WE PROUDLY BEGIN OUR BROADCAST DAY:
SASKATCHEWAN AND THE ARRIVAL OF TELEVISION,

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Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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By
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ABSTRACT

Television was one of the most pervasive and influential media of the twentieth century. Its arrival in Saskatchewan in 1954 was cause for both celebration and trepidation as many people wondered whether the medium would be a benign or malevolent force in the province. The development of Saskatchewan’s television system occurred at a much slower rate than the rest of Canada because Saskatchewan was not located near any major American cities, the expansion of television service in the province was left to private interests, and Saskatchewan’s sparsely settled rural and northern population were difficult to reach with television service. Between 1954 and 1969, Saskatchewan had six privately-owned television stations. These stations were located in Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Prince Albert, Yorkton, and Moose Jaw. Saskatchewan’s second-rate television system was a source of frustration for many people in the province, particularly those in rural and northern areas who wanted decent television reception, as well as those in Saskatoon who wanted second channel service. Saskatchewan was also the second-to-last province to receive a CBC-TV (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) owned and operated station. The lack of CBC-TV facilities in the province meant that Saskatchewan was not represented on the CBC’s national television network.

Despite the slow development of television service in the province, Saskatchewan television viewers were actually treated to some of the best television programs of the era and could watch the majority of these programs because they did not have the problem of conflicting schedules on two channels. Viewing habits in the...
province were largely defined by the program schedules of the stations and not by the preferences of individual viewers. Because Saskatchewan viewers had only one channel to pick from, there was little difference in the overall viewing patterns of men, women, teenagers, children, and viewers in rural and urban Saskatchewan. In the Regina-Moose Jaw area, where viewers could choose between two channels, there was greater variability in the habits of men, women, teenagers, and children. Saskatchewan stations also broadcast a great deal of local programming in this era, some of which was quite popular though never outside of the community in which it was produced.

In the 1950s, thousands of television sets were purchased in Saskatchewan and people in the province began to watch several hours of television daily. Television encouraged people to stay home instead of partaking in other leisure activities but only movie theatres and local sports teams were adversely affected by the arrival of television. Other forms of leisure such as reading and listening to the radio continued to maintain their popularity. Television also played into major trends occurring in the province in the 1950s and 1960s. The dissatisfaction with Saskatchewan’s television service was a factor in the growth of western alienation in the 1960s. Television also further encouraged the trend of rural depopulation in the province because the medium was basically available only near larger urban centres. Finally, television fostered the growth of a new prairie and Canadian identity in place of a provincial identity.
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Thank you also to the staff at the Saskatoon office of the Saskatchewan Archives Board for showing me what few materials they had as well as Bill Wagner at the Regina office for allowing me to sit in his office for an afternoon and watch some of the old television films. Thank you also to the staff at the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa. I would particularly like to thank Glenn Wright for pointing me in the direction of some useful collections of documents as well as for helping me obtain access to some CBC documents that proved to be helpful. Thank you to the Messer Fund for funding my research trip to Ottawa. Finally, thanks to Alex and Pearl Balych for answering my questions about television in North Battleford. Obviously, any errors or omissions in this thesis are my own.

I also want to thank my fellow graduate students in the Department of History who helped make this thesis a fun experience. In particular, I would like to thank Karen Sander, Darren Friesen, Jen Hamel, Nathan Elliott, Clay Poupard, and Dan Macfarlane for their friendship, support, and helpful criticism.

Finally, my biggest thank you goes to my mom, dad, and sister who not only supported this project from the beginning but have had to live with it ever since. Thanks, Lorie, for getting me out of the house every now and then.
DEDICATIONS

This thesis is for my dad, Ron Wagner, a member of the first generation of Saskatchewan television kids. His love of television is, if not infectious, most definitely hereditary.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE........................................................................................................i

ABSTRACT..........................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS......................................................................................................iv

DEDICATIONS......................................................................................................................v

TABLE OF CONTENTS........................................................................................................vi

INTRODUCTION..................................................................................................................1
ADJUSTING TO TELEVISION

CHAPTER ONE..................................................................................................................19
TELEVISION’S WILDERNESS

CHAPTER TWO..................................................................................................................50
THE PICK OF THE NETWORKS

CHAPTER THREE..............................................................................................................80
MR. EVERYBODY ELSE

CONCLUSION...................................................................................................................113
A SASKATCHEWAN SEINFELD

BIBLIOGRAPHY.................................................................................................................123

TABLES

TABLE ONE.......................................................................................................................86
PERCENTAGE OF SASKATCHEWAN HOUSEHOLDS HAVING SELECTED
FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT BY YEAR

TABLE TWO.......................................................................................................................89
PERCENTAGE OF SASKATCHEWAN HOUSEHOLDS OWNING AT LEAST ONE
TELEVISION SET BY CENSUS DIVISION AND YEAR
INTRODUCTION

ADJUSTING TO TELEVISION

Ask a baby-boomer about television and the story of his or her family’s first television set will immediately follow. After that comes wistful remembrances of a time when television programs were actually entertaining and Sunday nights were set aside for *Ed Sullivan* and *Bonanza*. Television’s arrival across North America was a major event for most families, including those who lived in Saskatchewan. For many members of the baby boom generation, that first television set is a cherished and common memory. As historian Paul Rutherford writes, “The arrival of television had been so sudden and so common an experience throughout North America that millions of people were affected in much the same way. In the beginning there was a sense of wonder, a fascination with all the things that little box in the living-room offered people for their nightly pleasure.”¹

Television’s arrival is more than just nostalgic memories. The advent of television is often noted as an important division between life in the first and second halves of the twentieth century. Television is given this distinction not only because it conveniently arrived at the midway point of the century but also because it is believed to

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¹ Rutherford is quick to point out that a similar sense of wonder was also present with the arrival of movies and radio. Paul Rutherford, *When Television Was Young: Primetime Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 101.
be the catalyst behind dramatic changes in leisure, lifestyle, and expectations for
information and entertainment in North America.²

Once television sets were installed in Canada’s living rooms, watching television
quickly became the most common way for people to spend their leisure hours, easily
surpassing activities such as reading, listening to the radio, and attending movies.³ It is
an overstatement to say that television caused a major revolution in Canadian society but
it did alter some aspects of everyday life through its displacement of these other leisure
activities.

Television history, while not a popular field of study in Canada, is not an entirely
neglected area either. Before the 1980s, histories of Canadian television focused
primarily on the development of national broadcasting policies. These works
concentrated on the constant tension between supporters of public broadcasting and
supporters of private broadcasting on issues such as the development of the Canadian
Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the findings of the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, the creation of the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG), the creation of a

² Neil Sutherland points to a distinct change in childhood before and after television though he does not
actually study the post-television era in Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to
the Age of Television (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), x. Other authors who mention the
powerful effects of television are John E. O’Connor, “Introduction: Television and the Historian,” in
American History/American Television: Interpreting the Video Past, ed. John E. O’Connor (New York:
Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983), xiv-xxii; Douglas Kellner, Media Culture: Cultural Studies,
Identity, and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern (New York: Routledge, 1995), 16; and
particularly of general histories, take for granted the enormous influence that television had upon lifestyles
without examining to what extent such changes can actually be traced to television. For instance, John
Larsen and Maurice Richard Libby write, “Until television changed the social habits of North Americans,
visiting was an almost ritual activity in Moose Jaw” without further comment in Moose Jaw: People,

³ By 1972, a Canadian government survey showed that 13% of Canadians watched more than 30 hours of
television a week and that 94% of Canadians surveyed watched at least one hour of television a week. No
other leisure activities came close to these figures in terms of time spent doing the activity. Rutherford,
445-6.
second Canadian television network (CTV), and the formation of the Canadian Radio-
Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

These authors have strong views about Canada’s broadcasting policies because
all of them worked in the broadcasting industry in some capacity. A definite division
exists in this literature between those writers who worked for the CBC and those who
worked for private broadcasters. Those who worked for the CBC portray private
broadcasters as the bane of Canadian television. They are presented as profit-motivated
businessmen who broadcast nothing but American television shows without regard for
the damage these programs could do to Canadian culture. Those who worked for
private broadcasters present the CBC as a government-subsidized dictatorial institution
that competes unfairly with private broadcasters and decides what kinds of programs are
best for the Canadian public without reference to what the Canadian public actually
wants.

The standard work on Canadian broadcasting policy is Frank Peers’ s *The Public
Eye*. Though over twenty years old, *The Public Eye* is still the most comprehensive
history of early Canadian television policy development. Peers contends that Canada’s
hybrid television system, which is neither fully public nor fully private, was the result of

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Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1965); E.S.
Hallman with H. Hindley, *Broadcasting in Canada* (Don Mills, Ont.: General Publishing Co. Limited,
(Ottawa: Canadian Communications Foundation, 1979); Frank Foster, *Broadcasting Policy
Development* (Ottawa: Franfost Communications, 1982); Andrew Stewart and William H.N. Hull,
*Canadian Television Policy and the Board of Broadcast Governors, 1958-1968* (Edmonton: University of
Alberta Press, 1994). Stewart’s work is included in the pre-1980 group because he wrote his memoirs in
the early 1970s but they were not published until 1994. The only exception to this rule seems to be Roger
Rickwood, “Canadian Broadcasting Policy and the Private Broadcasters” (unpublished PhD dissertation,
University of Toronto, 1978).


6 Allard.
the government catering to two competing broadcasting ideologies. The first ideology believed that broadcasting was an industry and should be based on private ownership and governed by the market alone. The second ideology argued that broadcasting was a public service whose goal was to fulfill national objectives such as the strengthening of a uniquely Canadian culture. Though Peers's history is the acknowledged standard in the field, Peers worked for CBC-TV during the era that he analyzes which raises some questions about the overall objectivity of the work.

T.J. Allard’s *Straight Up* was published the same year as Peer’s *The Public Eye* and demonstrates the chasm between public and private broadcasters in the literature. Allard was General Manager and later Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) and his involvement with that organization spanned from the 1940s to the 1970s. Though both works were published at the same time and deal with the same topics, the two monographs are quite different. Peers tries to maintain an appearance of objectivity through his comprehensiveness and careful citation of sources. In contrast, Allard’s work concentrates on saving the battered reputation of the private broadcaster in Canada. Allard presents private broadcasters as great men who shaped the Canadian broadcasting system despite interference from the CBC and the government. Allard is also extremely critical of earlier histories of Canadian broadcasting calling them “sloppily researched.”

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7 Peers, xvi.


9 The CAB was an organization that represented the interests of private broadcasters at the national level.

The most recent history of Canadian broadcasting policy, Marc Raboy’s *Missed Opportunities*, is quite different from its predecessors. Unlike the earlier authors, Raboy is an academic and did not work in the broadcasting industry. Raboy focuses on how and why Canadian broadcasting policy became an arena of struggle over notions of Canadian society, nation, and public. Some of Raboy’s conclusions do not differ significantly from those of Peers. For instance, like Peers, Raboy argues that the broadcasting system in existence by the 1970s and 1980s was the result of the conflict between two opposing ideologies of broadcasting. Raboy adds to Peers’s arguments by noting that broadcasting policies were also influenced by a desire to buttress Canadian culture against American influence as well as protect Canadian unity. Raboy’s book primarily examines how national broadcasting policy has related to the changing situation in Quebec.\(^{11}\)

These histories of broadcasting policy examine policy development and implementation at the national level only. Peers notes that the needs and wants of television stations in smaller markets, like Regina and Saskatoon, were significantly different from those of larger markets but does not pursue the comments further.\(^{12}\) Raboy analyzes the ways in which Quebec influenced national policy but his focus on Quebec is to the detriment of any discussion about the situation in the Maritimes or the West.\(^{13}\)


\(^{12}\) For instance, Peers mentions the importance of CBC affiliation for small television stations but does not discuss it any detail. Peers, 287.

\(^{13}\) Raboy makes no apologies about his emphasis on Quebec because Quebec is both the focus of his work and what differentiates his book from other histories of broadcasting policy. Raboy, xi-xiv.
Other Canadian television histories look at the arrival and development of television in Canada at a more general level.\textsuperscript{14} They discuss subjects such as the creation of popular programs and behind-the-scenes stories of the early days of broadcasting. While some of these books are more popular in tone and topic than others, all of these authors have also worked in the Canadian broadcasting industry. Some of the authors try to maintain a sense of academic objectivity such as Michael Nolan in his history of CTV, while others are openly anecdotal and nostalgic such as Warner Troyer in \textit{The Sound and the Fury} or Sandy Stewart in \textit{Here’s Looking at Us}.\textsuperscript{15} While these histories are more general in scope than the policy histories, they also focus their attention at the national level and ignore or downplay regional differences in the delivery and arrival of television. In these books, what’s true for southern Ontario is true for Canada.

Since the 1980s, a new type of Canadian television history has superseded the numerous insider memoirs. The key figures of this new history are Mary Jane Miller and Paul Rutherford. Their work on Canadian television is unsurpassed in terms of its depth of analysis, comprehensiveness, and objectivity. Mary Jane Miller is a professor of film studies and dramatic arts at Brock University and her object of study is CBC television drama. Her first book, \textit{Turn Up the Contrast}, is the first and only monograph


\textsuperscript{15} Though one may question Nolan’s objectivity when, in the introduction, he refers to the CBC as the “Holy Mother Corp.” and, in his preface, describes CTV as “a convenient whipping boy.” Nolan, xi. xxx.
to analyze systematically a large body of Canadian television programs.\textsuperscript{16} It is not an encyclopedia or reference guide to every television program ever made in Canada, but a thoughtful analysis of select television programs and series made by the CBC.\textsuperscript{17} Miller’s second book, \textit{Rewind and Search}, also focuses on CBC television drama but instead of examining what was on the screen, Miller looks at the changing process of creating CBC television programs from the 1950s to the 1980s through interviews with people who worked on a variety of aspects of program production.\textsuperscript{18}

The most important history of Canadian television to date is Paul Rutherford’s \textit{When Television Was Young}. Rutherford, a University of Toronto historian, discusses the creation of a national television service, the art of television, and the impact television had on life in Canada. Rutherford’s book is more comprehensive than those done by previous television historians because he examines what the arrival of television meant for Canadians and their way of life using historical evidence in place of broad generalizations and nostalgic memories.

While the amount of material covered in \textit{When Television Was Young} is remarkable, a number of topics crucial to Saskatchewan’s television situation are omitted. Rutherford notes several times that certain aspects of television’s arrival were different in western Canada than the rest of the country but does not further elaborate on those differences and why they existed because his focus is primarily national.\textsuperscript{19} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16}Mary Jane Miller, \textit{Turn Up the Contrast: CBC Television Drama Since 1952} (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 386-7.
\item \textsuperscript{17}The only reference guide to Canadian television programs is Peter Kenter, \textit{TV North: Everything You Wanted to Know About Canadian Television} (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2001).
\item \textsuperscript{18}Mary Jane Miller, \textit{Rewind and Search: Conversations with the Makers and Decision-Makers of CBC Television Drama} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).
\item \textsuperscript{19}For instance, Rutherford notes that in 1958 only 49\% of households on the prairies had television sets compared to 81\% of Ontario households and 79\% of Quebec households but he does not venture an explanation as to why this region was so far behind central Canada. Rutherford, 50. Rutherford also notes
\end{itemize}
addition, Rutherford studies only primetime programming because “by 1960, primetime viewing had become the single most common cultural experience of Canadians.” By focussing only on primetime, Rutherford excludes any discussion of daytime programming which often included the only local programming broadcast on any given day. To be fair, Rutherford’s focus is on television programs broadcast nationally so a discussion of local programming would be out of place. Local programming is important when looking at television on the prairies, though, because the bulk of Canadian programming was created in Toronto to compete for the viewing attention of a southern Ontario audience against three American networks. These local shows were often the only representation the prairies had on television.

Rutherford also examines the schedules of a select few stations to make his observations about television programming in Canada. These stations are the CBC flagship stations in Toronto and Montreal, the CTV outlet in Toronto, and the three American networks (CBS, NBC, and ABC). His work and conclusions in this regard apply primarily to southern Ontario and Quebec as none of these stations were available in Saskatchewan. In 1968, a year after Rutherford ends his study, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island were the only two provinces that still did not have a CBC-owned and operated television station that would be the equivalent of the CBC stations analyzed by Rutherford. Rutherford justifies his focus on the CBC by explaining that the CBC was the only body consistently making Canadian television programs that were

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20 Primetime is from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. *Ibid.*, 8.
21 Saskatchewan stations received CBC network service not the full schedule of programs that CBC-owned and operated stations would broadcast.
22 Stewart and Hull, 314-5.
broadcast from coast to coast. While the CBC certainly was the only network to
perform this task, Rutherford neglects to discuss the role that private stations played in
allowing the CBC to broadcast across Canada. Though Rutherford contends that CBC
service was "in some places the only service available" in the 1950s and 1960s, the only
service available was more often than not a private station broadcasting CBC programs
than a CBC-owned and operated station. Rutherford seems to have forgotten that the
CBC's private affiliates existed in between the worlds of the CBC and CTV because
they offered some of the CBC's service, some American programming, and some of
their own programming. As a result, viewers in Saskatchewan faced different choices
than viewers elsewhere in Canada. Rutherford acknowledges that the television
situation in Canada did vary from region to region but because of his decision to
concentrate on the national level, he merely comments that the situation was different in
some places without pursuing the differences further.

The only work done on television in Saskatchewan to date is a 1986 Master's
thesis by William Wells titled "Saskatchewan Government Cable Television Policy." This
thesis is a historical review of the introduction and evolution of cable television in
Saskatchewan from 1971 to 1982. Wells does include some information on television,
particularly cable television, in the province prior to 1970 but mostly describes the
national scene in these early years. In his thesis, Wells concentrates on broadcasting
policies and the jurisdictional wrangling between the federal government, provincial
government, and CRTC over cable television licences in Saskatchewan. Basically,

\[23\] Rutherford, 8.
Wells’s thesis is a provincial version of the broadcasting policy histories done at the national level.\textsuperscript{24}

No work has been done on the early history of television in Saskatchewan despite Saskatchewan’s unique situation among the provinces. Histories of television in Canada focus on the national level, not the regional or provincial level. Though many of these histories acknowledge that television’s introduction and form depended on where one lived in Canada, they seldom look at these differences in closer detail.\textsuperscript{25}

The television experience in Saskatchewan was different from other parts of Canada for a number of reasons. First, the prairies was the only region of Canada, apart from the north, that could not receive American television signals directly because it was too far away from major American centres. The schedules of the three American networks (CBS, NBC, ABC) were one of the most important influences on the CBC’s television schedule because the CBC tried to counter-program to them in order to maintain an audience.\textsuperscript{26} These American networks, however, were non-existent on the prairies so the CBC was counter-programming to nothing in this region. For instance, when the CBC scheduled cultural programming such as ballets, operas or concerts to provide an alternative to a hit American sitcom, people on the prairies had only the cultural programming without the alternative of the American program. This situation caused some resentment on the prairies as most places could receive only one channel.

