

In response to the challenges of keeping a relatively small population in touch with itself over a huge and rugged geography, Canadians have always placed a high priority on communications. As a result, our cable television, telephone and microwave systems, broadcasting networks, domestic satellites and other computer-age communications services have made us world leaders in these aspects of high technology. Notwithstanding the tremendous achievements already in place, the technological revolution in communications is proceeding rapidly across the world, and is making McLuhan's "global village" a reality. Our communications systems will continue to change radically in the years to come. A research report prepared for this Committee stated it this way:

*Traditionally, public communications transmission has involved either broadcast technology (through the airwaves from a single transmitter to many receivers) or telecommunications (point-to-point communications).*

*In the past decade or two, however, a technological revolution has occurred which makes it increasingly difficult to separate means of transmission. Telecommunications companies have taken advantage of the airwaves by using microwave and satellite systems to improve point-to-point communications, while at the same time broadcasting companies have enlarged their audiences through local cable television networks.*

*As a result of these trends, the difference between "broadcasting" and "telecommunications" has become less one of technology, and more one of purpose. — Mollie Dunsmuir, Culture and Communications: The Constitutional Setting, Research Branch, Library of Parliament, September 10, 1991, p. 3.*

In a humorous, yet serious vein, Keith Spicer, Chairman of the CRTC, made this counter-point to high technology, and this analogy to the close relationship between communications and culture:

*We actually had a province I will not name that advanced to us the idea that it did not want a telephone in every house because the party line was part of their culture. — Keith Spicer, Chairman, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (Issue 15:21).*

The principal media of communications in Canada are well known. It is debatable which takes the lead in cultural terms. Certainly, television is very powerful (the networks of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, TVA and CTV, private stations, cable television and specialty channels). Virtually all Canadians — 97 percent of us — watch television at least once a week. Ninety-five percent of Canadians listen to radio, 98 percent of Canadian homes have a telephone and over 60 percent of Canadian homes subscribe to cable television. Canadian daily and weekly newspapers have major impact, Canadian books and magazines reach a wide audience, and Canadian films are winning international awards. The prestigious Canadian companies that are leaders in the world telecommunications industry continue to develop wider and more sophisticated capabilities. The communications process can also be said to include the recording industry, and even the network of Canadian museums and art galleries.