

Radio Canada International brings Canada's message to the world



Radio Canada International (RCI), the world service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), represents the voice of Canada to millions of people round the globe.

Canada began shortwave broadcasting in February 1945, as a service to Canadian soldiers in Europe. Originally funded by a special grant from Parliament and administered by the CBC, responsibility for all aspects of the international service was turned over to the corporation by order-in-council in 1968. Four years later the name was officially changed to Radio Canada International, and in May 1980 the current mandate was approved by the CBC board of directors.

It directed RCI 'to provide a program service designed to attract an international audience, with the purpose of further developing international awareness of Canada and the Canadian identity by distributing, through shortwave and other means, programs which reflect the realities and quality of Canadian life and culture, Canada's national interests and policies, and the spectrum of Canadian viewpoints on national and international affairs'.

While recognizing broadcasting to foreign audiences as its primary objective, RCI was also called upon to broadcast programs 'to the growing number of Canadians abroad, in recognition of their need for more Canadian news and information'.

Compared to other services of its kind, RCI operates on a very small scale. Its annual budget of slightly over \$12 million (out of a total CBC budget of almost \$800 million) is roughly one-tenth that of the BBC's World Service. RCI has only six transmitters (located in Sackville, New Brunswick), compared to the Voice of America's 110, and broadcasts just 175 hours a week, while the British and the Americans are on the air for 734 hours and 868 hours respectively.

Five areas covered

At the moment, RCI shortwave programming is directed at six 'target areas' – Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean – the last added on May 1. The RCI newsroom is unlike any other in Canada. A staff of 22 people turns out 43 newscasts daily in a total of 11 languages: English, French, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Spanish, Portuguese, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and German. The news line-up varies according to the target area.

Veteran CBC journalist Dave Struthers, who presides over the newsroom, sees his job as 'presenting world news events through the eyes of Canadian journalists'.

But reporting international news meets only a small part of RCI's mandate. To serve Canadians living abroad, RCI provides a special service which rebroadcasts some of the CBC's more popular news and public-affairs programs, including *As It Happens*, *Sunday Morning* and *The World At Six*. It also administers the Canadian Forces Network in West Germany and the Netherlands. Three RCI employees in Montreal edit CBC programs in English and French for broadcast to a 15,000-strong audience comprising forces personnel, support staff

and their families. They also negotiate for broadcasting rights to such events as the World Series and the Grey Cup. Funding for the forces network is provided by the Department of National Defence.

To reach listeners not tuned in to shortwave, RCI gets Canada's message across by means of recorded programs. Approximately 145,000 records are shipped each year to radio stations, embassies and broadcast agencies around the world. RCI produces 60 hour-long 'spoken word' discs each year, in English, French and Spanish, on subjects ranging from Canadian drama and literature to sports, law and business. In addition, RCI freelance reporters prepare about 200 shorter 'topical discs', in English, French, Spanish and Japanese, most of which consist of short features on subjects of interest to specific target areas.

Recorded programs

RCI also uses its recorded programs to assist the careers of Canadian singers, composers and musicians. It produces 90 music albums a year, divided equally between pop and serious music. Most of these are by young Canadian performers making their recording debuts. In the past, these efforts have yielded impressive results, Glenn Gould, Maureen Forrester and Oscar Peterson are just some of the Canadian artists first recorded by RCI.

More recently, RCI has been active in promoting Canadian music through its massive *Anthology of Canadian Music* series, which, when complete, will include 300 recorded works by 36 composers, together with biographical material and background notes. RCI also uses its shortwave services to promote concerts by Canadian artists in its various target areas. 'We are not in competition with the industry,' RCI's director Betty Zimmerman said, 'but we believe that supporting Canadian artists is one of our most important roles. We will do everything we can to lend our support, and we're happy to do co-productions with anyone.' In 1981, the Canadian Music Council presented RCI with its Firm of the Year Award in recognition of its work in promoting Canadian music.

It is virtually impossible to obtain accurate ratings as to listenership for shortwave broadcasts. RCI uses a combination of audience response data (some 50,000 letters received each year) and surveys conducted by other broadcast services and the Gallup organization to conclude that about 10 million people each week listen to RCI programs around the world.

Most popular broadcaster

Perhaps the most popular broadcaster on RCI is Ian McFarland, host of a weekly show called *Shortwave Listener's Digest*, which deals with all aspects of the communications industry, but is primarily devoted to the joys of shortwave. For the past three years, it has topped an American broadcasting magazine's poll as shortwave listeners' favourite program. Mr McFarland also hosts a weekly show targeted for Africa, which features a 'mailbag' section where he reads and answers listeners' letters.

Program schedules available from Radio Canada International, PO Box 6000, Montreal, H3C 3A8. 🍁



Radio Canada headquarters in Montreal

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