\textsuperscript{24} Wells admits that he was involved in cable television in this era in Saskatchewan so like the other broadcasting policy historians, he is writing about events in which he was involved. William Wells, “Saskatchewan Government Cable Television Policy. 1971-1982” (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Regina, 1986).
\textsuperscript{25} Quebec is the obvious exception here. There is a rich historiography detailing French television in Quebec which differs greatly from the situation in English Canada. Richard Collins, \textit{Culture, Communication, and National Identity: The Case of Canadian Television} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 201-4; Miller, \textit{Turn Up the Contrast}, 4.
\textsuperscript{26} Miller writes that there were two major influences on CBC television schedules: American network television schedules and NHL hockey playoffs. Miller, \textit{Rewind and Search}, 331.
By the early 1960s, this circumstance no longer existed in Manitoba as a giant television transmitter placed in Pembina, North Dakota, started to send television signals directly into Winnipeg. Saskatchewan and Alberta did not have access to American stations until well into the 1970s. Television in Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s was a true era of “broad”casting when viewers in a region of the province either all watched the same program or nothing at all.

Secondly, the first television stations erected in Saskatchewan and Alberta were privately owned and operated affiliates of the CBC. This detail immediately presents a problem when one reads histories of Canadian television because the authors focus on either the public or the private broadcasters. In Saskatchewan and Alberta, the local stations were a mix of both. Thirdly, television development in Saskatchewan occurred at a much slower rate than in neighbouring Alberta and Manitoba. For instance, Saskatchewan was the second to last province to receive a CBC-owned and operated television station. By 1968, Alberta had two CBC-owned and operated television stations with seven CBC rebroadcasting stations. Manitoba also had two CBC-owned and operated stations with five CBC rebroadcasting stations. In contrast, Saskatchewan had zero CBC-owned and operated television stations and zero CBC rebroadcasting

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27 Rutherford, 106; Peers, 225.
28 Obviously, as television transmission towers became more powerful during the 1950s and 1960s, some of the signals began to overlap allowing viewers to have a choice between two stations in these places. The most notable area where this occurred was Regina and Moose Jaw. Nevertheless, only one station was located in each centre throughout this era. Rutherford argues that the change from broadcasting to narrowcasting is a key difference between television before and after 1970. After 1970, Canadians could watch a variety of different programs and specialty channels designed to attract only a sector of the television audience. If this change is relevant for Canada as a whole, even though some parts of Canada always had the ability to choose from more than one station, then it should be particularly relevant to Saskatchewan where true one channel broadcasting existed until the 1970s. Rutherford, 482.
29 Manitoba’s first television station, CBWT Winnipeg, was owned and operated by the CBC and carried the full CBC service.
stations. Finally, the CBC did not originate any dramatic programming from Saskatchewan until the mid 1980s and original dramatic programming was always too expensive for local private stations to undertake successfully.

The overall approach taken in this study of Saskatchewan television is borrowed from Paul Rutherford's *When Television Was Young*. In his book, Rutherford examines the history of television in Canada from three perspectives. First, he outlines the development of the national television system in the 1950s and 1960s from the perspective of the stations and networks involved in setting up the system. In the second part, he analyzes the different types of television programs available to Canadian viewers and how the audience responded to these programs. Finally, in the third section, he discusses television’s impact on Canadian society.

Rutherford uses a traditional historical approach in his analyses of archival sources. He also employs ratings in his discussion of viewing preferences. While many media theorists suggest that ratings should be avoided because of their methodology and underlying assumptions, Rutherford recognizes that, used properly, ratings can provide a valuable picture of the historic television audience. The one topic covered extensively by Rutherford that is not discussed in this thesis is program analysis. While it would have been interesting to analyze television programs from Saskatchewan, the available sources simply did not permit the same type of analysis undertaken in Rutherford’s

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30 Stewart and Hull, 314-5.
31 Miller, *Turn Up the Contrast*, 326.
32 This format is not dissimilar to a cultural studies approach which emphasizes examining popular culture artefacts through a number of different perspectives in order to fully understand the significance of the artefact. This thesis, though, places greater emphasis on historical context than some scholars of cultural studies might. Paul duGay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 3.
book. In all other respects, this project follows the general format and methodology used by Rutherford.

The first chapter outlines the development of the television system in Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s. The focus is on the years 1954 to 1969 because they bookend a unique period of television history in Saskatchewan when only one television station per area existed and all were privately owned and operated. The first television station opened in Regina in July 1954 followed by one station in Saskatoon, Swift Current, Prince Albert, Yorkton, and Moose Jaw in that order. This chapter demonstrates that the television system in Saskatchewan developed more slowly than in most other parts of Canada. The slower pace of television’s expansion encouraged the growth of resentment in the province towards the CBC, the broadcasting regulators, and the federal government, all of which, it was believed, acted in the best interests of central Canada and not Saskatchewan.

The next chapter concentrates on the programs available to Saskatchewan viewers and examines, to the extent that the evidence will allow, which ones were the most popular and why. In Saskatchewan, the 1950s and 1960s were the era of the captive audience in which viewers could watch only their local channel because no other options were available. This era never existed in southern Ontario, British Columbia, or Quebec where American television signals could be directly received as early as 1948 and “second stations” were opened as early as 1961. This chapter argues that because the people of Saskatchewan were trapped in a one-channel area, their local television stations made an extra effort to present a well-balanced program schedule and actually

33 A television station was also opened in Lloydminster but because this station is usually counted as an Alberta station, it is not included in this study.
broadcast most of the best programs of the time. Because most areas of the province had only one channel, the majority of people, whether they were male or female or lived on the farm or in the city, watched the same programs. The only notable difference was between children and adults who watched distinct programs because the networks provided programming specifically for children. In Saskatchewan, television was truly mass entertainment as everyone had no choice but to watch the same programs.

The last major chapter explores the impact television had on life in Saskatchewan. Television viewing took place in the privacy of the home and meant that one could find an evening’s entertainment without ever leaving the comfort of one’s living room. Other leisure activities soon discovered that television affected their place in daily life. Radio had to change its format in order to maintain an audience, newspapers changed how they presented the news, and attendance at movie theatres and sporting events dropped. This chapter also argues that television played a role in some of the changes taking place in Saskatchewan society at the time including urbanization, the growth of western alienation, and the homogenization of the province’s culture and identity. Saskatchewan was not a blank slate when television arrived but a province in the throes of a transition from a pioneer economy and primarily rural way of life to a modern economy and largely urban population. This thesis discusses television’s arrival and early years in the province in an effort to understand how the medium fit into a changing way of life in Saskatchewan.

Because no secondary material has been written about the early history of television in Saskatchewan, it was necessary to use a variety of primary sources to uncover the basic chain of events that brought television to Saskatchewan. One of the
most useful sources in this regard was the local newspapers which carried hundreds of stories about television in Saskatchewan. One problem, however, with Regina and Saskatoon's daily newspapers was that both newspapers at this time were owned by the same company that owned Regina's television station. The editorialists in these newspapers had a vested interest in the broadcasting system and many of their comments had to be read warily as they did not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Saskatchewan general public. In addition, Yorkton and Swift Current did not have a daily newspaper at this time which made finding information on these two stations difficult. The amount of space given to the Yorkton and Swift Current stations in this thesis reflects this problem.

Other key sources in building the story of television in the province were collections held at the National Archives in Ottawa including the records of the CBC, Clifford and Winfield Burrows Sifton, the CAB, the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, and the Advisory Committee on Broadcasting. The Royal Commission records were particularly useful for uncovering the opinions of Saskatchewan people about the broadcasting system since they included submissions from a variety of Saskatchewan people and organizations. The Clifford Sifton and CAB records at the National Archives provided valuable insight into the private stations' situation in the province. Another useful source was the published House of Commons Debates which provided a window into some of the television issues that were important to the people of Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, politicians often had the facts of the situation confused. Many assertions made in the House of Commons had to be double-checked against another source. Finally, an interview conducted with Alex and Pearl Balych,
who worked for CKBI-TV Prince Albert in North Battleford, shed some much needed light on the situation in areas that depended on satellite stations for television service.

One of the more difficult aspects of this project was uncovering the habits and preferences of the viewing audience. The two most valuable sources in this endeavour were a set of Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) ratings books held in the University of Saskatchewan Library and the surprise find of hundreds of letters from Saskatchewan people to the CBC printed each week in the Prairie Edition of the *CBC Times*. While the ratings and letters do not create a complete picture of the Saskatchewan television audience, they do provide a window into Saskatchewan television habits in the 1950s and 1960s. One might argue that analysis of television programs is a necessary component of a comprehensive understanding of viewer behaviour. Unfortunately, this type of analysis is not possible for Saskatchewan television. Local stations in Saskatchewan did produce some programming such as local news, children’s programs, and talk shows. Ideally, one would critically view such programming to see how it differed from or was similar to the nationally produced programs of the same genre offered in the province. Sadly, most local programming was only broadcast live and never filmed because filming was too expensive. The Saskatchewan Archives Board does have a substantial collection of film from CFQC-TV Saskatoon; however, most of the broadcasts have no sound and present only brief clips of news items, commercials, and local shows, not entire programs.

Understanding the overall impact of television in the province was also a difficult task. Again, the local newspapers were particularly useful as they published numerous articles describing changes that were occurring in other leisure activities. The
Annual Reports of the Saskatchewan Department of Labour provided a great deal of information about movie theatres in the province and the Annual Reports of the Saskatchewan Provincial Library, the Regina Public Library, and the Saskatoon Public Library conveyed countless statistics and facts about library usage at this time. Finally, reports from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, including the 1961 and 1971 census reports, presented a wealth of information about the standard of living in all parts of the province during this era. What none of these sources provide, unfortunately, is a sense of the day-to-day changes that took place as a result of owning a television set. While these sources show what happened in aggregate, they do not provide the researcher with personal stories or comments about how television changed activities such as meal consumption, home architecture, or socializing.

Television’s arrival in Saskatchewan was more than just a new leisure activity or electronic gadget. Television, like other forms of mass communication, changed ideas about time and space in the province. After radio and television’s arrival, the distances between communities seemed to shrink as these two media were increasingly able to present information both instantaneously and simultaneously to people around the world. Viewers in Halifax, Toronto, and Regina could all watch the same hockey game on a Saturday night in January as if they were all at the arena. People across Canada and the United States could watch the same episodes of their favourite dramas like I Love Lucy or Dragnet. Mass communications scholar David Hall notes, “as the mass media become a more powerful social force, geographic and social distance become less
salient, and the end results are tendencies towards unity, centralization, and integration.”

Rutherford suggests that television did not cause a revolutionary change in Canada but rather led to an “adjustment” in a way of life. Saskatchewan’s adjustment to television was not an easy one. It was fraught with anger, frustration, confusion, and complications. But after watching Grey Cup finals, The Ed Sullivan Show, election results, Don Messer’s Jubilee, and even the moon landing, most people in Saskatchewan would not have traded the experience for anything.

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35 Rutherford, 6.
CHAPTER ONE

TELEVISION’S WILDERNESS

Ralph Bosomworth, a Regina radio dealer, purchased a television set in 1952 to see if he could modify it for use in Saskatchewan. He put an aerial on top of the hotel next to his shop and placed the set in the repair department of his store. The next day, he was able to receive signals from television stations as far away as Dallas, Minneapolis, and Oklahoma City. The news quickly spread through Regina that the first working television set in the city was in Bosomworth’s radio shop and many curious people began to visit his store to see the new medium. Bosomworth soon complained, “the repair department was so full of people we couldn’t do any work.”¹ The people of Saskatchewan were definitely interested in television but it would be many years and many battles before they would receive the same level of television service that other Canadians had enjoyed since the early 1950s.

By the time television arrived in Saskatchewan in 1954, it was not a new phenomenon in most parts of North America. The first experimental television sets were constructed in the late 1920s and by the end of the 1930s both Great Britain and the United States had limited television service. In 1939, the industry’s development was suspended by the arrival of World War II when both materials and manpower were directed to the war effort. Once the war ended, some of the factories that had been focussed on building war materials shifted their production lines to build television sets. With more television sets available and the arrival of better economic times, television

¹ “Believed first Reginan brings in TV show,” Regina Leader-Post, 15 July 1952.
began to spread quickly across the United States as broadcasting stations and networks were set up and thousands of Americans began to purchase their first television sets.²

Though television spread like wildfire across the United States in the late 1940s, its arrival and early growth in Canada was a much slower and deliberate process. This slow growth did not mean that television was not present in Canada prior to 1952. Many viewers in southern Ontario and Vancouver could pick up signals from American stations near the international border. Canadian television stations, however, were not immediately forthcoming after the war.

The experience of radio’s early years slowed the arrival of television in Canada. When Canadian radio was in its infancy, it was dominated by privately-owned stations which primarily broadcast American radio programs along with large amounts of commercial advertising. Some Canadians worried this heavy importation of American programs was causing the slow Americanization of Canada so the federal government decided to create the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1936 to counter this trend. The CBC was a publicly owned corporation that was autonomous from the government. It had its own stations along with privately-owned affiliates that broadcast the CBC’s programs. With television on the horizon, the Canadian government vowed that it would not let private interests set up broadcasting stations until the government had a chance to create a consistent policy for the new medium that would protect it from the type of Americanization that had characterized early radio broadcasting in Canada.³

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In 1949, the federal government's interim policy on broadcasting allowed the CBC to set up only two television production and broadcasting centres in Canada: one in Toronto and the other in Montreal. With the successful launch of these two stations in September 1952, Canadians outside of Toronto and Montreal started to push the government and the CBC Board of Governors to authorize television stations in the rest of Canada. In response to this demand, the federal government promised CBC television stations for Halifax, Winnipeg, and Vancouver in November 1952. Unlike Canadians in southern Ontario or Vancouver, people in Saskatchewan could not receive consistent television signals from the United States because no major American cities, with their high-powered transmitting towers, were located close enough to Saskatchewan to broadcast a signal into the province. As a result, Saskatchewan viewers would need television stations located in the province to receive decent television service.

The first reported television signal reception in the province occurred June 19, 1952 in Wilcox, Saskatchewan about forty kilometres south of Regina. Jack Chadwick, a local radio dealer, purchased a television set in order to acquaint his customers with the new gadget in the hope of selling a few sets once broadcasting began in the area. Chadwick installed the set in his garage and, surprisingly, received broadcasts from the United States for a few hours each morning until the signal faded out. As word spread

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4 A CBC station for Ottawa had been approved earlier. Peers, 17. 36-7.
5 There are unconfirmed reports that an experimental television station was located in Saskatoon in 1932. Knowlton Nash, The Swashbucklers: The Story of Canada's Battling Broadcasters (Toronto: M&S, 2001), 150.
of the reception, increasing numbers of people began to visit Chadwick’s garage for a view of the phenomenon.6

Despite these first instances of television viewing, Saskatchewan had no local television service and it seemed to some that television broadcasting in the province was still many years away. Numerous editorials appeared in the daily newspapers of Saskatchewan in 1952 criticizing the government for making all Canadians pay for a service that only a small number would actually receive. An editorial in the Moose Jaw Times-Herald complained, “with TV in the West a good many years away, the people out here are not enthusiastic about their taxes being used to give free TV to a restricted area of Canada.”7

Saskatchewan’s lack of television service was also discussed in the House of Commons. One of the first MPs to raise the issue was future prime minister John Diefenbaker. In 1953, Diefenbaker asked the minister responsible for the CBC, the Hon. J.J. McCann, what plans the government had for television in Saskatchewan. McCann replied that the government hoped Saskatchewan would be supplied with programs from either Alberta or Manitoba. If not, the government would have to give consideration to a CBC transmitter in the province. Another MP quickly asked if this meant Saskatchewan was to be “a no-man’s land” for television to which McCann replied, “Saskatchewan has never been neglected as far as this government is concerned.” Diefenbaker was not happy with this response and declared, “In Saskatchewan we find that we are to be the forgotten province. There is nothing for us.”8

6 “T.V. Comes to Wilcox,” Regina Leader-Post, 21 June 1952. This kind of long-distance television signal reception was not strong or consistent and often required a large antenna in order to receive it.
The federal government soon realized it could not afford to build a CBC-TV station in each province so, in March 1953, it began to approve privately-owned television stations in areas that the six CBC-TV stations could not reach. These private stations were required to affiliate with the CBC which meant they had to carry a portion of the CBC’s national program service. In contrast, the six CBC-owned and operated stations broadcast the CBC’s full program service and had the opportunity to create programs for broadcast on the national network. Each area of Canada would be served by only one television station, either a CBC-owned and operated station or a privately-owned CBC affiliate. By allowing only one television station in each centre, the government hoped this ‘single station’ policy would force the extension of television service more quickly to areas like Saskatchewan which were not as attractive to the private broadcasters because of their small populations.9

Under the single station policy, the television situation in the province rapidly caught up with the rest of Canada. Interested parties started to put together applications for television stations in Saskatchewan’s two largest urban centres. One of the first people to express an interest in operating a television station was Clifford Sifton, one of the sons of Sir Clifford Sifton, a former Minister of the Interior in the Laurier government. Sifton owned numerous media outlets across Canada including Regina’s daily newspaper (*Leader-Post*), Saskatoon’s daily newspaper (*Star Phoenix*), and CKCK radio in Regina.

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Early in 1953, Sifton began to gather information about some of the technical aspects of television broadcasting in order to submit applications for television stations in Regina and Saskatoon. For the Regina application, Sifton initially turned to the other radio broadcasters in Regina (CKRM) and Moose Jaw (CHAB) to see if they would be interested in submitting a joint application for a television licence but they both declined his offer.\(^{10}\) Sifton decided to go ahead with the Regina application on his own. Since CKCK was the only applicant for Regina and no one had appeared at the public hearing to oppose its bid, the CBC Board of Governors approved the application on June 1, 1953.\(^{11}\)

Sifton also applied for a station in Saskatoon. As he had done in Regina, Sifton initially talked to other media outlets in Saskatoon to see if they would be interested in applying for a television station jointly with the Star Phoenix. Neither of Saskatoon’s radio stations (CKOM and CFQC) were interested in submitting such an application.\(^{12}\)

Both CFQC radio and the Star Phoenix submitted applications for a television station in Saskatoon but only the Star Phoenix’s application was approved by the Department of Transport and proceeded to a public hearing. At the public hearing on May 28, 1953, representatives of the Star Phoenix told the CBC Board of Governors that people in Saskatoon were anxious to have television service as quickly as possible. J.P. Tripp, a member of the CBC Board of Governors, concurred with the StarPhoenix’s portrayal of the situation saying, “I know that on the Prairies it is going to be difficult to cover the Prairies, to give them service, but I know the people out there are quite

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\(^{11}\) “Approve TV For Regina,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1 June 1953.

anxious to get the service and they will put up with almost anything to get it.” A.A. Murphy, the owner of CFQC, also appeared at the public hearing to ask that the Board defer granting a television license for Saskatoon until its next meeting. Murphy informed the Board that he had completed a new application in which the previous technical problems were fixed and he had simply been unable to submit this new application before the original deadline.\footnote{NAC, T.J. Allard Papers – Canadian Association of Broadcasters, MG 30, series D304, v. 22, file 4, Transcript of CBC Board of Governors Public Hearing, 28-29 May 1953.} As CFQC’s application was basically complete, the CBC Board of Governors decided to defer granting an application for Saskatoon.

