and television network. These studies clearly indicated that the news, political commentators, experts and topics dealt with on radio and television overwhelmingly reflected what was happening in Montreal.
8. In fact, it is very rare for an Acadian expert—much less an Acadian from Nova Scotia—to be invited on a public affairs program to provide comments and a different viewpoint. The same holds true for variety shows, where Quebec artists—some of them complete unknowns—are invited to take part in several

programs during the same week, whereas Acadian artists have to be superstars before anyone pays them the least bit of attention. As for online news, on any given day, it is far more common to see news from Quebec and Ontario as well as national and international stories. However, news from our province is practically non-existent. For example, in the online news for Friday, October 3, 2014, the top story was the war against the Islamic State, four secondary stories dealt with international issues, two secondary stories were from Ontario and two other secondary stories were from Quebec.

9. In fact, it seems that reporters, researchers, producers and other artists view Radio-Canada as a regional station rather than a national network. In Nova Scotia, people refer to it as “Radio-Montréal.” This nickname clearly reflects how the province’s Acadians and francophones feel: an insignificant story from Montreal gets preferential treatment over an important story in Nova Scotia.

10. These observations are corroborated by the fact that programs such as *l’Épicerie*, *la Facture* and others rarely come to Nova Scotia; national and international stories are covered only from Montreal and feature experts from the province of Quebec. This situation is very detrimental to Nova Scotia’s Acadians and francophones, who feel like second-class citizens. Our province’s Acadians and francophones will not feel a sense of value by seeing and hearing only Quebecers on television and radio. Lastly, in the longer term, it is Quebec’s heritage in all its diversity that will be preserved, to the detriment of our heritage and that of Canada’s Francophonie as a whole. In short, Nova Scotia’s Acadians don’t recognize themselves in Radio-Canada programming: they don’t see, hear or read about themselves.

11. For the reasons stated previously, we also find it very regrettable that, Canada’s francophone presence on the international stage is limited to Quebec. Radio-Canada not only adds to Canadians’ lack of knowledge about the life and issues of Nova Scotia’s Acadian community, but it also reinforces the international perception that Quebec is the only province in Canada where French is spoken.

12. We understand that current budget restrictions have forced Radio-Canada to rely on private companies to produce programs. However, we believe that this devolution of powers should nonetheless respect the Corporation’s mandate and Canada’s regional diversity, regardless of ratings and advertising revenues.

13. Although the federation applauds Radio-Canada Acadie’s coverage of major events such as election night, it deplores the preferential treatment given to New Brunswick over Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces. For example, on Friday, October 3, 2014, Radio-Canada’s online coverage for the Acadian region featured a lead story from New Brunswick and one from Prince Edward Island. Readers had to scroll down to the bottom of the page to find under the heading “Dernières publications,” one story from Nova Scotia,

compared with one from Newfoundland, two from Prince Edward Island and five from New Brunswick. At the time, the government of Nova Scotia was preparing to pass a health reform bill at third reading that would cut the number of health authorities from 10 to 2 and the number of health-related labour organizations from 50 to 4. The scope of this reform concerned all Canadian labour unions. In short, Nova Scotia is being marginalized both by Radio-Canada and by Radio-Canada Acadie online.

14. Radio-Canada produces only two French-language regional radio programs in Nova Scotia: Réveil Nouvelle-Écosse and au Rythme des courants. It produces no television programs in Halifax. Nova Scotia's Acadian community is clearly disadvantaged when compared with Moncton or Montreal. Radio-Canada's weekly radio schedule lists 32 programs produced in Montreal and four produced in New Brunswick. Nova Scotia has only two programs, both produced in Halifax. Moreover, three of the four programs produced in New Brunswick air only in Atlantic Canada; none of the programs produced in New Brunswick or in Nova Scotia are broadcast across the entire network.

15. Lastly, despite the quality of Radio-Canada's productions, the Acadian and francophone community we represent believes that the Corporation could do a better job of fulfilling its mandate to reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions.

16. We hope that the hearings of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications will enable the Corporation to ensure that Nova Scotia's Acadians and francophones are better represented in its programming, that they get to know francophones in the other provinces better and that we are able to celebrate our diversity.

17. Thank you for your attention.