



# Canadian Public Interest Journalism and the Philanthropic Sector

Funders Meeting • June 5, 2018

McConnell





**In June 2018, the McConnell Family Foundation convened a meeting to discuss and review the landscape of philanthropic involvement in Canadian journalism.**

McConnell's interest in this subject is ingrained in the organization's history, as its founder was a former publisher of the Montreal Star.

Most recently, the Foundation has been interested in building ecosystems in order to accelerate and collaborate with peers. The organization's related interests in solutions journalism was also a driving factor for this project. The Foundation believes that a thriving fourth estate enables foundations to better do their work by informing the public and raising awareness.

This document is being published as an artefact of the day's discussions, as well as to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the future of news in Canada.

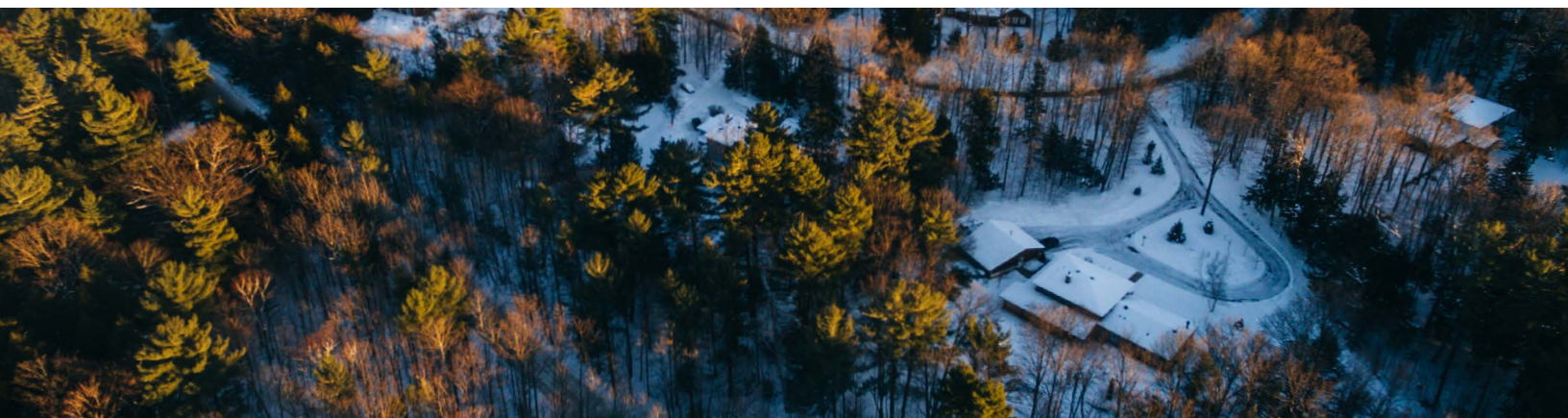
## Overview

In Canada and around the world, traditional media are in a time of disruption. The move to a digital-first environment, paired with new audience behaviours, have challenged business models and revenue streams. This disruption has raised important questions about the future of journalism given its role in holding governments to account and sharing community stories.

Journalism and philanthropy each play a role in shaping a better society. As media evolves, foundations are actively evaluating what kind of involvement they might have in the future. Some are interested in helping revitalize and strengthen the core tenets of journalism: holding power to account and serving the public interest. Others see opportunity in this time of change to correct inequities in the makeup of newsrooms, or to ensure the quality of journalists is better as the quantity decreases. As new business models and storytelling methods emerge, many are interested in giving a voice and a platform to those who have been under-represented.

In addition to discussing several convening questions, the group also heard from representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Public Policy Forum.

This document outlines some of the broad themes that emerged as a result of this discussion.



### Our Convening Questions

- What challenges and considerations need to be on the sector's radar?
- What are the conditions that would enable greater philanthropic participation in supporting public interest journalism?
- What barriers, opportunities and needs for support exist?
- What are the priority issues and actions to be taken?
- Is there interest in support for 'solutions journalism' and other initiatives?



## Emerging Themes

### 1: Foundation missions and capacities are varied, so too will be their involvement

Philanthropic involvement will likely take a number of different forms and will evolve. The box below outlines a few of the ways that foundations are currently playing a role.

#### Roles for philanthropic sector in supporting Canadian journalism

- Training and education for journalists
- Financial supports for beats that are underserved
- Investing in emerging models such as member-supported journalism
- Industry modernization and innovation
- Incentivizing excellence and supporting journalists' careers
- Business model innovation
- Training and capacity building

One example of future foundations involvement would be in specific pockets of journalism. This might involve working towards increasing diversity among storytellers or supporting small-scale content projects.

It is clear that no one sector or player will be large enough to fill the gap that returns journalism back to what it looked like before this disruption. The future conversations, however, might include a more diverse group than had been part of the conversation in the past.



## 2: Federal charitable rules require clarification or modification

Charitable status in Canada comes with restrictions on how funds are used and distributed. A key precursor for the involvement of the philanthropic sector in this space will be charitable regulations that allow for foundations to freely contribute and partner with news media. The path forward remains unclear. Is a simple clarification from the Canada Revenue Agency all that is required? Or, for journalism to be seen as a charitable public benefit, is a fundamental policy change needed?



## 3: Convenors are needed

To support a collaborative and coherent response to a rapidly changing environment, there needs to be venues where interested parties can better understand changing dynamics and share best practices. Session participants shared the desire to be kept abreast of developments relevant to the philanthropic sector. Communication and collaboration will be paramount as new models are tested and innovations emerge.