By the time the next public hearing for the Saskatoon television license was held in September 1953, there were three applicants: Clifford Sifton representing the \textit{Star Phoenix}, A.A. Murphy representing Saskatoon radio station CFQC, and R.A. Hosie representing Saskatoon radio station CKOM. The CBC Board of Governors decided to recommend CFQC’s application for approval. The Board decided not to grant the station to the \textit{Star Phoenix} because the Siftons already owned a television station in Regina and had a share in another television station in Hamilton, Ontario. The Board also felt that Murphy’s application had been generally more satisfactory than Hosie’s.\footnote{“Saskatoon gets TV channel,” Regina \textit{Leader-Post}, 28 September 1953.}

CKCK-TV Regina had a six-month head start over CFQC-TV Saskatoon so it was the first station ready to broadcast in the province. The station’s premiere broadcast was tentatively set for July 1954 to coincide with Regina’s Provincial Exhibition. One of the main attractions of the 1954 Provincial Exhibition was the Exposition of Electrical Living featuring “the great debut and demonstration of Television.” The entire east wing of the Grain Show building was set aside for over thirty television exhibitors.
Monday through Saturday of Exhibition week, CKCK-TV intended to televise seven hours of programs daily from 4:00 to 11:00 pm. CKCK-TV planned to start broadcasting a test pattern on Sunday so viewers could adjust their sets before the first broadcast on Monday.\textsuperscript{15}

Mother Nature had other plans for television's arrival in the province. High, gusty winds and rain in the week leading up to television's scheduled debut in Regina meant that workers could not complete the transmitter tower in time for the start of the Exhibition. The first test patterns from CKCK-TV were finally broadcast at 5 a.m. on Tuesday morning, two days behind schedule. At 3:30 p.m. the same day, the first television program was broadcast in Saskatchewan, a fifteen-minute film entitled "Living and Doing." After the film, the station went back to the test pattern. CKCK-TV officially began broadcasting at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 28, 1954 and was the first operational privately-owned station in western Canada. Once the station began broadcasting regularly, thousands of fairgoers jammed the aisles in the Grain Show building to see the television sets.\textsuperscript{16}

CKCK-TV continued to broadcast during the month of August and had its grand opening on September 8, 1954 when the studios were completed.\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Leader-Post} published a twenty-four-page special section on that day to mark the occasion. This section contained articles outlining the staff of the station, the science behind television


\textsuperscript{17} CKCK-TV’s transmitter and studios were located three miles east of Regina. The transmitter broadcast at an effective radiated power of 19,000 watts video and 10,000 watts audio on channel 2. “Television audience increasing since fair,” Regina \textit{Leader-Post}, Television Supplement, 8 September 1954.
broadcasting, how to use the test pattern, advice on where to place the television in the room, advertisements for popular programs and for television set dealers, commonly asked questions about television, and how to care for a television set.

The average television viewer in southern Saskatchewan had to be within about sixty-five kilometres of CKCK-TV’s transmitter to receive a consistent signal. Picking up the television signal in this area meant the installation of an outdoor aerial. In areas closer to the transmitter, indoor antennas or “rabbit ears” were often enough for a good signal. Communities such as Weyburn, Melville, Raymore, Davidson, and Assiniboia were outside of CKCK-TV’s primary reception area. These places could receive a satisfactory picture with a high gain outdoor antenna; however, their reception was affected by the terrain, the height of their receiving antenna, the type of antenna installed, sunspots, and the weather. In some places, reception changed quickly while in others it could be stable for months at a time.18

Because the approval for CFQC-TV Saskatoon came six months after CKCK-TV Regina, its construction and debut followed CKCK-TV by the same amount of time. CFQC-TV aired test patterns with background FM music for several weeks prior to their first broadcast to give television set retailers something to show customers in their showrooms. The strategy must have worked because, by November 1954, it was estimated that there were already 3,000 television sets installed in CFQC-TV’s broadcasting area. According to Walter (Spike) Romanow, the first station manager of

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18 NAC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] Papers, RG 41, A-IV-2-c, v. 473, TV Coverage Map, T-1102; Foster, 188.
CFQC-TV, so many people were watching the test pattern that “it reached a point where the dealers wanted to buy commercial time within the test patterns.”

The debut of television in Saskatoon on Sunday, December 5, 1954 went no better than it had in Regina in July. When the station discontinued the test pattern the night before its debut, CFQC-TV’s engineers discovered that a coaxial cable on the video transmitter had burned out so the station would be unable to broadcast a picture the next day. The engineers were forced to work most of the night and the next morning to replace the faulty cable and the station was able to broadcast again only ten minutes before its scheduled premiere broadcast.

The first program the station planned to broadcast was the 1954 Grey Cup final which had been played just the day before. The film of the game was scheduled to arrive by a special air force plane a few hours after the game had ended. Unfortunately, the delivery was delayed because Saskatoon’s airport was fogged in, scaring CFQC-TV that it might have to face the wrath of angry football fans if the fog did not lift. Thankfully, the fog broke and the kinescope of the game arrived early Sunday morning. With the film of the game in hand and the cable problem fixed a mere ten minutes before they were scheduled to go on the air at 12:52, the staff of CFQC-TV thought they had the situation under control again. Sadly, about ten minutes into the Grey Cup telecast, technical difficulties with the audio developed and the problem was not fixed until 6:10

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19 CFQC-TV’s transmitter was located fourteen miles northeast of the city while its studios were located in downtown Saskatoon. The transmitter broadcast at an effective radiated power of 100,000 watts video and 60,000 watts audio on channel 8. “Nelson Appointed Manager of Saskatoon TV Station,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Television Supplement, 6 December 1954; “Test patterns signalled new era,” Saskatoon Sun, 27 November 1994; “TV Starts Here Sunday,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1 December 1954; “CFQC Brings Television to North Sask.” Prince Albert Daily-Herald, 4 December 1954; Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Television supplement, 6 December 1954, 11; NAC, Royal Commission on Broadcasting – Submissions, RG 33, series 36, v. 24, no. 7, “C.B.C. Radio & TV Ownership & Coverage.”
that evening. The people of Saskatoon had to watch their first Grey Cup game on television without sound.\textsuperscript{20}

The \textit{Star Phoenix} ran a special supplement on television in the December 6, 1954 edition of the paper. Interestingly, the regular edition of the \textit{Star Phoenix} that day was only twenty-four pages long while the television supplement was thirty-six pages. When CFQC-TV opened, it was the third most powerful television station in Canada. Even with this power, the farthest points that could receive a consistent signal from CFQC-TV were Leask and St. Louis to the north, Middle Lake and Plunkett to the west, Outlook and Kenaston to the south, and Maymont and Harris to the east.\textsuperscript{21}

By January 1955, both Saskatoon and Regina had television service. It did not take long for other areas in the province to begin campaigning for similar service but they soon realized it would be difficult to persuade either the CBC or private companies to spend so much money on television stations in areas with relatively small populations. Some centres decided to take matters into their own hands. The people of Prince Albert could get only poor reception of the Saskatoon station so a group of Prince Albert and Saskatoon financiers raised money to install a cable television system for the city.\textsuperscript{22} A 130-foot steel tower was built on Prince Albert’s South Hill and Saskatchewan Government Telephones strung more than fifteen miles of coaxial cable in the city. The

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\textsuperscript{22} Cable television or Community Antenna Television (CATV), as it was known at the time, was originally designed in the late 1940s to overcome the problem of long distance television reception. A large antenna tower was built in a high location where the signal could be received. Electronic boosters and coaxial cable were then used to connect this large antenna to television receivers in the area. By selling this service to subscribers, the large cost of the electronic equipment and cables could be met. Foster, 148-9.
\end{flushright}
system was completed in December 1955 and was the first of its kind to be built on the Canadian prairies.\textsuperscript{23}

In 1955, the federal government appointed a Royal Commission on Broadcasting (Fowler Commission) to investigate Canada's radio and television systems.\textsuperscript{24} The Commission held hearings in twelve cities across Canada and received briefs from various groups and individuals expressing their opinions on the broadcasting system. Of the 276 formal briefs made to the Commission, twenty-two were submitted by groups from Saskatchewan. The Commission also held two public hearings in the province: one in Regina on May 11, 1956 and the other in Saskatoon on May 24, 1956. Besides the formal briefs, a number of community organizations and individuals also sent letters to the Commission.

Though these briefs and submissions cannot be seen as representative of the opinions of all the people of Saskatchewan, a number of common themes recur throughout. All but a few groups from Saskatchewan felt it was important for the CBC to remain in control of broadcasting in Canada. For instance, the Saskatchewan Farmers’ Union argued, “The control of these vital mediums of communication is too important to be left to anyone other than the people of Canada through their elected representatives in Parliament, and certainly should not be entrusted to mechanics of commerce and gamblers in business.”\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} This Commission was created because of a recommendation made by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences that the subject of television broadcasting in Canada should be investigated no later than three years after television's arrival in Canada. Peers, 55-91: Raboy, 117-130.
\textsuperscript{25} NAC. Royal Commission on Broadcasting – Submissions, RG 33, series 36. v. 32, no. 91. “Saskatchewan Farmers Union.”
Implicit and explicit in many of the comments supporting the CBC was the idea that the private stations showed programs of inferior quality and questionable morality. For example, in his letter to the Commission, Murray Acker of Regina noted, "without the impact of the CBC, recognizing its failings and lapses in the quality of programs, radio and TV in Canada would deteriorate to a level of shoddy, mediocre, and highly-commercialized presentations."\(^{26}\)

Despite such criticism, the local private stations were generally portrayed in a positive light to the Fowler Commission. Many organizations commended the community service work undertaken by the local television stations such as announcing school closures, presenting public service announcements with little or no fee, promoting community events, and giving local talent their first chance at wider exposure. The Knights of Columbus of Regina, for example, wrote of the "generous public service policy" and "fine community spirit" of Regina's private radio and television stations.\(^{27}\)

Judging by the briefs, letters, and presentations submitted to the Commission, the people of Saskatchewan who had television service were happy with the system as it stood. They wanted the CBC to retain its powers in order to maintain high broadcasting standards but also admitted that the private stations were doing a fine service within the community. These attitudes would seem to be contradictory but what these groups were collectively pointing out to the Fowler Commission was that the existing hybrid system of public and private broadcasting was working well within the province. Several


groups commented that while it was important that the CBC set national standards and create high calibre programming to broadcast across the country, it was also important that the local private stations remain in place to report on local events and give local talent an opportunity to perform. The Regina Library Association wrote, “the CBC, with its nation-wide hook-up, can prove a very unifying and cultural force on the national and international level. There remains plenty of scope for privately-owned stations, handling a variety of programs of local interest.”

Once the Royal Commission had reported, the government lifted its freeze on new television station applications. Several groups from Saskatchewan applied immediately for licenses for television stations, demonstrating the demand for television service outside of the Regina and Saskatoon areas. On June 27, 1957, Swift Current and Prince Albert became the next two centres in Saskatchewan to receive approval to build television stations.

William Forst of Swift Current made the application for the Swift Current station. At the time of the application, the CBC Board of Governors expressed some concern about the whether the station would be financially viable given the small population of the region but the Board decided to grant the application because they believed there was evidence of strong local support for the station. CJFB-TV Swift Current officially went on the air on December 23, 1957 but its signal was consistent

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29 CJFB-TV’s studios and transmitter were located about two miles north of Swift Current. The transmitter broadcast at an effective radiated power of only 9,000 watts video and 4,500 watts audio on channel 5. In comparison, the Saskatoon station operated at 100,000 watts video and 60,000 watts audio.
only about sixty kilometres away from the transmitter. Places such as Shaunavon, Maple Creek, Eston, and Gravelbourg were beyond the best reception area.30

Television was big news in Prince Albert long before anyone was given a license to open a station there. With the opening of the station in Saskatoon, television antennas sprang up all over Prince Albert causing one editorial in the Prince Albert Daily-Herald to note the growth of a “New Forest” that had nothing to do with pulpwood.31 It was not long, however, after the Saskatoon station went on the air that people in Prince Albert realized their reception was lousy. While the cable system in Prince Albert was able to fill the television void for a few years, people in the city still longed for free television reception. Their wish was granted when CKBI radio received approval for a television license for Prince Albert. CKBI-TV began broadcasting on January 27, 1958 and the station’s best signal reached about seventy kilometres outside of Prince Albert. Communities such as Montreal Lake, Nipawin, Melfort, Tisdale, Waldheim, and Spiritwood were too far away to receive clear and consistent reception of the station.32

Not long after CJFB-TV Swift Current and CKBI-TV Prince Albert received their broadcasting licenses, the Yorkton Television Company applied for and received a

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32 CKBI-TV’s transmitter was ten miles south of Prince Albert at Red Deer Hill while the studios were built in downtown Prince Albert. The transmitter had an effective radiated power of 61,000 watts video and 36,500 watts audio on channel 5. “Sask. centres may have TV,” Regina Leader-Post, 27 June 1957; “Work Continues on TV station,” Prince Albert Daily-Herald, 7 December 1957; “Complicated Operation Involved In TV Station,” Prince Albert Daily-Herald, 24 January 1958; NAC, Committee on Broadcasting Papers, RG 36, series 23, v. 4, “CBC Maps Radio-Television Coverage,” T-2156, March 1964.
license for a television station in Yorkton. When CKOS-TV went on the air on June 19, 1958, it was the first television station in Canada to broadcast a live program on its first day. CKOS-TV could broadcast clearly about fifty-five kilometres away from the transmitter. Communities such as Kamsack, Esterhazy, Grenfell, Fort Qu'Appelle, Foam Lake and Preeceville were outside the best reception area of the station.

The last centre to apply for and receive a license for a television station in this era of television expansion in Saskatchewan was Moose Jaw. Despite receiving a fairly good signal from Regina, a demand still existed in Moose Jaw for a local station with a stronger signal. Moose Jaw radio station CHAB received approval to establish a television station in the city in December 1957. Because Moose Jaw and Regina were so close to one another, viewers in Regina with outdoor antennas would be able to receive CHAB-TV just as viewers in Moose Jaw could receive CKCK-TV Regina.

After several delays caused by ownership problems, the opening of CHAB-TV suffered another major setback when a boom used to lift one of the antenna sections broke loose and fell to the ground smashing part of the transmitter house and nearly cutting one of the guy wires holding up the tower. Perhaps it was not a coincidence that CHAB-TV was the thirteenth television station to open on the prairies. CHAB-TV

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33 CKOS-TV's transmitter was twelve miles west of Yorkton near Fonehill while the studios were located in downtown Yorkton. "Decision in Sept. on TV," Regina Leader-Post, 3 July 1957; "Permit awaited for TV station," Regina Leader-Post, 10 October 1957.


35 "CHAB applies for TV outlet," Regina Leader-Post, 28 October 1957; "CBC recommends TV station in Moose Jaw," Regina Leader-Post, 9 December 1957.
finally went on the air on July 7, 1959. Its primary signal reached as far west as Chaplin, as far south as Assiniboia, as far east as Pilot Butte, and as far north as Girvin.36

In 1958, the newly elected Diefenbaker government passed a new Broadcasting Act which, to the delight of the private broadcasters, replaced the CBC Board of Governors with a new independent regulatory body, the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG).37 During the 1960s, the BBG continued the extension of primary television service in Saskatchewan through the establishment of rebroadcasting or satellite stations instead of originating stations.38 Satellite stations broadcast television signals to communities that could not afford to have their own station and could not receive a consistent signal from the nearest originating station. Satellite stations were extremely important for the extension of television service in Saskatchewan since most places in the province were too sparsely populated to support their own television station. These satellite stations were placed in Saskatchewan with the sole intention of filling gaps in coverage. None of these stations brought second channel service to a community.39

The situation in North Battleford demonstrated what many of these smaller communities outside of the primary reception areas of the six stations faced in terms of quality television service. When the Saskatoon station began broadcasting in 1954,

38 A rebroadcasting or satellite station was a second transmitter for an already existing station. Andrew Stewart and William H.N. Hull, Canadian Television Policy and the Board of Broadcast Governors, 1958-1968 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1994), 172.
39 CKOS-TV Yorkton built satellite stations at Baldy Mountain (Manitoba), Carlyle Lake, and Wynyard. CKBI-TV Prince Albert built satellite stations at Alticane, North Battleford, Nipawin, Greenwater Lake, and Big River. CJFB-TV Swift Current built satellite stations at Eastend, Val Marie, Riverhurst, and Shaunavon. CFQC-TV Saskatoon built one satellite station at Stranraer. CKCK-TV Regina built satellite stations at Colgate and Willow Bunch.
many people in and around North Battleford bought television sets assuming they would receive a good picture from Saskatoon. Unfortunately, they could receive the signal from Saskatoon only by building a forty-foot antenna on their homes. Even with these giant antennas, the signal was not consistent or bright and was often affected by the weather.\footnote{Alex Balych, interview by author, 9 February 2004.} Desperately wanting better reception, people in the region began holding public meetings and setting up citizen's groups to push for improved television service.\footnote{"Seeking Better TV Reception At North Battleford." Saskatoon \textit{Star Phoenix}, 5 May 1959.} CKBI-TV Prince Albert heard the demand and applied to operate a low-power satellite station at North Battleford. This satellite station began broadcasting on February 10, 1961 and enabled people in North Battleford to use a low cost outdoor antenna to get a relatively clear picture. Unfortunately, this transmitter was so weak that when Alberta's first CBC-TV station, CBXT Edmonton, went on the air just seven months later, it interfered with and terminated the satellite station's signal. Television reception was not fixed in North Battleford until CKBI-TV built a more powerful transmitter the next year.\footnote{The original transmitter built by CKBI-TV broadcast at only five watts on channel 7. The second transmitter, built in 1962, broadcast at 250 watts. Even with this stronger transmitter, interference from CBXT Edmonton continued to be a problem until a more powerful transmitter was built in North Battleford in the 1970s. "TV Service Result of Community Effort: Maher." North Battleford \textit{News-Optimist}, 8 February 1961; "TV reception probe brings reply," North Battleford \textit{News-Optimist}, 23 August 1961; Alex Balych, interview by author, 9 February 2004; "History of Television in the Battlefords," provided by Alex Balych.}

Prior to the Broadcasting Act of 1958, all six Saskatchewan television stations had to be affiliates of the CBC. Starting in 1960, the BBG began hearing applications for second television stations in Canadian centres where they believed the market could support two stations: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. Once this second generation of private stations went on the air, it
was not long before they began to push for some type of network affiliation for themselves. The CTV television network was born from this need and began operations on October 1, 1961.43

The creation of a new network was important for television service in Saskatchewan, particularly in Regina and Moose Jaw. Both CHAB-TV Moose Jaw and CKCK-TV Regina were CBC affiliates which meant both stations carried the same basic program schedule. In August 1962, the Moose Jaw station decided to apply to affiliate with the new network hoping this change would enable it to provide an alternative service which could compete more effectively with CKCK-TV Regina. CHAB-TV also applied to put a transmitter in Regina to broadcast its signal into the city more strongly.44 The affiliation with CTV was approved and CHAB-TV began broadcasting from its new Regina transmitter under the call letters CHRE-TV on December 21, 1962.45

As improved television reception began to spread across the province, a new issue was rapidly developing that would dominate discussions about television in the province until the 1970s. Before the first television station had opened in Regina in 1954, some groups and individuals in the province believed that Saskatchewan should have a CBC-TV-owned and operated station and not private CBC affiliates. Delegates at the annual convention of the Saskatchewan CCF in 1953 said the CBC had a “discriminatory policy” which “unfairly plans to leave Saskatchewan without [a] CBC

43 Unlike the CBC, CTV did not own any television stations. Each of the member stations was owned by a different private interest. Peers, 224-39; Michael Nolan, CTV: The Network that Means Business (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), xiii-xxvi.
44 “CHAB seeking television outlet in Regina area,” Regina Leader-Post, 15 August 1962.
45 Three months later, CKCK-TV applied to place a high-power satellite station at Marquis to broadcast a stronger signal into the Moose Jaw area. The BBG approved the application and the transmitter began broadcasting on September 16, 1964 under the call letters CKMJ-TV. “Sask. television issue to be decided by BBG.” Regina Leader-Post, 29 March 1963; “Marquis TV tower ready by Sept 1.” Regina Leader-Post, 15 January 1964; “CKCK-TV spreads its signal.” Regina Leader-Post, 24 September 1964.
TV station, leaving the field open to the private stations with the consequent danger of inferior programs, excessive advertising and outright monopoly." By 1960, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, and the territories were the only places in Canada that did not have a CBC-TV station or satellite station. For the CBC, the next logical place for a station was Edmonton because it was the largest centre in the region between Winnipeg and Vancouver. In September 1961, CBXT began broadcasting from Edmonton.

