

Public Accountability

Accountability Mechanisms

As in the past, CBC/Radio-Canada continued to report to Canadians on the fulfilment of its commitments. It accounted for its activities to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Parliament through its Annual Report, Corporate Plan and the Auditor General's Special Examination Report (which was also released to the public by CBC/Radio-Canada); to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) through broadcast year-end reports and annual financial returns; and to stakeholders through townhall meetings and CBC/Radio-Canada websites.

The Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman provides viewers and listeners with an opportunity to have investigated serious, unresolved complaints pertaining to CBC/Radio-Canada journalism. An impartial and independent body, of the Office of the Ombudsman investigates the complaint and provides a written report which helps to ensure the excellence of the Corporation's news and information programs.

The Office has two Ombudsmen, one for English-language Services and the other for French-language Services. Both Ombudsmen report directly to the President and are completely independent from the Corporation's media management.

In 2000-2001, the Office of the Ombudsman (English and French Services combined) handled a total of 1,377 complaints, expressions of concern and other communications. There were 1,135 concerning English programming and 242 concerning French programming. On the English side, 591 communications fell within the mandate of the Ombudsman (information programming), while there were 176 on the French side. Communications not relating directly to CBC/Radio-Canada journalistic programming were acknowledged and forwarded to the programming departments concerned.

The English Services Ombudsman organised five Independent Advice Panels to assess CBC's compliance with its own journalistic policies. Four panels monitored coverage of the federal election campaign on *The National* on English

Television, *The World at Six* and *The House* on Radio One, *Politics* on CBC Newsworld, and the CBC/Radio-Canada website, *cbc.ca*. A fifth panel monitored *Canada Now* during the Alberta election campaign.

While there were some critical comments, most panel members had no fundamental quarrel with the accuracy, fairness and integrity of the programming. Panel reports were shared with the relevant programmers, senior management and the Board of Directors.

For his part, the French Services Ombudsman created five Independent Advice Panels to assess the Corporation's compliance with its own journalistic policies. Three committees examined the following television programs: *Le Téléjournal/Le Point* and *Élections 2000 : Le Journal* (French Television), and *Décision 2000* (RDI). Another committee looked at the radio programs, *L'entrevue*, and the morning *Radiojournal*. Finally, for the first time, an Independent Advice Panel was set up to review Radio-Canada's website, *Nouvelles*.

Overall, coverage of the federal election campaign by the various CBC/Radio-Canada French media was deemed to be satisfactory. The fundamental principles of CBC/Radio-Canada journalistic policy, namely accuracy, fairness and integrity, were observed.

The Independent Advice Panels' reports were submitted to the programming heads, senior management and the Board of Directors.

Where to Write

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