#### 4: Government may continue to tread lightly

Legislators will always be challenged with what role government intervention might play in supporting journalism with public dollars. This debate is not new to Canada, as federal support for our national public broadcaster has often been a point of discussion. Political parties have differing opinions on how or whether public dollars should be used to subsidize an entity which exists to hold government to account.

While the Government of Canada committed to a modest investment in supporting local news through its most recent budget, it remains to be seen what longer-term or permanent role it might play.



#### Next Steps

The McConnell Foundation will continue to convene interested participants as part of a **journalism funders affinity group** in order to identify areas of mutual interest, to share information, and to collaborate on common priorities.

Foundations and charities who participated in the day's discussion will continue to evaluate partnership and funding opportunities as they become available.

## Appendix A: Attendees

### Participants

Colette Murphy	Atkinson Foundation
Pat Thompson	Atkinson Foundation
Aaron Shull	Centre for International Governance Innovation
Laurel Carlton	Community Foundations of Canada
Helen McLean	Donner Canadian Foundation
Shazlin Rahman	Inspirit Foundation
Chris Lee	Inspirit Foundation
Elizabeth McIsaac	Maytree Foundation
Stephen Huddart	McConnell Family Foundation
Chad Lubelsky	McConnell Family Foundation
Laurence Miall	McConnell Family Foundation
James Baxter	Michener Foundation / Publisher at iPolitics
Andrew Molson	The Molson Foundation
Katharine Bambrick	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Blair Dimock	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Deborah Irvine	Vancouver Foundation
Aaron Good	The Rossy Family Foundation (by phone)

### Guests

Graham Flack	Heritage Canada
Ed Greenspon	Public Policy Forum



## Facilitators

Caitlin Kealey	MediaStyle
Ryan Kennerly	MediaStyle

## Regrets

Hilary Pearson	Philanthropic Foundations Canada
Sandy Houston	Metcalf Foundation
Ian Bird	Community Foundations of Canada
Allan Northcott	Max Bell Foundation
Alan Broadbent	Maytree Foundation
Marcel Lauziere	Lawson Foundation
Ross McMillan	Tides Canada
François Lagarde	Chagnon Foundation
James Deacon	Michener Foundation
Claude Pinard	Saputo Foundation





## Appendix B: Insight Matrix

The purpose of the Insight Matrix is to do a scan of existing innovations or players in a space to see what can be learned from them. Working with pre-defined categories (aligning with areas of interest), participants were asked to leverage their own networks and knowledge to contribute to completing the matrix. The original Insight Matrix activity was presented [in a table format](#), and has been reformatted into bullet points here for ease of reference.

### Training and support for journalists

- [Indigenous Reporters Program](#) (Journalists for Human Rights)
- Solutions Journalism Network (Munk School)
- [Media Training Workshops](#) (National Council for Canadian Muslims)
- Michener Foundation (fellowships)
- The Discourse – Local fellowships
- Service journalism / support of recent graduates – [Report for America](#)
- J-Schools at Universities (Universities Canada)

### “Beat” sponsorship and philanthropic support

- [Discourse Media](#) (McConnell Foundation)
- Feature reporting on nonprofit sector issues and achievements (Ontario Trillium Foundation; with the National Observer and Canadian Centre for Investigative Journalism)
- Support for Indigenous & Muslim media makers (Inspirit Foundation)
- Local journalism pilot (Vancouver Foundation)
- Community News Commons (Winnipeg Foundation; ended in 2017)
- [Beat reporters at LA Times and Washington Post](#) (Ford Foundation)
- [Media Impact Funders](#)

### Member-supported journalism

- Taproot Edmonton
- Canadian Journalists for Free Expression
- The Digger – Vermont
- New Scoop
- The Tyee
- De Correspondent
- Discourse
- Sonoma West Publishers (community investment with dividends, rather than member-supported journalism)

### Industry modernization and innovation

- [The Knight Foundation](#)
- [Digital News Innovation Fund](#) (Google)
- [Google News Initiative](#) (Google)

- [Canada Periodical Fund's Business Innovation Stream](#)
- Groundtruth
- [Texas Tribune](#)

## Independent journalism

- The National Observer
- The Discourse
- iPolitics
- The Winnipeg Free Press
- Village Media
- [Carleton J-school](#)
- West End Phoenix

## Long-form content sponsorship

- [Public Policy Research and Education](#) (Donner Foundation)
- [Media and Arts Impact Grants](#) (Inspirit Foundation; not currently offered)

## Content creation

- [opencanada.org](#) (Centre for International Governance Innovation)
- [The Reentry Project](#) (Solutions Journalism Network, Knight Foundation)
- [The Conversation Canada](#) (multiple partners, Lawson Foundation)
- [Vital Signs](#) (Community Foundations of Canada)
- [Photojournalism Project](#) (Atkinson Foundation)

## Incentivizing excellence and supporting journalists' careers

- Michener Foundation
- Canadian Association of Journalists
- Donner Foundation
- Canadian Journalists for Free Expression
- [Annual Atkinson Lecture at Ryerson School of Journalism](#) (Atkinson Foundation)

## Investigative reporting

- Atkinson [Fellowship in Public Policy](#) (Atkinson Foundation/ Toronto Star/ Honderich Family)
  - [2016–2018 Atkinson Fellow in Public Policy on 'The New Newsroom'](#)

## Short-term systems fixes

- Atkinson–Toronto Star Projects (Atkinson Foundation)
  - [Work and Wealth](#)
  - [Democratic Renewal](#)