The CBC fuelled interest in a CBC-TV station for the province in the summer of 1962 by indicating that it intended to apply for a new television station in Saskatchewan. The rumour at the time was that the station would be located in Saskatoon because Regina could not handle another station due to the overlap between CKCK-TV and CHAB-TV while Saskatoon had only one station, a privately-owned CBC affiliate. Not surprisingly, the city of Regina was upset about the rumour since Regina was the provincial capital and larger city. Regina’s mayor, Henry Baker, declared, “I deem this as an insult to the city of Regina and the people of Southern Saskatchewan.” In 1963, the CBC applied for and received a channel reservation for future CBC use in Saskatoon. At the same time, the federal government placed a freeze on all applications for new and alternative television services until July 1, 1964. The government then created an Advisory Committee on Broadcasting to counsel the minister about the

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46 "Privately owned TV is opposed," Regina Leader-Post, 7 November 1953.
47 British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia each had one, Manitoba and Quebec each had two and Ontario and Newfoundland had three each. Stewart and Hull, 314-5.
48 Peers, 249.
creation of new broadcasting legislation and said that approvals for all new channels would have to wait until the committee finished its report.\textsuperscript{51}

The people of Saskatchewan, particularly Saskatoon, were upset that the federal government had seemingly stalled all plans for their promised CBC station indefinitely. Spence Caldwell, the president of CTV, fanned the flames of discontent about the CBC station when he visited Saskatoon in April 1965. Caldwell argued that the CBC should make its intentions regarding Saskatoon known since it had been granted its channel reservation for Saskatoon two years earlier but had not yet taken any action to set up a station. Caldwell contended, “They shouldn’t just sit on their reservations while they build big expensive Taj Mahals in Montreal and Toronto. The CBC could move into Saskatoon and have a transmitter in operation within a few months.”\textsuperscript{52}

In September 1965, the Advisory Committee on Broadcasting, headed by Robert Fowler, released its report on the state of broadcasting in Canada.\textsuperscript{53} One of the most important topics covered in the report was the creation of new CBC television stations. The report argued, “CBC should \textit{not} receive additional licences to establish alternative television services throughout Canada.” According to the report, the CBC’s first priority should be the extension of television service to those without service or to those who did not have service in their first language (either French or English).\textsuperscript{54} The report did not comment on the CBC’s long-term goal of having one station in each province. Indeed, the report treated the prairie provinces as one district and did not discuss the differing

levels of service that existed within the region, particularly in regard to CBC-TV-owned and operated stations.

The CBC disagreed strongly with the report arguing that the next television stations to open in Saskatchewan should be CBC-owned and operated stations since Saskatchewan had only CBC affiliates. The CBC argued that the establishment of English service CBC-TV stations in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island was the “only way in which these provinces can eventually be adequately reflected on the national networks.”55

The frustration of Saskatchewan people regarding the absent CBC-TV station began to grow stronger and many groups started to openly push the federal government to lift the freeze and allow the CBC to apply for the station. Three hundred twenty-five professors from the University of Saskatchewan sent a petition to the federal government asking it to permit the CBC to establish a television station in Saskatoon. In the petition, the professors said that Saskatoon warranted the complete programming service of the CBC rather than the partial CBC service carried by CFQC-TV. They also noted that the lack of CBC-TV facilities prevented both the province and city from being adequately represented to the rest of Canada.56

The Saskatchewan Legislature also encouraged the federal government to allow the CBC to open a station in the province. Woodrow Lloyd, the CCF Leader of the Opposition, introduced a motion to the Legislature in 1966 that urged the federal government and BBG to authorize the CBC to proceed immediately with the construction of a television outlet in Saskatchewan. In his speech, Lloyd said,

56 “Professors ask CBC outlet here,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 18 February 1966.
“Saskatchewan is of the maturity and of the importance in every way to warrant a television outlet of the CBC to be located here.” Lloyd seemed to suggest that Saskatchewan’s lack of a CBC-TV outlet was a slight on the province’s relative position and worth in the country.57

Complicating matters in Saskatoon, local radio station CKOM applied in February 1966 for a license to operate a private television station in the city. CKOM planned to affiliate with CTV thereby bringing alternative television service to the city.58 To the frustration of CKOM and the people of Saskatoon, CKOM’s application was denied because the BBG believed the next television station in Saskatoon should be a CBC-TV station.

The gap between CBC-TV facilities in Saskatchewan and the rest of Canada continued to increase. By 1966, Alberta and Manitoba had two CBC-TV stations each. Besides Saskatchewan, the only other province with no CBC-owned and operated station was Prince Edward Island, which had only one television station.59

In September 1966, the government’s freeze on applications for alternative television service was lifted and the CBC publicly stated that it was going to proceed with the construction of a television station in Saskatoon as soon as possible.60 The CBC filed its formal application with the BBG on April 25, 1967. There was no opposition to the application and it was expected to be approved easily. Representatives

57 Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Debates and Proceedings, 10 March 1966, 1037, 1039.
59 Nova Scotia had one CBC-TV owned and operated station. New Brunswick had one French CBC-TV station. British Columbia had three CBC-TV stations. Quebec had two English and two French CBC-TV stations. Ontario had three English and three French CBC-TV stations. Newfoundland had six CBC-TV stations but Newfoundland’s total also included armed forces stations run by the CBC. The two territories had no CBC or private television stations in 1966. Canada, Board of Broadcast Governors, Annual Report 1965/66, Appendix B.
60 “CBC tells Board of Trade second TV outlet certain,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 17 September 1966; Peers, 361.
of CBC, CTV, and CFQC-TV Saskatoon agreed that the Saskatoon market was ready for another television station. The CBC noted in its application that a CBC television outlet had been requested by “practically every public body in the city, by the government of Saskatchewan and by the population of the province at large through letters and verbal requests.” The CBC had also received two petitions signed by about 4500 residents of Saskatoon.61

Saskatoon’s CBC-TV station was approved by the BBG on May 3, 1967. The application was then passed to the Department of Transport for approval before being placed before Cabinet for final consideration. Stirling King, the Star Phoenix reporter who had been covering the story, wrote, “These steps are considered routine and the application is expected to get full approval and be licensed.”62 This was not the case. After receiving approval from the BBG and Department of Transport in May, the application stalled at the Cabinet level for what one CBC official described as “an unusually long period of time.” No official reason was given for the delay but Cabinet approval was normally automatic once the BBG and Department of Transport gave their approval. Some officials speculated that a possible cutback in CBC spending for the year was the problem.63

Construction on the station was supposed to begin on September 1, 1967 but by September 25, there was still no indication that the Cabinet would give its approval. Over the following month, Saskatoon’s MP, Lewis Brand, repeatedly asked Prime

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62 “CBC station for city approved,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 4 May 1967.
63 The CBC’s spending in 1967 was significantly higher than in previous years because of the cost of both building the Expo ’67 broadcasting facilities and covering the event as well as the expense of covering the Centennial activities. “CBC Bid for Saskatoon Station Still Awaits Cabinet Approval,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 31 August 1967.
Minister Pearson when the Cabinet was planning to approve the station without receiving any reply. 64 Finally on November 1, 1967, Pearson answered Brand’s repeated inquiries: “Bearing in mind the fact that the Saskatoon area is already served by a CBC affiliate, and having regard to our efforts to reduce public expenditures, the government has regretfully come to the conclusion that the establishment of a CBC television station at Saskatoon at the present time cannot be approved.” 65

Back in Saskatoon, reaction to the decision was swift and angry. The Saskatoon Board of Trade argued that “the CBC outlet in Saskatoon has been the victim of such cutbacks [for] long enough.” Saskatoon Mayor Sid Buckwold said, “it is shameful that this project, promised by the CBC to the citizens of Saskatoon for several years should be postponed.” An editorial in the Star Phoenix was also scathing in its assessment of the government’s actions. Calling it the “now-you-see-it-now-you-don’t CBC station,” the editorial blasted the government for not allowing a second station to operate in the area through either the CBC or a private interest. 66 Brand and others at the time suggested that the Saskatoon station was cancelled due to political interference motivated by problems in the Regina-Moose Jaw broadcasting region but these accusations never became more than mere rumour. 67

For whatever reason the application was denied, the government was firm on the decision. The situation remained unchanged until a Canadian Radio-Television

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65 Ibid., 1 November 1967, 3741-2.
67 For a complete account of these accusations see House of Commons, Debates, 6 November 1967, 3935; Stewart and Hull, 152-3; Peers, 361-2.
Commission (CRTC) public hearing in April 1968. At this hearing, CHAB-TV/CHRE-TV Moose Jaw/Regina applied to the CRTC for permission to transfer 520 common shares of capital stock from Jack Moffat to the Moffat Broadcasting Company. If the CRTC approved the transfer, Moffat Broadcasting would be forced to sell the television stations within a year because CRTC policy stated that no person or group could control more than one station in the CTV network and Moffat Broadcasting already had an interest in CJAY-TV Winnipeg.

R.C. Fraser, a CBC Vice-President, appeared at the hearing on behalf of the CBC, which wanted to declare its interest in eventually purchasing the stations. Fraser told the CRTC that the CBC could not “begin to serve adequately the people in Saskatchewan both in terms of a complete CBC service going to them nor in terms of some service coming out of Saskatchewan to the rest of the country unless we have a production facility in that province.” Despite these grand plans, the representatives of Moffat Broadcasting told the CRTC that they wanted to find a way to remain in control of CHAB-TV/CHRE-TV that would also be satisfactory to the CRTC. The Vice-President of Moffat Broadcasting, James Pryor, said, “We have not agreed to sell the station to the CBC. We have not even entered into negotiations to sell the station to the CBC.”

In April 1969, it looked as if the CBC had failed to negotiate the purchase of the Moose Jaw station because Moffat Broadcasting announced that, pending CRTC approval, it had sold CHAB-TV and CHRE-TV to Western Broadcast Management, a

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68 A new Broadcasting Act was passed in 1968 and under the terms of this act the BBG was replaced by the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC). Peers, 390-1.
Regina group headed by G.E. Ross Sneath and Dr. Douglas T. Martin.\textsuperscript{70} At a CRTC hearing in June 1969, both Western Broadcast Management and the CBC presented their case for purchasing the Moose Jaw-Regina stations. In the end, the CRTC decided to approve the CBC’s application.\textsuperscript{71} With the CBC opening a station in Regina, CKCK-TV announced that it would be entering into negotiations immediately to join the CTV network.\textsuperscript{72} On September 13, 1969, the stations CHRE-TV Regina and CHAB-TV Moose Jaw became owned and operated stations of the CBC English television network under the new call letters of CBKRT and CBKMT.\textsuperscript{73}

Even with its new Regina station, the CBC continued with its plans for a CBC-TV station in Saskatoon. In November 1970, the CBC appeared before the CRTC to apply for a Saskatoon television station for the third time in less than a decade. Not only did the CBC appear before the CRTC but so did a number of groups representing the people of Saskatoon. It seemed that this time the people of Saskatoon were leaving nothing to chance. Appearing before the CRTC were Mayor Sid Buckwold and Councillor Cliff Wright representing the City of Saskatoon, along with the Saskatoon Board of Trade, the Students’ Union of the University of Saskatchewan, and the Trades and Labor Council. In addition, countless private petitions were filed with the CRTC.\textsuperscript{74} In December 1970, the CRTC announced that a CBC station for Saskatoon was approved. As Ned Powers, the \textit{Star Phoenix}’s Features Editor wrote, “Saskatoon is

\textsuperscript{70} "Reginans buy TV stations." Regina \textit{Leader-Post}, 11 April 1969.
\textsuperscript{71} "CBC given approval to buy CHRE, CHAB-TV," Regina \textit{Leader-Post}, 19 July 1969.
\textsuperscript{72} "CK-TV to seek CTV affiliation," Regina \textit{Leader-Post}, 23 July 1969.
\textsuperscript{74} "CBC applies for Saskatoon TV outlet," Saskatoon \textit{Star Phoenix}, 10 November 1970.
finally coming out of television’s wilderness.”

The CBC was able to keep all of its commitments this time and CBKST Saskatoon went on the air on October 8, 1971.

Even with the opening of the CBC-owned and operated stations in Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan remained behind the other provinces in terms of the number of people in the province who could receive good television service. By 1970, the only two provinces with more than 10% of their population without consistent television service were Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. Only 88.5% of the population of Saskatchewan could receive good reception of a Canadian television station with an outdoor antenna. Saskatchewan’s television coverage was poor in comparison to the rest of Canada because a large percentage of Saskatchewan’s population lived in rural areas and the northern part of the province.

Beginning in the early 1960s, groups from northern Saskatchewan, anxious for television service, began to lobby for television coverage for communities north of Prince Albert. Their most vocal spokesperson was Albert Cadieu, the MP for Meadow Lake. He urged the government to build television transmitters in communities like Buffalo Narrows and Uranium City arguing that it was an “injustice” that these areas did not have television service given the amount of wealth that comes out of the region. In November 1966, the CBC developed a Frontier Coverage Package which was designed

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76 "TV panel show sparks CBC debut," Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 9 October 1971.
77 Newfoundland was the lowest province with only 87% of their population able to receive a good signal. Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, and New Brunswick had over 99% of their populations in reach of good television reception. Quebec was not far behind at 97.8%. Good television service reached 93.3% of Albertans, 92.8% of Prince Edward Islanders, and 91.8% of British Columbians. Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Annual Report of the CRTC 1969/70, 13-4.
78 House of Commons, Debates, 14 March 1966, 2654.
to bring television service to northern communities.\textsuperscript{79} By 1968, these packages still had not been placed in Saskatchewan so Cadieu raised the issue again in the House of Commons. Cadieu charged that television services “are supposed to be national in scope and not selective or restricted only to areas of dense population and easy terrain.”\textsuperscript{80}

At the same time Cadieu was arguing for television service for northern Saskatchewan, the CBC had submitted an application for a licence to establish a Frontier Coverage Package at Uranium City, which was located about fifty kilometres south of Saskatchewan’s border with the Northwest Territories.\textsuperscript{81} In the fall of 1968, the station began broadcasting four hours daily to the people of Uranium City and Eldorado. The CBC then applied to place another Frontier Coverage Package at La Ronge in February 1969.\textsuperscript{82} While these select communities were finally able to receive television signals, most of the people in northern Saskatchewan would have to wait for the 1970s and the use of satellites in broadcasting before receiving decent television service.

The first cable television system in Saskatchewan was built in Prince Albert in 1955. Cable systems were also set up in Estevan in 1958 and Weyburn in 1963. These systems differed from Prince Albert’s system because subscribers in Estevan and Weyburn were supplied with several American stations along with Saskatchewan stations.\textsuperscript{83} Other communities in Saskatchewan could not receive this type of service because the Department of Transport prohibited cable operators from using more than a single microwave hop to relay signals picked up by the head-end receiver to the

\textsuperscript{79} A Frontier Coverage Package was a small self-contained transmitter that broadcast four-hour cartridges of taped programming. “TV to frontier north to be provided soon,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 19 November 1966.
\textsuperscript{80} “Northern television urged by Meadow Lake member,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 5 February 1968.
\textsuperscript{81} Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Public Hearing, 6-8 February 1968, 522-3.
\textsuperscript{82} “La Ronge televising probable,” Regina Leader-Post, 23 November 1968.
\textsuperscript{83} Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Public Hearing, 22-24 October 1968, 434-5, 441.
beginning of the trunk cable. This policy meant cable television operators could not broadcast American stations in places like Saskatoon and Regina because they were too far away from the nearest American television stations.\(^8^4\) Since cable systems in most parts of Saskatchewan could not offer American stations to their potential subscribers, the only reason to subscribe would be for improved sound and picture quality. Most people in the province were not willing to pay a monthly fee for a small technical improvement.\(^8^5\) As a result, of the 264,000 households in Saskatchewan in 1969, only 5,800 were cable television subscribers.\(^8^6\) Saskatchewan did not have widespread cable coverage until the early 1980s.\(^8^7\)

Television coverage came to Saskatchewan slowly because of the province’s small and dispersed population. A CBC-TV-owned and operated station, secondary service for urban centres, cable television systems, primary service for northern and rural communities, and program originations from the province all came many years after such developments were taken for granted in other parts of Canada. The slowness of television’s arrival was often regarded as an insult to Saskatchewan as MPs continually called Saskatchewan the “forgotten province” and provincial and civic politicians repeatedly argued that Saskatchewan “deserved” to have better television service. Saskatchewan people had been ready for full television service since the first stations in Toronto and Montreal were announced in 1949. Unfortunately, television’s


\(^{86}\) Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, *Public Announcement, 3 December 1969, Appendix 5, Cable TV in Canada*.

development in the province was tempered by countless complications and it seemed to some that advances in Saskatchewan's television service did not occur unless the people of the province worked diligently to convince federal authorities that improvements were actually needed.
CHAPTER TWO

THE PICK OF THE NETWORKS

R.S.E. of Saskatoon was upset with the CBC:

We are a captive audience to your network and have no other alternative to turn to. Of all the twaddle we have been subjected to, tonight’s Festival (CBC-TV, January 12th, Introducing Michel Legrand) was the acme of boredom. Festival should have been labelled This Hour Has Seven Months. It seemed that long. When you see The Telephone Hour or Hall of Fame you see the Kiss of Death because these programs are usually boring to death. Then, item two, you pre-empted Dick Van Dyke to project comment on the Fowler Report….Better you should have pre-empted Michel Legrand, a totally wasted hour anyway…If we only had an alternative station here we could choose what we wanted to watch, but no, we are in an unfavourable part of the country for it.¹

R.S.E. clearly had strong feelings about the television programs available on his station, as did most Saskatchewan people. Viewers from the province often complained that because they only had one channel, they were missing better television shows and being forced to watch programs they had no desire to watch. Despite what they believed, people from Saskatchewan could see most of the popular programs of the 1950s and 1960s. What they did not receive was programming from a Saskatchewan perspective.

Saskatchewan’s six television stations knew from the beginning they would have to create television schedules that would appeal to as many viewers as possible. This understanding was particularly important for the four stations that had no competition

¹ CBC Times, Prairie Edition XIX, no. 8 (4 February 1966): 2. The CBC Times printed only the initials of letter writers but identified all female writers with either a Miss or Mrs in front of their initials.
because they realized that their viewers would simply turn off the set if they did not like what was on. These stations could not show all sports programs, all Canadian dramas, or all American sitcoms if they hoped to have a happy audience. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool noted the importance of a variety of programs in its submission to the Royal Commission on Broadcasting: “In a sparsely settled area such as Saskatchewan where the number of radio and television outlets is likely to be limited for many years, the importance of having an overall radio and television service which can cater to a wide variety of listener-interest becomes a matter of considerable importance.”

Until Saskatchewan joined the microwave network in 1957, Saskatchewan’s television stations had to rely on kinescope recordings to receive their programs for broadcast. Kinescope recordings were created by filming television programs as they were broadcast in Ontario and Quebec off a green coloured television monitor onto 16mm film. These films were then shipped either by air or rail to the CBC affiliates not connected to the microwave network. This process meant that, at best, programs would be aired in Saskatchewan one week after they were originally broadcast in Toronto or, at worst, three weeks after the original broadcast. This delay created a number of headaches for Saskatchewan’s CBC affiliates because it meant that holiday specials could not be shown until well after the holiday was over and sports events could not be

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3 CKCK-TV Regina and CFQC-TV Saskatoon joined the microwave network in the summer of 1957. CJFB-TV Swift Current and CHAB-TV Moose Jaw were on the network from their first broadcast day. CKBI-TV Prince Albert joined in February 1959. CKOS-TV Yorkton joined in November 1959.
shown live but only after the outcome was already known.\(^4\) Once the stations joined the microwave network, this problem disappeared and the number of sports programs available in the province dramatically increased.\(^5\)

Under the terms of the affiliation agreement, Saskatchewan’s television stations received most of their programs from the CBC network. The CBC offered its affiliates far more than simply its own productions like *The Plouffe Family* and *Country Hoedown*. It also provided its affiliates with what it considered to be the best television programs made by the three American networks: CBS, NBC, and ABC. Programs such as *Gunsmoke*, *Walt Disney*, *My Three Sons*, and *Car 54, Where Are You?* were supplied to CBC affiliates as part of the CBC network service. CBC affiliates across Canada, including those in Saskatchewan, were anxious to receive these American programs because their viewers wanted to watch the same popular and famous programs that were being enjoyed in larger cities.\(^6\) When CFQC-TV Saskatoon started broadcasting in December 1954, it bragged that it was showing “the pick of the networks” because it was carrying as many top-rated American programs as possible.\(^7\)

Studies of Canadian television have pointed out that the CBC’s decision to supply top quality programs from all three American networks may have led to unrealistic views among Canadian viewers about the overall quality of American

\(^4\) Warner Troyer, *The Sound and the Fury: An Anecdotal History of Canadian Broadcasting* (Toronto: J. Wiley, 1980), 170; NAC, Royal Commission on Broadcasting – Submissions, RG 33, series 36, v. 24, no. 5, “CBC Radio & TV Networks;” “Increased range for TV station,” Regina Leader-Post, 24 August 1956. The affiliates often complained to the CBC in their annual meetings that the CBC had to do a better job of explaining why so many programs were shown weeks after they were originally intended to air. NAC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] Papers, RG 41, A-IV-2-c, v. 464, file 30-10, part 1. Minutes and Agenda – Meetings with TV Affiliates – Minutes, 3 November 1954, 8.

\(^5\) For instance, the CBC-TV standby *Hockey Night in Canada* was not shown in Saskatchewan until after the stations joined the microwave network.


\(^7\) “Excellent Program Lineup Scheduled Over CFQC-TV,” Saskatoon *Star Phoenix*, Television Supplement, 6 December 1954.
programming. Saskatchewan viewers fell into this trap quite willingly. Because they watched not only the best of the American networks but also of the CBC, Saskatchewan viewers believed that if they had two channels, they would certainly receive twice as many good programs. What they failed to realize was that two channels often meant the same number of good programs were simply spread over both channels. As Ned Powers of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix insightfully warned, “The viewers will have their choice. But they’ll soon come to realize that often the choice may be between two bad shows and this will be the case more often than when the choice will be between two good shows.”

The 1957 Report of the Royal Commission on Broadcasting argued that in most cases Canadian viewers had an advantage over American viewers because they could watch the best programs of all three U.S. networks while an American single station market could provide only one of the American networks’ offerings due to affiliation agreements. In other words, the CBC’s powerhouse Sunday night schedule of the 1960s which involved The Ed Sullivan Show, a CBS program, followed by Bonanza, an NBC production, would not have been possible in a single channel market in the United States. In some ways, Saskatchewan viewers were also better off than viewers in larger Canadian centres with many channels. In Saskatchewan, stations like CFQC-TV Saskatoon bought top-rated U.S. shows that were not already provided through the CBC network service and then scheduled these programs in succession on different nights. In

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places like Toronto, two or three excellent programs could be broadcast on the same
night and time on different channels so viewers could watch only one of the excellent
programs while the rest of the night could be filled with programs of lesser quality.

Single channel viewing was not better for all types of programs, though. One
area of television programming in Saskatchewan that certainly would have benefited
from the addition of a second channel was sports programming. For example, to the
chagrin of Saskatchewan baseball fans, the CBC broadcast only five of the 3240 regular
season games played by Major League Baseball teams in 1968. Many sports fans
recognized that more sports broadcasts on their local channel was not necessarily a fair
solution to the problem because, as Mac Keillor of the Star Phoenix summed up,
“Athletics to the disinterested are as entertaining as a drunk to the sober.” Nevertheless,
baseball fans questioned the CBC’s choice of sports events, arguing there were more
baseball than bowling or soccer fans in the province so the CBC should show fewer of
these sports and more baseball games instead.10

Canadian Football League (CFL) fans were also upset with the coverage their
sport received in Saskatchewan. In the 1960s, CBC affiliates in Saskatchewan were not
allowed to show CFL games because CTV owned the broadcast rights. Saskatchewan
football fans outside of Regina and Moose Jaw cried loudly for the broadcasts to be
made available to them but the networks would not budge. The possibility of missing
CFL games created an even larger demand in places like Saskatoon for a second channel
and produced further resentment towards the CBC in the province. Disgruntled football
fan J. Wallace of Saskatoon told the Star Phoenix, “So far as I know Saskatoon is one of

10 Mac Keillor, “CBC’s Strikeout!!” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 20 July 1968; CBC Times, Prairie Edition
the very few, if not the only city of this size in Canada, restricted to one station. As for the CBC programs, I’ll never let my kids see Festival. A lot of CBC programs seem to be strictly based on either a mental or a sex problem.” W. Carey of Saskatoon pushed the point even further: “They can put that ---- junk on Festival, but they can’t put on Canada’s greatest spectator sport!” Eventually, the networks reached a compromise and many of the games were shown in Saskatchewan but not before severe damage had been done to the CBC’s reputation in the province.11

There was little complaint about National Hockey League (NHL) coverage in the province probably because hockey games were shown every Saturday night in the winter months. The one complaint Saskatchewan hockey fans did have was that they wanted the CBC to broadcast the entire game. In the 1950s and 1960s, the CBC would show only part of the second period and the entire third period of the game as a concession to NHL team owners who felt that if the broadcaster showed all three periods, they would lose their audience at the arenas. Hockey fans in Saskatchewan urged the CBC to show the first two periods of the game since the score was sometimes lopsided by the second period, making it pointless to watch the game to the finish. W. Garlick of Prince Albert protested, “when the national ballet put on Swan Lake we are not permitted to see only the third act, oh no, we have to suffer through the whole thing. Well, why not a whole hockey game?” The CBC responded to the complaints by saying that Saturday night was a popular night for family viewing and it would not be fair to people who did not like hockey to take up the whole evening with the game. These shortened hockey

broadcasts were yet another example of the CBC and its affiliates trying to please as many viewers as possible in single channel markets.\textsuperscript{12}

Besides sports coverage, one of the major concerns about television programming in Saskatchewan, which was not as pronounced in the rest of the country, was the appropriateness or morality of many television programs. In the 1950s, this concern centred on the attractive presentation of alcohol and tobacco consumption on television. Numerous letters and representations to the Royal Commission on Broadcasting from Saskatchewan expressed concern with the presence of liquor and tobacco both in television programs and advertisements. For instance, Mrs. K.E. Bailey of Regina observed, "We deplore very much the prominent place given in programs to drinking and smoking which leaves an impression on childrens [sic] minds that these practises are the accepted code in social life...In so doing they lose sight of finer moral principles so necessary to good Christian living."

By the 1960s, these concerns about drinking and smoking had been replaced with worries about profanity, sexuality, and violence on television. In a letter to the \textit{CBC Times}, O.S. of Regina wrote, "May I protest the showing of scenes on television glorifying illicit sex and drinking as something casual and necessary, and violence of all kinds? Sex may have been kept in the dark too much a generation ago, but now it is in every periodical and in the majority of shows. Modesty and decency have been thrown to the winds."


\textsuperscript{13} NAC, Royal Commission on Broadcasting – Representations – Individuals, Sask., RG 33, series 36, v. 14, file 26, Mrs. K.E. Bailey to Secretary Royal Commission, 27 February 1956.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{CBC Times}, Prairie Edition XVIII, no. 6 (22 January 1965): 2.
A 1963 CBC study of public opinion towards the network discovered that in Saskatchewan and Alberta, there was "a genuine concern (greater than is shown elsewhere in the country) about programs which it is felt contravene standards of morality and good social behaviour, which offend viewers' sensibilities, shock them, or are otherwise in 'poor taste'." The local stations recognized the preferences of their audience and sometimes acted in advance to prevent controversial programming from airing on the station. In 1969, CKCK-TV Regina did not broadcast an episode of the CBC news program *The Way It Is* dealing with homosexuality because the station believed it would likely offend the majority of their audience.\(^{15}\) While complaints regarding the morality of television programs were more common in Saskatchewan than the rest of Canada, the majority of Saskatchewan viewers did not believe that CBC programming had a bad influence on morals. Only 35% of Saskatchewan respondents to a CBC study said the CBC's plays were too often concerned with the "seamy side of life."\(^{16}\)

Understanding the viewing habits and preferences of the television audience in Saskatchewan or anywhere else in the world is a tricky task. One of the most common and controversial sources used in the study of television audiences are ratings. Ratings measure the total number of people watching a given television program on a specific day and time. While ratings would seem to be a relatively straightforward and useful

\(^{15}\) CBC, *What the Canadian Public Thinks of the CBC: An Empirical Study of Public Attitudes to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and to Certain Other Aspects of Broadcasting in Canada* (Ottawa: CBC Research, 1963), 87. Rutherford also notes that radical drama tended to upset viewers in rural Ontario and the prairies more than elsewhere in Canada and their complaints tended to centre on "excessive drinking, filthy language, exposed flesh, unpatriotic or immoral sentiments." Rutherford, 297; "CBC-TV show ousted," Regina *Leader-Post*, 3 February 1969.

\(^{16}\) This number was still significantly higher than the national average of 24%, although it did not approach the 43% of Albertans who questioned the appropriateness of CBC programming. Interestingly, only 22% of Manitobans and 21% of British Columbians believed most CBC programming was questionable. CBC, *What the Canadian Public Thinks of the CBC*, 68-9, table 103.
source for understanding a television audience, they do have serious drawbacks. For example, ratings do not tell researchers whether the television audience actually enjoyed the program. Ratings only show what people chose to watch given the choices available. In Saskatchewan, because most places had only one channel, viewers could only watch whatever program was scheduled making it nearly impossible to determine whether they watched the program because they liked it or simply because it was on the air. The reliability of ratings is also affected by the methods used to collect the information. Some ratings firms used telephone surveys to gather information in the 1950s and 1960s. Only 76% of Saskatchewan households had a phone in 1960 so Canadian viewing patterns based on telephone surveys were less likely to represent regions like Saskatchewan accurately.17

Some theorists have argued that the ratings system and the concept of a ‘television audience’ are flawed. Mass communications scholar Len Ang argues persuasively that the construction of a television audience is a “calculated ignorance of the dynamic complexity of the social world of actual audiences.”18 She suggests that viewing behaviour can only be stated definitively when it is grounded in the concrete situation in which it takes place. She argues that if scholars truly want to understand viewing behaviour, they must study the “micro-situation” in which each person views television instead of making broad generalizations.19

19 Ibid., 153-65.
While this technique would certainly give the best understanding of how viewers watch television and why they choose to watch the programs they do, it is not a feasible way to access historic television audiences. Ang’s ideas are more useful to disciplines such as sociology and psychology because scholars in these areas are trained to observe people watching television and use techniques such as focus groups which are a necessary component of such studies. Historians are not necessarily trained in the use of such techniques and studying the audience in the specific situation in which they watch television is not possible because television audiences of the past do not exist anymore. Until time travel is possible, a historian cannot observe the “micro-situations” of viewing behaviour that occurred forty or fifty years ago. The historian’s best source of information is whatever evidence the audience has left behind and, in most cases, that evidence is ratings. Ratings are not a perfect source but they are still the best and often only window that historians have on the viewing habits of television audiences of the past.\(^{20}\)

The ratings for Saskatchewan used in the following discussion were created by the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) between 1965 and 1968. These ratings provide information on the total number of people watching each program broadcast on each station in the province throughout the broadcast day and also break this total number down into numbers of adult men and women, teenagers and children, as well as viewers in the station’s central and full broadcasting area. BBM ratings at this time did not report on viewers’ ethnicity, level of education, income, or leisure habits. Despite

\(^{20}\) For instance, Canadian television historian Paul Rutherford makes extensive use of ratings in his discussion of the viewing preferences of Canadian television audiences in the 1950s and 1960s in *When Television Was Young.*
these omissions, these ratings provide a great deal of detailed information about the audience and its viewing habits.

Correspondence from viewers complaining about or praising what they witnessed on television supplies a window into viewer preferences in the province. One of the richest sources of this kind for Saskatchewan is the Prairie Edition of the *CBC Times*, a weekly television and radio program guide printed by the CBC. Each edition of the *CBC Times* contained a section called the “Mailbag” which published letters written by viewers and listeners in the prairie region. Over the fifteen years covered by this study, more than 350 letters from Saskatchewan were printed in the *CBC Times* about television.

Unfortunately, these letters also have a number of drawbacks that must be taken into consideration. First, only three or four percent of Canadians subscribed to the *CBC Times* and it would be unlikely that persons who did not subscribe to the magazine would write a letter to it.\(^2^1\) Secondly, the people who wrote letters to the Mailbag mainly focussed their comments on CBC programming. They seldom discussed programs created by American networks likely because the CBC had no control over specific content in these programs. This lack of comment is disappointing because the programs with the largest audiences in Saskatchewan were always American programs, and the letters, consequently, do not explain why so many people chose to watch American shows. Thirdly, it is probable that the *CBC Times* did not print all of the letters it received and may have been quite selective in deciding which comments to print. The “Mailbag” certainly published many letters of complaint about CBC

programs but the number of complimentary and critical letters actually printed may not have accurately represented the proportion of the total number of letters received. Lastly, the number of letters written about a program does not necessarily indicate the overall happiness or unhappiness that the audience had with a program. No magic formula can be used to argue that a certain number of letters meant a program was liked or hated by the majority of viewers. Nevertheless, the letters printed in the CBC Times do show how some viewers responded to the CBC’s offerings and, used in conjunction with the ratings, can give a better understanding of the preferences of the Saskatchewan television audience in this era.

Men and women in Saskatchewan generally watched the same programs because the majority of them watched television on the same nights, at the same times, and on the only available channel. The size of Saskatchewan’s viewing audience of men and women for any program depended most heavily on the day and time at which a program was scheduled. For instance, in October 1966, the highest rated programs of the week on CKBI-TV Prince Albert included Red Skelton, Don Messer’s Jubilee, Bonanza, and The Ed Sullivan Show all of which had large numbers of both male and female viewers and were scheduled during prime time viewing hours on popular television-watching nights.

In When Television Was Young, Paul Rutherford comments on the viewing preferences of Canadian men and women based on his analyses of ratings from the Toronto and Montreal region. He argues that the television audience for sporting events,

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22 Eaman, 185.
westerns, crime dramas, and other action/adventure programs was largely male, while women made up the majority of the audience for social dramas. Rutherford’s generalizations about male and female viewing preferences do not apply to most of Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s because Saskatchewan was basically a single station region. Many Saskatchewan women, for example, might have preferred a program such as *Peyton Place* to *Star Trek* but they watched *Star Trek* because that was their only option. Of course, not all parts of Saskatchewan were single station locations. Men and women in the Regina-Moose Jaw area had two channels available to them and their viewing patterns followed the profile suggested by Rutherford far more closely than the rest of the province.

The case of sports-viewing in Saskatchewan provides an excellent example of the differences between the one and two-channel areas of the province. Rutherford argues that the television audience for sporting events in Canada was a largely male audience. In the single station areas of Saskatchewan, Rutherford’s generalization does not fit because sports programs had roughly equal numbers of male and female viewers. In some cases, the number of women watching the broadcast was actually greater than the number of men. In March 1967, a mere 17,400 Prince Albert men tuned into *Hockey Night in Canada* compared to 22,900 Prince Albert women.

In the Regina-Moose Jaw area, however, sports programs had a consistently larger male audience in the late 1960s. For example, CKCK-TV Regina’s programming on Saturday night in February 1968 began with *The Beverly Hillbillies* at 7:00 p.m.

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24 Rutherford does not suggest that all women did not like sports or that all men did not like sitcoms and soap operas. Rather, he contends that while men and women enjoyed many types of programs, given a choice, men and women as a group often favoured different programs. Rutherford, 461-2.

which was their second highest rated program of the week. According to the ratings, 33,800 Regina women and 36,100 Regina men tuned into *The Beverly Hillbillies* that week. Its competition, namely the Moose Jaw station, broadcast *The Jackie Gleason Show* at the same time on Saturday night to 10,200 Regina women and 10,000 Regina men. CKCK-TV followed the highly rated *Beverly Hillbillies* with *Hockey Night in Canada* starting at 7:30 p.m. while CHRE-TV followed the hour-long *Jackie Gleason Show* with a movie starting at 8:00 p.m. 37,500 Regina men tuned into the hockey game starting at 7:30 p.m. while only 26,400 Regina women tuned into the same game. Conversely, the number of Regina women watching CHRE-TV increased from 10,200 watching *The Jackie Gleason Show* at 7:00 p.m. to 17,400 women watching the 8:00 p.m. movie. The increase in female viewers from *The Jackie Gleason Show* to the movie on CHRE-TV was the same size as the decrease in female viewers from *The Beverly Hillbillies* to the hockey game on CKCK-TV. Clearly, given another option, these Regina women would rather watch a movie than a hockey game.26

While the majority of comments printed in the *CBC Times* from male and female viewers about programming were quite similar, the differences in their comments speak to some of their viewing preferences. For example, the *CBC Times* printed several letters from women complaining about the CBC cutting into regular programs and movies to show sports. Mrs. M.L.C. of Saskatoon wrote, “It is truly a pity that so much time is given to sports. Entertaining programs are cancelled for them, and at various times of the year we seem to be slaves to sport. What of people with cultured minds in music and other interesting things.” Men writing into the *CBC Times* argued the

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opposite point of view. They believed the CBC did not show enough sports programming. D.G. of Regina wrote,

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With the approach of the hockey season I would like to put forward a plea for television coverage of a complete NHL game each Saturday. Since TV sports programs are confined largely to hockey during the winter this would not seem to be an unreasonable request. A realistic estimate of the proportion of the population watching sports events on TV would be one out of two or three, certainly not one out of 50 or 75, as suggested by previous correspondents.27
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While the ratings for the single station areas of Saskatchewan suggest that men and women equally watched sports programming, the letters to the CBC Times show that not all of these viewers had the same level of enjoyment of these sports broadcasts.

While the men and women of Saskatchewan had relatively similar television viewing habits, children and teenagers had more diverse habits. This discussion of the viewing patterns of children and teenagers is based solely on analyses of BBM ratings from the late 1960s. Ratings are one of the few ways researchers can delve into the preferences of children and teenagers since these two groups were unlikely to write to local stations, networks, or newspapers to discuss what they watched on television. The CBC Times printed only a handful of letters from its teenage audience and none from children.28

As with men and women, the existence of a second channel played a major role in defining the viewing habits of the under eighteen audience. Rutherford argues that as

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28 The BBM at this time defined a child as a person between the ages of two and twelve and a teenager as a person between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western, (1-14 November 1965); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (14-27 February 1966); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (11-24 July 1966); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (16-29 October 1966); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (6-19 March 1967); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (19 February-3 March 1968).
children aged, their preferences tended to align more closely with the adult audience’s preferences, which meant less fantasy and more action and realism. This pattern is only evident in Saskatchewan’s two-channel area. In the single channel areas, men, women, teenagers, and children tended to watch the same programs because they had only one channel and were all basically watching television at the same time of day. In the Regina-Moose Jaw area, children showed a clear preference for programming designed specifically for them, which resulted in less overlap between the most-watched programs of children and teenagers. In this part of Saskatchewan, children chose to watch children’s shows while teenagers chose to watch adult programs because each group had the opportunity to do so.

Another factor that heavily influenced children’s viewing was the time at which programs were scheduled. By 9:00 p.m., the majority of children were no longer watching television and one can only assume this drop in numbers meant that, in most Saskatchewan households, 9:00 p.m. was bedtime. Many programs that might have been attractive to the under twelve audience may have had low numbers of child viewers simply because they were scheduled late in the evening. For instance, in February 1966, most Saskatchewan stations carried the popular American western Gunsmoke. CFQC-TV Saskatoon broadcast Gunsmoke at 10:00 pm on Thursday night and, as a result, few children or teenagers watched the program in that region. In contrast, CKOS-TV Yorkton aired Gunsmoke at 6:30 pm on Tuesday evening and, in that area, Gunsmoke was the highest rated program among child and teenage viewers that day. Similarly, Bonanza, another American western, had few child viewers at its time slot at 9:00 p.m. on Sunday night; however, in the summertime, when children were perhaps allowed to

39 Rutherford, 462-3.
stay up later because there was no school, *Bonanza*, still broadcast at the same time, was the highest rated Sunday program among child viewers at several stations.\textsuperscript{30}

One of the most striking differences between adult viewers and child and teenage viewers is that children and teenagers watched far more American-made programs than adults did. Saskatchewan children and teenagers did not watch many Canadian shows that were highly rated among adult viewers in the province, including *Front Page Challenge*, *The Tommy Hunter Show*, *Juliette*, *This Hour Has Seven Days*, *Telescope*, the CBC and CTV National News, *Singalong Jubilee*, and *W5*. It is noteworthy, however, that many of these programs were scheduled after 9:00 p.m.; some children and teens may have wanted to watch these programs but were unable to do so. Canadian-made children’s programs such as *The Friendly Giant*, *Chez Helene*, *Mr. Dressup*, and *The Forest Rangers* did very well among Saskatchewan kids. *Don Messer’s Jubilee*, a staple of the Saskatchewan adult audience, also had large numbers of Saskatchewan children in its audience; the show, however, always received low ratings from Saskatchewan teenagers. In comparison, *Wojeck*, a gritty CBC drama about a Toronto coroner, had many Saskatchewan teenage viewers. A letter in the *CBC Times* from Miss E.C. of Regina is a good reminder that the ratings do not necessarily reveal what teenagers preferred to watch but simply show what the majority of them did watch. She wrote, “The CBC is to be congratulated on the production of such excellent programs as “Bousille and the Just” on *Festival* recently...I am a teenager and I think it

should be known that many of our age group appreciate something more than Bachelor Father and Bonanza.”

Saskatchewan children were the only ones in the province to watch animated programs in large numbers. Bugs Bunny, The Flintstones, Secret Squirrel, Woody Woodpecker, and the generic half hour of cartoons always did well with the child audience. Besides cartoons, other television programs created specifically for children had large numbers of child viewers such as Fury, The Lone Ranger, and Thunderbirds. Despite the amount of programming on television that was created specifically for them, Saskatchewan children actually watched more sitcoms than any other type of program. Shows such as Bewitched, Gilligan’s Island, Flipper, The Munsters, The Beverly Hillbillies, My Favorite Martian, and Hank had consistently large numbers of child viewers.

In the 1960s, television networks did not create programming specifically for teenagers so few programs attracted only a teenage audience. Teenagers in Saskatchewan split the majority of their viewing time roughly equally between sitcoms and dramas. The remainder of their viewing time was primarily devoted to musical-variety type programs. Some of the highly rated programs of the Saskatchewan teenage audience included Bonanza, Gunsmoke, The Man From U.N.C.L.E., Hogan’s Heroes, Red Skelton, The Fugitive, and The Ed Sullivan Show.

While children and adults clearly had distinct tastes in television, the difference between rural and urban Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s was minimal at best.

32 Children were the only demographic that had large numbers of network programs created specifically for them at this time. Otherwise, television networks focussed on making programs that would appeal to the widest audience possible. Rutherford, 463.
People in both rural and urban areas chiefly watched television during prime time hours. Since the five CBC affiliates in the province carried the same basic schedule during prime time, viewers in rural and urban Saskatchewan had no choice but to watch the same shows.

Despite the overwhelming similarities between urban and rural Saskatchewan’s viewing patterns, one clear difference between the two groups was the larger audience for country music programs in rural Saskatchewan. *Don Messer’s Jubilee* was easily the highest rated program of this type in Saskatchewan. While *Don Messer’s Jubilee* had strong ratings on all the CBC affiliates in the province, it had noticeably higher ratings on stations with large rural populations. In February 1966, *Don Messer’s Jubilee* was the second highest rated program of the week on CKOS-TV Yorkton and the fourth highest on CKBI-TV Prince Albert and CJFB-TV Swift Current. In contrast, it was only the sixth highest rated program of the week on CFQC-TV Saskatoon and the eighth highest on CKCK-TV Regina. This trend is even more apparent as Messer’s popularity began to drop during the 1960s. By March 1967, *Don Messer’s Jubilee* only cracked the top ten at CKBI-TV Prince Albert and CJFB-TV Swift Current and even at these stations, it had a larger audience on their rural satellite stations than in their central broadcasting area.33

Rutherford suggests that what appealed to rural viewers about these types of programs was that they harked back to an older and presumably simpler Canada which

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33 *Don Messer’s Jubilee* did not make the overall top ten on CKOS-TV Yorkton, a station with a largely rural audience, in March 1967. However, *Don Messer’s Jubilee* was the highest rated program among adult males and females on CKOS-TV that week. It was its low ratings among teenagers and children that kept *Don Messer’s Jubilee* out of the overall top ten shows of the week on CKOS-TV. *Don Messer’s Jubilee* did not have similarly high numbers of adult male and female viewers on CKCK-TV or CFQC-TV. BBM, *Television Station and Area Report, Western* (14-27 February 1966); BBM, *Television Station and Area Report, Western* (6-19 March 1967).
clashed with the flash and glamour of the American programs and urban way of life. J.E.B. of Palmer, Saskatchewan defended his region’s taste in music programs in the *CBC Times*: “I and many others in this district disagree with N.S.R. of Stettler, Alta., very strongly where he criticizes *Don Messer, Country Hoedown, Juliette* and similar programs. We look forward to these – they are our favorites. Just because we have had them for quite a while does not mean that we are tired of them, but just the contrary.” In contrast, E.H. of Saskatoon complained about this same type of program: “Where do you get the idea that all westerners love country music? I, for one, am sorry to see Tommy Hunter, Gordie Tapp, and the rest back…I would like to see a survey conducted as to just how many people are delighted to see so much western type programming on the CBC.”

The ratings of the late 1960s present one other interesting difference between urban and rural viewers in Saskatchewan. *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Green Acres* were two hit American sitcoms shown in Saskatchewan in the 1960s. Both of these programs dealt with the pros and cons of urban and rural life, albeit in a wacky and fanciful way. *The Beverly Hillbillies* first hit the airwaves in 1962 and remained on the air until 1971. This program followed the humorous adventures of a rural backwoods family who move to the big city, Beverly Hills, and learn the trials and tribulations of city life including “cement ponds”.

*Green Acres* was first broadcast in 1965 and also stayed on the air until 1971. This program used essentially the opposite premise of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. On *Green Acres*, a wealthy urban family move to a farm near the town of Hooterville and learn the

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trials and tribulations of rural life including dealing with Arnold Ziffel, the smartest pig in town.\textsuperscript{35} Despite being scheduled on Wednesday nights by the CBC in the 1966-67 season, \textit{Green Acres} was a runaway hit on the three Saskatchewan affiliates with largely rural audiences, becoming the second highest rated program of the week on CKBI-TV Prince Albert and CJFB-TV Swift Current and the third highest on CKOS-TV Yorkton. In contrast, it was only the eighth highest program on CFQC-TV Saskatoon and did not even make the top ten on CKCK-TV Regina. The following season, in a new Sunday night time slot, \textit{Green Acres} increased its audience on the two urban stations becoming the second highest rated program of the week in Saskatoon and the third highest in Regina while still maintaining its popularity on the other three stations.\textsuperscript{36}

While \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} was a consistently highly rated program across all parts of Saskatchewan for most of the 1960s, as it aged, its audiences began to wane more quickly in rural areas. In March 1967, \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} was the second highest rated show of the week in Saskatoon and the fourth highest on CKCK-TV Regina. It was the third highest show on both CJFB-TV Swift Current and CKBI-TV Prince Albert while it did not make the top ten in the Yorkton area. A year later, \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} had dropped to sixth in Prince Albert and seventh in Swift Current while it maintained a large audience in Regina as the second highest rated program of the week.\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Green Acres}, which featured an inept urban family struggling to adjust to


\textsuperscript{36} BBM, \textit{Television Station and Area Report, Western} (6-19 March 1967); BBM, \textit{Television Station and Area Report, Western} (19 February-3 March 1968).

\textsuperscript{37} In the February 1968 BBM ratings, \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} was only the twelfth highest rated program of the week in Saskatoon. Nevertheless, \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} still attracted a larger audience in Saskatoon in actual numbers than in Regina: 51,200 people in Saskatoon tuned into \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} that week compared to 50,300 in Regina. BBM, \textit{Television Station and Area Report, Western} (6-19 March 1967); BBM, \textit{Television Station and Area Report, Western} (19 February-3 March 1968).
rural life, had larger audiences in the rural areas of Saskatchewan while *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which featured an inept rural family struggling to adjust to urban life, was able to maintain its audience longer in urban Saskatchewan. This difference could be a manifestation of underlying tensions between urban and rural Saskatchewan or it could just be a coincidence of ratings and both programs were actually equally liked by both groups. Either way, it is a thought-provoking difference.

The overall similarity of viewing patterns among all types of viewers and across all parts of Saskatchewan was the result of the form of the television system in the province. Because most areas of Saskatchewan had only one channel, a CBC affiliate, the number of viewers of any program in Saskatchewan was more dependent on when the program was broadcast than on its actual content. The viewers examined by Rutherford, on the other hand, belonged to large urban centres with many channels available. These viewers could choose to watch programs that best fit their likes which resulted in greater distinctiveness in the programs they watched.

Just because people from Saskatchewan had to watch the same shows did not mean they all liked the same shows. The program that viewers from Saskatchewan singled out the most for praise or censure was the CBC’s ever-controversial *Festival*, an anthology program which showed something different each week. One week it might present a symphony orchestra, while the next week it might show a cutting edge modern drama. Saskatchewan viewers had quite different opinions about this program. Many viewers wrote to the *CBC Times* praising the program as the best show on the air. K.C. from Regina wrote a typically glowing letter:

> Congratulations are due to the CBC for presenting the Canadian intellect with something a bit more challenging than *Danny*
Thomas and The Verdict is Yours. I refer, of course, to the programs Festival and Quest...For those who wish to remove these shows from the air, I can suggest that they instead shut-off their TV rather than try to prevent others who enjoy this type of show from watching. The CBC is the only thing that makes a TV set worth keeping.

The CBC Times also printed many letters from viewers who believed that Festival was easily the worst program on television. Mrs A.M. of Rocanville wrote, “Of all the years we’ve been stuck with Festival and Playdate, you could count on your fingers the ones that could hold a person’s interest...In most of these the acting usually leaves much to be desired. It is so very rare an occasion when a character is portrayed in a near-natural manner. However, the script material is so poor that this may hamper the actor.” Mrs. R.S.P. of Gerald, Saskatchewan slammed the program for another reason: “The first drama production opening the new Festival season, namely A Cheap Bunch of Nice Flowers (CBC-TV, September 22nd), was just that – I mean cheap. I’m sure that the vulgar and coarse language is bad enough but still you had to make it immoral.”

In most of English Canada, including Saskatchewan, American programs constantly surpassed the Canadian productions in terms of sheer numbers of viewers. The 1965 Report of the Advisory Committee on Broadcasting noted this trend and suggested two reasons for the popularity of American programs. First, the American networks had more money and talent and could simply produce more programs with higher production values than the CBC could. Secondly, the report argued that because Canadians were increasingly becoming part of a larger North America, they shared

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many of the same values and interests as Americans, including television program preference.\textsuperscript{39}

A 1963 study of CBC viewers found that Canadian television drama was held in lowest regard in Saskatchewan and Alberta.\textsuperscript{40} These negative feelings towards Canadian television productions were likely related to the single station situation in which most of Alberta and Saskatchewan were stuck. A study of the popularity of the CBC’s production of a Molière play, which was broadcast in French on the CBC English television network in 1963, showed that this program was least popular in centres such as Saskatoon which had only one channel available for viewing. The study suggested that more viewers in these areas would grudgingly sit through a program, hating every minute of it rather than turn the television set off.\textsuperscript{41} For most Saskatchewan viewers, their key viewing decision of the day was whether or not to watch television. Once they had decided to turn on the set, they would watch whatever program was on.

Saskatchewan adults primarily watched television during the evening hours for entertainment purposes. Whether these viewers were male or female or from rural or urban areas, they liked programs that were, first and foremost, entertaining but also well-made and often informative. Programs that were not well-liked by Saskatchewan viewers were usually seen as inappropriate because of violence, drinking, language, sexuality or generally offensive content. Saskatchewan viewers also complained about programs that were poorly made or boring to watch. Even though Saskatchewan

\textsuperscript{39} Canada, Committee on Broadcasting. \textit{Report}, 35-6.
\textsuperscript{40} CBC, \textit{What the Canadian Public Thinks of the CBC}, 66, Table 98.
viewers disagreed strongly about which specific programs were enjoyable and which
were not, they all believed they had a right to watch only ‘good’ television.

While Saskatchewan viewers received the best of American and Canadian
programming, they did not necessarily receive the best of Saskatchewan programming.
Because there was no CBC-TV-owned and operated station in the province,
Saskatchewan could not supply the CBC network with programs.42 A 1956 article in the
CBC Times, however, presented a different opinion: “in the field of television,
Saskatchewan is the source of a variety of CBC programs seen across Canada.” The
examples listed in the article were: Saskatoon’s Pion-Era shown on the CBC Winnipeg
program Country Calendar, a few Roughrider games played in Regina, a program about
the RCMP filmed in Regina, and a prominent Saskatchewan resident featured in an
episode of Profile.43 Clearly, these are minor contributions to the television network and
none of them involved an entire program either created, based in, or about
Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan was not completely absent from the national network. Occasionally,
the CBC set dramas in the province. For instance, the program R.C.M.P.
was located in a fictional small town somewhere near Prince Albert and the city was
often referenced in the program. Despite this Saskatchewan connection, R.C.M.P. was
not a popular program in the province. The Prince Albert Daily-Herald printed an
editorial complaining about the program saying it was “a run-of-the-mill, drab filmed
series where episodes are often poorly acted and sometimes difficult of comprehension.”

42 The Annual Reports of the CBC list the program contributions made by each province to the television
network. From 1954 to 1969 no television programs were listed under Saskatchewan.
43 “Saskatchewan Contributes to National Radio and TV,” CBC Times, Prairie Edition IX, no. 31 (20 July
The *Daily-Herald* suggested that “for the good of Prince Albert and the good of the RCMP the film makers should consider revising or scrapping the remaining episodes of this dreary piece of ‘entertainment’.” *R.C.M.P.* was not a Saskatchewan-produced program that was designed to showcase the province and its people. *R.C.M.P.* was a program “‘shot’ in the east” that merely used Saskatchewan as an unusual backdrop.\(^{44}\)

Saskatchewan viewers received programs from many other regions of Canada and some of these programs, like *Don Messer’s Jubilee*, were quite popular. At the other end of the spectrum was the unpopular Quebec CBC drama, *The Plouffe Family*. This program was the English version of Radio Canada’s popular *La Famille Plouffe* which followed the ups and downs of a Quebec working class family.\(^{45}\) *The Plouffe Family* received such strong negative feedback from Saskatchewan that the CBC commissioned a special study to examine why the show was doing so poorly in the province. The study focussed on Regina viewers and discovered that their main criticisms related to the show’s “intelligibility.” In other words, Regina viewers did not understand the language, the roles and actions, the cultural symbols, or the social customs presented in the program. The study admitted that there was probably a core audience in Regina which enjoyed the program but the fundamental problem was that most of Regina did not understand and could not relate to the program and therefore did not like it.\(^{46}\) Even though Saskatchewan viewers did not like or understand it, *The Plouffe Family* is an excellent example of a regionally produced program that showcased the culture and way of life of a specific group of Canadians. Saskatchewan simply did

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\(^{44}\) “We Protest Use Of Our Name,” Prince Albert *Daily-Herald*, 24 November 1959.


\(^{46}\) NAC, CBC Papers, RG 41, v. 999, CBC Audience Research Division, “Report on the Viewing of the Plouffe Family in Regina” (July 1956).
not have programs created within the province for broadcast on the national network that were the equivalent of Quebec’s *The Plouffe Family*, British Columbia’s *Cariboo Country*, Halifax’s *Don Messer’s Jubilee*, or Winnipeg’s *Red River Jamboree*.\(^\text{47}\)

Since the CBC was not producing shows that reflected the Saskatchewan experience, the Saskatchewan CBC affiliates stepped forward to fill this gap. Saskatchewan’s television stations produced a wide variety of programming in the 1950s and 1960s for their local audience, most of which was scheduled in the daytime. Children’s programs like *Peter and Pooch* (CKCK-TV), *Smokey’s Cabin* (CFQC-TV), and *Kids Bids* (CFQC-TV, CKCK-TV, CKBI-TV) were common. All of the stations carried local news, sports, and weather broadcasts, as well as community interest programs such as *Carnival* (CFQC-TV) and noon hour programs like *Top o’ the Clock* (CFQC-TV), *Junction* (CKBI-TV), and the *Mid-Day Show* (CKOS-TV). Many local programs were also broadcast specifically for women such as *Joy Perkins* (CKCK-TV), *Menu Magic* (CFQC-TV), *Sallytime* (CFQC-TV), and *Joy’s Journal* (CKCK-TV). Musical performances were a key part of many local television programs like *Supper Club* (CKCK-TV) and *The Neil Harris Music Shop* (CKCK-TV), as well as on talent programs like *The Town & Country Show* (CFQC-TV), *Tiny Talent* (CKBI-TV), *Spotlight on Talent* (CKBI-TV), and *TV Playtime* (CKCK-TV). Finally, some local programs such as *Partyline* (CKCK-TV) and *Ted and Corny at Large* (CFQC-TV) tried to cover all of the material mentioned above.

\(^{47}\) One could argue that CBC-TV’s *Jake and the Kid*, set in Crocus, Saskatchewan, would be the equivalent of programs like *The Plouffe Family*; however, unlike the other regional programs mentioned, *Jake and the Kid* was not created in Saskatchewan and was a complete flop. Even W.O. Mitchell, the author of the radio program on which the television series was based, did not like the program. Kenter, 83.
The two most successful local programs of the 1960s in Saskatchewan were easily the CKBI-TV Prince Albert talent shows: Tiny Talent and Spotlight on Talent. The shows’ producers would hold auditions in different communities in CKBI-TV’s broadcasting area and then put the best performers on the air. Spotlight on Talent, sponsored by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, featured adult performers, while Tiny Talent featured child performers under the age of twelve. These two half-hour programs were broadcast Friday nights at 7:30 p.m. on alternating weeks. One of the communities involved in the Prince Albert talent show phenomenon was North Battleford and, once a month, Tiny Talent or Spotlight on Talent would feature performers from that area. Pearl Balych was in charge of the auditions in North Battleford. She would hold an audition in the community and then Jack Cennon, the host of the show, would choose which “talent” he wanted to appear on the program over the entire year. Over the twelve years that Spotlight on Talent and Tiny Talent were on the air, Pearl Balych took over 1,100 children from North Battleford to Prince Albert to appear on the programs.48

What makes Tiny Talent and Spotlight on Talent so significant in the history of Saskatchewan television is not that they showed local performers but that these two shows were the only local programs to air during prime time hours that beat everything else in the ratings. These programs, particularly Tiny Talent, were extremely popular in the CKBI-TV viewing area. In 1965, Tiny Talent was the highest rated show on Fridays with larger audiences than Rawhide, Get Smart, and The Tommy Hunter Show. By February 1966, Tiny Talent had cracked the top ten highest rated shows of the week for CKBI-TV beating Walt Disney Presents and Flashback. By March 1967, Tiny Talent was the highest rated show of the week on CKBI-TV with larger audiences than The

48 Alex and Pearl Balych, interview by author, 9 February 2004.
Beverly Hillbillies, Bonanza, Red Skelton, and The Ed Sullivan Show. The almost unbelievable success of Tiny Talent and Spotlight on Talent was not repeated elsewhere in the province. These programs were popular because they were a way of seeing, supporting, and developing local talent in the hopes that one of these performers would graduate to bigger venues and audiences. M.M. Richards of Prince Albert believed that watching programs such as Tiny Talent was a way to support the development of “our own unique talents; our own philosophy and our own individuality.” He continued,

So it is that we can sit through 30 minutes of “Tiny Talent”, no matter how painful to the ears it is at times in preference to a half-hour of grunting, wrestling gunmen showing us how they developed the old west and how today their detectives are upholding the “Am’aarican” way of life. If just one of those tiny talents...develops into a Jon Vickers, a Lesia Zubrack, a Bonnie Hicks or any of the young people who have gone from Saskatchewan to further fields...then the painful moments will be well spent.

Another local program that did well in the ratings was CFQC-TV Saskatoon’s Smokey’s Cabin. Jeff “Smokey” Howard was the host of Smokey’s Cabin and every week would sing songs, tell stories, and otherwise entertain the kids at home and in the audience at CFQC-TV’s studios. Smokey’s Cabin was broadcast daily at 5:00 p.m. and, though it was only on the air from 1964 to 1967, it was a consistent ratings winner for CFQC-TV and extremely popular with Saskatoon kids, including the author’s father. Smokey’s Cabin reached the peak of its popularity during its last year of broadcast. By March 1967, Smokey’s Cabin had the third highest ratings of any daytime program broadcast on CFQC-TV. Out of all the programs broadcast in Saskatoon in 1967

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49 BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (1-14 November 1965); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (14-27 February 1966); BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (6-19 March 1967).

between Monday and Friday, only Lost in Space and The Monkees had a larger audience of children than Smokey's Cabin.\footnote{1}

While some local programs were successful and others failed miserably, what is important about these programs is that most of them were never shown on another station. Only one locally produced program, Rural Route Saskatchewan, was shown on more than one Saskatchewan station. Rural Route Saskatchewan first aired in 1962 and was a joint creation of CKCK-TV Regina, CFQC-TV Saskatoon, and the provincial Department of Agriculture. The goal of the weekly series was to present useful information for Saskatchewan farmers. By 1965, CKBI-TV Prince Albert, CKOS-TV Yorkton, and CHAB-TV Moose Jaw were also carrying the show.\footnote{2}

The element that was missing in all of the television programming in Saskatchewan, whether from an American network, the CBC, CTV, or a local station, was a Saskatchewan point of view. The local CBC and CTV affiliates were able to present programs that were popular within their communities but were unable to create shows that would appeal to a wider Saskatchewan audience. The CBC was unable to create shows about Saskatchewan and its people because it lacked the facilities to do so in the province. Television viewing in Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s had its benefits and drawbacks. While the single channel system enabled Saskatchewan viewers to receive the best of U.S. and Canadian programming, the lack of CBC-TV facilities in the province prevented the creation of programming that would showcase a uniquely Saskatchewan culture to the province and country at large.

\footnote{1} "Smokey' Howard Delights Young TV Audience," Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 30 November 1964; BBM, Television Station and Area Report, Western (6-19 March 1967).
CHAPTER THREE

MR. EVERYBODY ELSE

Woodrow S. Lloyd, the provincial Education Minister and future premier of Saskatchewan, confessed in 1956 that he had an “uneasy feeling” about television. Lloyd joked that this feeling was based on a fear that if he sat in his shorts in front of the television on a hot summer night, the people on the other end would see him. In reality, his concerns were far more serious. He wondered, “What will TV do to my reading and thinking? It’s so easy to close a book and watch TV.” Lloyd conceded that television could be a powerful medium for education and entertainment if it were used properly. He was troubled, however, that “TV may make me more like Mr. Everybody Else. There is strength in unity, but there is neither wisdom nor freedom in being just conventional or just gregarious. Running with the crowd is often just a matter of running away from ourselves.”

Television’s impact on Saskatchewan was varied and complex and, like Lloyd, the people of Saskatchewan struggled with difficult questions about whether television would be a positive or negative force in the province. While the medium certainly altered other leisure activities in Saskatchewan, television’s manner of arrival and development also affected more fundamental elements of provincial life including western alienation, rural depopulation, and the province’s cultural identity. Indeed, television’s lasting impact seems to have been to encourage Saskatchewan to run away from itself.

1 “Uneasy feeling for TV,” Regina Leader-Post, 30 April 1956.
As Saskatchewan prepared for the arrival of television, many people expressed concerns about what the new medium could or would do to its viewers. Critics argued that once people had television sets, they would do nothing but sit and blankly stare at the screen for hours on end; all other types of leisure activities from sports to reading to conversation would end. Reverend Herman Mahlerman of Melfort wrote the CBC Times about the possible effect television could have on Saskatchewan. “As the focal point of our attention,” he warned, television “may gradually replace all our creative hobbies and turn us into a mass of spectators. I can only pray that television will not be found guilty of having contributed to the spiritual impoverishment of our nation.”

These concerns about the potential impact of television on adults were minor compared to the fears about how television would affect children. Children were seen as not only highly impressionable but also incapable of knowing what they should and should not watch or how many hours of television per day were acceptable. Parents were cautioned that overly violent programs and programs intended for an adult audience would lead to increasing delinquency and aggressiveness among their children. Experts also suggested that television would dull children’s imaginations making them passive and unable to think for themselves. A Star Phoenix editorial worried that television could turn children into “mindless, spiritless, actionless “watchers”.” In the end, though, the greatest concern about how television would affect children was that no

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3 “The TV Problem,” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1 September 1953; Saskatchewan Television Conference, “TV and the Child,” Saskatchewan Television Conference, (Saskatoon: Adult Education Division, 9 February 1957), 38; “TV or not TV question studied by researchers,” Regina Leader-Post, 20 January 1962.
one knew precisely what it would do. Experts conducted studies and made their best guesses but no one could say definitively what the effects on children would be.

Saskatchewan parents, educators, and critics of television did not express concerns that were dramatically different from those expressed elsewhere in Canada or the United States. In fact, Saskatchewan critics often used articles and studies conducted elsewhere in North America to support their arguments about television’s potential impact. Television was simply a new medium of mass communication and people around the world were trying to decide how best to use it to receive the maximum benefits for the minimum cost.4

While some Saskatchewan people warned of the potential dangers of television, others welcomed its arrival with open arms. Many people pointed to the arrival of television as another example of how the province continued to grow and develop. For them, television represented progress and the beginning of a new age as well as further proof that Saskatchewan’s cities were just as modern as any other Canadian city. As the Saskatchewan Power Corporation proudly proclaimed, television was “Another Step Forward” and the province was entering “a New Era of Living Through Another Miracle of Electronics.”5

Television supporters believed that there were many benefits to having a television set. One of the most common arguments was that television would help to bring families together. Some people were concerned that families were spending less leisure time together. Television seemed to be the perfect solution to this problem

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5 Advertisement, Regina Leader-Post, 8 September 1954.
because families would gather around the television set in the living room to watch their favourite programs. The Saskatchewan Power Corporation even recommended television “as a means of re-establishing the Family Circle of Home Entertainment.” Not only would families spend more time together thanks to television but they would also have more in common. As an article in the Prince Albert Daily-Herald explained, “now it is not uncommon for a housewife to display an unusual grasp of what happened in last night’s wrestling matches, when discussing them with her husband at the breakfast table.”

Besides encouraging family togetherness, television also enabled people to see a variety of entertainment that only the wealthiest few would have had access to fifty or seventy-five years earlier. As long as a person could afford a television set, they could see symphony orchestras, world-class singers, great comedians and actors, and acclaimed plays. They could also watch a lot of mediocre entertainment but that was rarely mentioned. Television also permitted people to see other parts of the world that their ancestors would never have had an opportunity to see. For television boosters, the future was bright and television was leading the province down the path of progress and prosperity.

While some people worried about what television might bring and others embraced its arrival as a sign of progress, both sides agreed that television’s effects could be mitigated by their own actions. Television would only be as good or bad as viewers and broadcasters allowed it to be. A Star Phoenix editorial argued that both broadcasters and viewers had a responsibility to use television in such a way that it

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7 Canada, Royal Commission on Broadcasting, Report (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1957), 5-6: “TV station may open in June.” Regina Leader-Post, 1 April 1958.
would contribute positively to both individual and collective enjoyment and understanding. The editorialist observed, “There is a tremendous opportunity here for human betterment in more ways than one.”

Once television arrived in the province, questions about whether television was a good or bad invention were soon forgotten in the rush to buy a television set. Television sets were extremely expensive items when they were first introduced to Saskatchewan and represented a major household purchase. In 1954, television sets ranged in price from $219.50 at the local Co-op to $699.95 for a deluxe model at the Bay. One television set available at the Bay included a built-in phonograph player and AM radio at a staggering cost of $905! These prices may not seem expensive by 2004 standards but consider that the average annual personal income in Saskatchewan in 1954 was only $927. As television sets became more common, the prices began to drop. By 1958, a small television set cost only $159.95. Television set prices continued to decline through the 1960s until colour television was introduced. Colour television sets, like their black and white counterparts, were extremely expensive when they were first available. In 1966, the price for colour television sets ranged from $600 to $2,300.

Saskatchewan people did not let the enormous cost of this new appliance stop them from purchasing one. As soon as television broadcasting started in the province, people began to purchase television sets by the thousands. Between 1955 and 1959, **[footnotes]**
over 110,000 television sets were sold in Saskatchewan. Commenting on the number of people purchasing television sets in the province in 1956, Clifford Sifton, the president of CKCK-TV Regina, said, “It seems to me almost to be a form of insanity; people want to have a television set no matter what else they may need. It is a little difficult to understand but the demand for television sets is tremendous.” In just six years, the percentage of Saskatchewan households owning a television set increased from 0% to 56%. This figure continued to increase until it plateaued in 1966 at just over 90%.

By 1960, more Saskatchewan homes had a television set than had indoor plumbing or an indoor flush toilet. Five years later, more Saskatchewan households had a television set than owned an automobile or a telephone, while the number with television sets continued to exceed the number of households with indoor plumbing and flush toilets. The only two appliances that were still owned by more households in the province were radios and refrigerators (See Table 1). The initial boom in television set ownership was likely due to the novelty of the device. Television provided entertainment in an astonishing new way and, after watching a set at a store or at a neighbour’s house, many people simply had to have one for their own home. This boom may have also related to the new “shared reality of life” being created by

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16 The general consensus in television histories seems to be that the purchasing boom, which occurred across North America, was related to the novelty of television. Other secondary explanations include the attraction of home entertainment, a general postwar demand for consumer goods, and the fact that, at least initially, a television set was regarded as a status symbol. Barbara L. Davies, “The Advent of Television: a Study of the Perceptions and Expectations of the First Television Viewers in Metropolitan Halifax in the
Table 1: Percentage of Saskatchewan Households Having Selected Facilities and Equipment By Year

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television Set</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Plumbing</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Flush Toilet</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator (Electric)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


television: a set of common experiences that required a television set in order to participate. Without a television set, one could not discuss last night’s episode of *The Fugitive* or last Saturday’s hockey game. Indoor plumbing and flush toilets simply did not have the public prominence of television. It is unlikely that co-workers and neighbours would be able to detect whether or not a family owned a flush toilet in day-

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to-day conversation but it would be readily apparent that a family did not own a television set when the discussion turned to television programs.\textsuperscript{17}

According to the 1961 census, 67\% of Saskatchewan households had a television set. These television sets were not distributed evenly between urban and rural Saskatchewan. Only 56\% of households in rural Saskatchewan owned a television set compared to 80\% of urban households. Northern Saskatchewan had the lowest number of households (8\%) with a television set in the province. Regina and surrounding area had the highest number (87\%). The difference in television set ownership was due to the availability of a reliable television signal. Besides the north, areas with the lowest number of households that owned a television set were places with poor or no television coverage, such as the region between Saskatoon and Yorkton, areas along the Alberta border, and the northeast part of the province. In contrast, Saskatchewan’s six cities with television stations had high percentages of television set ownership.\textsuperscript{18}

By 1971, 93\% of Saskatchewan households had at least one television set and 16\% had a colour television set. The gap between rural and urban television set ownership had closed significantly with 95\% of urban households in Saskatchewan owning a television set and 90\% of rural households. Despite this improvement in overall numbers, new inventions seemed to take longer to spread to rural Saskatchewan as 22\% of urban households had a colour television set while only 9\% of rural households had acquired the new technology. Between the 1961 and 1971 census, all

\textsuperscript{17} Rutherford, 474.
\textsuperscript{18} Canada, DBS. \textit{1961 Census of Canada: Housing: Basic Dwelling Characteristics}. 

87
areas of Saskatchewan saw considerable increases in the number of households that owned a television set (See Table 2).\(^ {19}\)

This large growth in television set ownership during the 1950s and 1960s demonstrates that a television set was seen as a necessary household appliance easily equivalent to a radio, telephone, or refrigerator. The increase also shows that people in areas which had greater difficulty receiving a television signal were less likely to buy a television set. An area with fewer television households was a direct reflection of the inadequate television service in that part of the province.

After the rush to buy a television set, Saskatchewan people did not leave the set to gather dust in a corner. By 1958, television watching ranked third in a survey of how Canadians spent their time. Numbers one and two were sleeping and working.\(^ {20}\) In 1967, Saskatchewan television viewers watched an average of twenty-three hours of television a week. According to the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement, between 81\% and 88\% of all people in Saskatchewan watched television on any given day of the week in the fall of 1967. Saskatchewan women watched the most television averaging 4.5 hours per day, while Saskatchewan men watched 3.8 hours, teenagers watched 3.0 hours, and children watched 2.9 hours per day.\(^ {21}\)

\(^{19}\) Statistics Canada, 1971 Census of Canada: Housing.

\(^{20}\) "Encourage Canadian TV urged." Regina Leader-Post, 27 March 1958.

\(^{21}\) Viewers in northern Saskatchewan watched the fewest hours of television averaging only 16.9 hours a week. This number is probably lower than elsewhere because the overall northern average would be pulled down by viewers who had irregular reception. The region with the highest average stretched east from Saskatoon to the Manitoba border and included the city of Yorkton. People in this area watched an average of 26.8 hours of television a week. The reasons for this higher average are unclear but could include the programming schedule of the station, available leisure activities, education levels in the region, the size of English-speaking population, the overall ethnic make-up of the area, or the methods used to collect the survey sample. Bureau of Broadcast Measurement [BBM]. Television Station and Area Report. Western (30 October-12 November 1967).
Table 2: Percentage of Saskatchewan Households Owning at Least One Television Set by Census Division and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Division</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90%</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Division</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regina</th>
<th>Saskatoon</th>
<th>Moose Jaw</th>
<th>Prince Albert</th>
<th>Swift Current</th>
<th>Yorkton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With Saskatchewan people spending so many hours a week watching television, it seems likely the medium had some effect on its viewers. Determining the exact nature of that influence is a difficult proposition as the medium’s impact on its audience is arguably the most contentious area of television study. Most scholars have now acknowledged that television has no clear, direct, or explicit effect on the audience. Viewers can engage the television actively or they may ignore or reject the messages completely. The encoding/decoding model is currently the predominant theory of television-audience relations. It essentially argues that “our culturally learnt codes and conventions transform what we watch from mere external stimuli into actual communication, where the message is not only received but also decoded, understood and responded to.”

Most mass communications theory focuses on how television affects ways of thinking, behaviour, attitudes, and other mental processes. These scholars suggest that the most effective methods for ascertaining television’s effect include focus groups and the careful observation of people watching television. But as historian John E. O’Connor notes, “laboratory experiments and poll taking” are not the usual techniques of the historian.

Richard Collins, another communication studies scholar, approaches the problem of television’s impact differently. He argues that television has two different levels of

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22 John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1978), 69. The encoding/decoding model argues that the television message decoded by the audience is not necessarily the same one encoded by the producers. The encoding of programs is merely meant to encourage viewers to prefer certain meanings. Therefore, audiences decode actively but are constrained by both the message presented and their own ideological world. Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 187-90.

effect. Television’s primary effect is to alter how people spend their time. Essentially, time spent watching television is not available for other activities so television’s presence affects these competing activities, such as reading, going to the movies, and listening to the radio. Collins also suggests that television has a secondary effect on its viewers. This secondary effect influences people’s behaviour and way of thinking based on what they watch on television. This type of effect is much harder to ascertain and conclusively prove.\textsuperscript{24}

Television historians have concentrated solely on television’s primary effect when they discuss the impact of television on society.\textsuperscript{25} Understanding this primary effect requires the kind of evidence and techniques that historians are trained to use. Television historians discuss changes in leisure activities, other mass media, interior design, home architecture, and meal consumption -- not whether television made children more aggressive or teenagers more promiscuous. Though historians can show selected effects that television had on a specific place, they will probably never be able to definitively state the exact and full nature of television’s impact. Nevertheless, television’s arrival in Saskatchewan in 1954 certainly affected other leisure activities in the province.

Prior to the arrival of television, daily newspapers were the primary medium for news. Television presented a serious challenge to this role as it had the ability not only to present the news in the same manner as the newspapers but also to show footage of the actual news event. If newspapers were like being told second-hand about an event,


\textsuperscript{25} Many television historians have argued that the historian’s best contribution to the study of television is filling out the historical and cultural context of the medium. O’Connor, xvi.
television was like watching the event happen. William Thomson, the Executive Vice-President of the Regina Leader-Post, commented that a “journalistic revolution” was underway. He noted that because newspapers had lost the element of “firstness” to radio and television, they had to focus instead on tasks that television and radio did not have the time to do, such as being a record of the news, providing the background to news stories, and explaining the significance of the news.²⁶

Among Canadians, people in Saskatchewan were the least likely to buy and read a daily newspaper. According to a study undertaken for the Senate Committee on Mass Media in 1970, only 65% of Saskatchewan people read at least one newspaper everyday compared to 80% of Canadians. On average, Saskatchewan people spent twenty-eight minutes a day reading a daily newspaper or just under three hours a week. In comparison, 83% of Saskatchewan people said they watched at least six hours of television a week. Daily newspapers were not as prevalent in Saskatchewan as television and radio were primarily because the large rural population of Saskatchewan did not have daily, ready access to a newspaper but did have daily, ready access to radio and, to a lesser extent, television broadcasts.

Though fewer Saskatchewan people read a newspaper regularly, they still believed that newspapers performed certain tasks better than any other information medium, such as making one think, getting below the surface of the news, and telling the whole story.²⁷ By focussing on the broader and more complicated facets of current events, daily newspapers found a way to remain relevant against the immediate and visual presentation of the news on television. For those residents of Saskatchewan who

²⁶ “Newspapers adjusting to journalistic change,” Regina Leader-Post, 27 July 1966.
could receive one, a daily newspaper continued to be an important news source despite the arrival of television.

Movie theatres were arguably the leisure industry hardest hit by the arrival of television. Many people saw television as a cheaper and more convenient alternative to the movies.28 Movie theatres in Saskatchewan took their new rival very seriously. Beginning in 1955, theatres in Saskatoon and Regina began to run advertisements in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix and Regina Leader-Post urging people to leave the house and go to the movies. One such advertisement in the Star Phoenix read, “Get more out of life...go out to a movie.”29

Despite these efforts to win back the movie-going audience, the number of people going to movie theatres in Saskatchewan declined dramatically during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1953, paid admissions to Saskatchewan movie theatres totalled 11,851,062. By 1956, total paid admissions had dropped by over two million. In 1960, there were only 5,551,694 paid admissions to movie theatres in Saskatchewan and, five years later, this number had dropped again to just over four million. By 1970, there were a mere 3,482,206 paid admissions to Saskatchewan movie theatres, a far cry from the close to twelve million admissions of 1953.30

The dramatic decline in movie theatre attendance was coupled with huge drops in the number of movie theatres in Saskatchewan, which peaked in 1955 at 561 theatres. By 1970, this number had declined to a mere 161 theatres. The largest decrease in the

28 Rutherford, 470.
29 Advertisement, Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1 March 1958.
total number of theatres occurred in 1957 and 1959 when fifty-nine theatres closed in each of these years.

The number of movie theatres in Saskatchewan’s cities peaked at forty-two in 1955 and ten years later reached its lowest point at twenty-two. Regina had seven movie theatres in 1957 and only four theatres five years later. One of those theatres, the Nortown, opened in 1953 but “it felt the influence of television and was closed in 1961 and turned into bowling lanes.” The situation was the same in Saskatoon. The Victory Theatre was temporarily closed in 1957 for the summer months but by 1959, the closure was permanent. A spokesperson for the theatre blamed the arrival of television for its closure stating that people preferred to stay home and watch television “at least until the set’s paid for.” After 1965, the number of theatres in Saskatchewan’s cities began to rebound slowly so that by 1968 there were twenty-six movie theatres in the cities. This slow recovery was likely the result of Saskatchewan’s growing urban population during this period.

The story was much the same in Saskatchewan’s towns. As in the cities, the number of movie theatres operating in towns peaked in 1955 at 120 theatres. Unfortunately, the number of movie theatres in the towns did not experience a rebound in the mid-1960s as had occurred in the cities. The number of theatres in the towns continued to drop until there were only eighty-three theatres left by 1968.

The biggest decrease in the number of theatres unquestionably took place in Saskatchewan’s villages and rural communities. The large and steady decline in the

number of movie theatres in these areas began years before television arrived which suggests that the drop was not only the result of television's arrival in rural Saskatchewan but also due to the migration of people from rural to urban areas that was taking place in the province during this time. Television's arrival merely amplified an already occurring trend. The number of movie theatres in Saskatchewan's villages and rural communities reached its highest point in 1953 at 404 theatres. This number plummeted over the next sixteen years leaving these areas with only fifty-one movie theatres by 1969.33

By the late 1960s, television's impact on the movie business had reached its peak and the industry began to stabilize. In 1967, Regina's first new movie theatre in over thirteen years opened. At the time the Odeon-Centre theatre opened, Regina had four movie theatres: the Metropolitan, the Capitol, the Broadway, and the Odeon-Roxy.34 As the Leader-Post commented, if this new theatre were successful, it would be the first new theatre in over thirty years to be so.

The medium that had the most to lose with the arrival of television was radio. Radio had made its mark by providing information and entertainment in the home. This function was quickly usurped by television, which seemingly left the radio industry without an audience. Radio networks were one of the first parts of the radio industry to be seriously hurt by television. A.A. Murphy, the owner of radio station CFQC and television station CFQC-TV in Saskatoon, told the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, "TV has affected the Dominion network [radio network] to a very great extent, probably

33 These numbers do not include drive-in theatres. Drive-in theatres in Saskatchewan did not experience either a large decline in the number of theatres over this era or a large drop in attendance. The relative stability of drive-in theatres was likely related to their novelty at this time. Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Labour. Annual Report, 1953-1970.
34 “First new theatre in 13 years,” Regina Leader-Post, 17 December 1966.
to a much greater extent than it has affected me as a private station fighting against myself in the two fields." As television developed in the province, local radio stations began to dump network broadcasts in their search for a new format that could compete with television. H.A. Crittenden, the general manager of CKCK radio in Regina, wrote to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) commercial division just two years after television arrived in Regina to inform the CBC they would be terminating their network contracts for several radio programs. Crittenden cited "the heavy inroads made by the impact of Television in our market, particularly in the clients minds, and the subsequent reluctance of both local and national advertisers to buy nighttime [sic] radio," as the station's reasons for cutting the programs.

While the old radio networks were suffering with television's arrival, the local radio industry continued to prosper. Technology was perhaps the most important catalyst for radio's survival. The advent of the transistor radio meant radios in the 1950s and 1960s became portable as well as smaller and cheaper than ever before. As the big old radio sets were evicted from Saskatchewan living rooms for a new television set, they were replaced with new radios in kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, and even cars. The radio audience as a whole did not shrink after television arrived. People merely listened less frequently than they had before with most people tuning in during the day instead of at night. Radio stations also altered their programming to compete with television. Radio stations switched from programs to a format of recorded music interspersed with news, weather, and sports information. The new format was so

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popular with audiences that the older style radio programs soon disappeared from the airwaves completely.\textsuperscript{37}

Partly because of the demise of radio networks, radio stations started to concentrate more on their local broadcasting area, while television took on the mantle of national medium. This change was reflected in the major sources of advertising revenue of Saskatchewan radio and television stations in the 1960s. In 1959, Saskatchewan’s privately-owned radio stations received 35\% of their total advertising revenue from national and network sources and 65\% of that revenue from local sources. By 1969, they received 70\% of their advertising revenue from local sources. In contrast, in 1959, Saskatchewan’s privately-owned television stations received 41\% of their advertising revenue from local sources. By 1969, they were receiving only 35\% from local sources.\textsuperscript{38}

The new local focus of Saskatchewan radio stations was also reflected in what Saskatchewan people believed to be the relative strengths and weaknesses of radio and television. In a study conducted for the Senate Committee on Mass Media in 1970, 49\% of Saskatchewan people believed radio was the most important medium for local news while only 21\% chose television. In contrast, 65\% and 55\% of Saskatchewan people felt television was most important for international and national news, respectively. Most Saskatchewan people (43\%) also believed that the most essential medium was radio, followed by newspapers (31\%), while only 24\% cited television. In Canada as a whole, radio and newspapers tied as the most essential media with television a close third. The

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\item [\textsuperscript{37}] Canada, Royal Commission on Broadcasting, \textit{Report}, 203-4, 206; Schmalz, 97-8, 102; \textquote{Regina’s newest radio station goes on the air.}, Regina \textit{Leader-Post}, 25 November 1959.
\item [\textsuperscript{38}] The television figures are Saskatchewan and Manitoba combined. DBS, \textit{Radio and Television Broadcasting}, Catalogue (Statistics Canada): 54-206, 1959-1969.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Senate report argued that radio was seen as more essential in Saskatchewan than in the rest of Canada because many people in the province lived in rural areas and did not have access to a daily newspaper so radio remained their best source for local news. Television was widely viewed as a "non-essential" medium next to radio and newspapers because most people believed television’s main function was to entertain not provide news or information.39

Radio did not disappear in Saskatchewan with the arrival of television. Rather, with its new format and emphasis on local events, it became even more indispensable to the province, particularly for people in rural areas who did not have access to a daily newspaper or television signal. As Saskatchewan radio historian Wayne Schmalz writes, “radio gave listeners something that television, despite its exciting images, was unable to supply – a local identity.”40 In the end, the medium that had the most to lose made the biggest gains. A.A. Murphy summed it up best when he told the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, “in our radio station business against our television station business the first months we dropped off considerably, but I can assure you we gained that all back.”41

One of the most worrisome aspects of television’s arrival was the impact it might have on reading. Despite these concerns, reading in Saskatchewan was not adversely affected by the arrival of television. Interest in reading actually increased through the 1950s and 1960s, if this activity can be accurately gauged through library usage figures in Saskatchewan. Between 1953 and 1968, the number of books signed out of all

39 Canada, Parliament, Senate, Special Committee on Mass Media, Report, Volume III, 5, 9, 42, 44.
40 Schmalz, 97.
Saskatchewan libraries more than tripled and the number of registered library borrowers tripled between 1953 and 1964. The expansion and renovation of existing library facilities was a key reason for the growing use of libraries in the province. In 1952, only 27% of people in Saskatchewan had access to library services. By 1968, this number had increased to approximately 66% thanks to the creation of regional library systems, the addition of new branches in the cities, as well as the purchase of booktrailers.42

Not all libraries in the province experienced this constant increase in circulation. The Saskatoon Public Library blamed the introduction of television in late 1954 for its drop in circulation in 1955 and 1956. This drop was short-lived, however, as the library gained back its lost numbers plus more in 1957.43 Saskatchewan’s Travelling Library Service, which sent boxes of books for recreational reading to farms and other isolated rural areas, was also hurt by television. In 1953, 851 of these libraries were in use and by 1961 only 311 remained. The service was discontinued in March 1961 because “with better roads, TV, paperbacks, etc., the number of requests decreased.”44

Historian Paul Rutherford argues that television adversely affected fiction borrowing at Canadian libraries because fiction, like television, was primarily used for entertainment. Between 1953 and 1959, the Saskatoon Public Library tracked the number of fiction and non-fiction books that were signed out by children and adults. These figures show a slow increase, particularly between 1957 and 1959, in the number of non-fiction versus fiction books signed out. Despite this increase, the majority of book borrowing in 1959 was still fiction books for both adults (67%) and children.

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Observing the decrease in circulation in 1955, J.S. Wood, the Chief Librarian at the Saskatoon Public Library, wrote, "Whether this is because of television or not, we do not know, but it is interesting to note that the decrease is entirely in adult fiction and children’s "Easy Books"."\textsuperscript{45}

Over the 1950s and 1960s, there was a marked increase in the use of library facilities across Saskatchewan. This trend is likely due to factors such as the increased availability of library facilities through new branches and booktrailers as well as an overall higher education level. It is unlikely that television played a major role in this growth. Television did not seem to have the negative impact on reading and libraries in Saskatchewan that was initially forecast.

When television was new to an area, it often decreased local interest in the community’s sports teams. Some sports, such as professional football, were able to cope with the competition from television by arranging for local games to be blacked out or not broadcast in the area in which the game was being played. Canadian professional football teams believed that local blackouts were imperative to their survival since football stadiums were large outdoor facilities and the Canadian Football League (CFL) season extended well into November.\textsuperscript{46} The Saskatchewan Roughriders had such an agreement in place with broadcasters in the Regina area for home games at Taylor Field. By the late 1960s, however, the Roughriders insisted that the Regina games also had to be blacked out across the rest of Saskatchewan. They argued that Saskatchewan fans outside of the Regina area were not willing to travel to Regina to watch the game if it

\textsuperscript{45} Rutherford, 470; Saskatoon Public Library, \textit{Annual Report}, 1953-1959.
was available on television and they needed those fans to buy tickets and support the team.

Although the concerns about television’s effect on attendance at Taylor Field were legitimate, television also worked to increase interest in the Roughriders outside of Regina. Because of television, football fans who had never been able to attend Roughrider games in Regina were now able to watch the team play several times in the season. An editorial in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix noted the increased support for the Roughriders outside of Regina, pointing out that no Roughrider team prior to the 1966 team had “gone to the Grey Cup final with the general roofer support that this one has, not even the 1951 team led by the great Glenn Dobbs.” The editorialist concluded that “the interest created outside Regina by televised games” as well as a winning season were the forces behind the huge swell of provincial fan support for the Roughriders in 1966.\(^7\)

Television’s double-edged sword also wreaked havoc on hockey teams. Unlike football, Saskatchewan’s professional hockey teams were not part of Canada’s premier professional hockey league, the National Hockey League (NHL). Professional hockey teams in Saskatchewan were part of a second-tier professional league with players who were either hoping to make it into the NHL or who could no longer compete in that league. The arrival of television in Saskatchewan hurt the attendance figures for these teams for two reasons. First, in the early years when television was still a novelty, many people chose to stay home and watch television on winter nights rather than venture out to a cold arena to watch a hockey game. The second and far more serious reason was that once Saskatchewan television stations joined the national microwave network, they...

began to carry NHL games every Saturday night in the winter. Many people preferred to stay home and watch the NHL games, which featured the best players in North America, instead of buying a ticket to watch local teams like the Saskatoon Regals. Historian Morris Mott notes that with the arrival of television, prairie hockey fans “became aficionados of first-rate hockey, and they became impatient with, and even condescending toward, second or third rate hockey.” Live local hockey did not disappear in Saskatchewan. It survived by shifting from professional players to junior ones which made a lower calibre of play acceptable to hockey fans. Because television encouraged people to stay home, its greatest effect was on leisure activities that required one to leave the home. Besides movie theatres and sports events, other leisure activities outside the home such as recreational sports, live theatre, eating at restaurants, community dances, and membership in local clubs were also likely affected.

Television also had an impact on elements which were unique to the province and region, one of which was western alienation. Western alienation had been a part of Saskatchewan since its inception, but from the late 1960s through the 1970s, the movement began to gain real strength until it reached its zenith in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Western alienation is the name given to a set of beliefs held by some in western Canada that the western provinces were powerless compared to central Canada

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and that the federal government implemented programs and policies that were intended to benefit central Canada to the detriment of growth and development in the West.\footnote{David K. Elton, “Contemporary Western Alienation: An Opinion Profile,” in \textit{The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945}, 47; Roger Gibbins, “Political Change in the “New West”,” in \textit{The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945}, 45.}

The allocation of adequate television service for Saskatchewan was a major sore point in the province for most of the 1950s and 1960s and an issue that fuelled feelings of frustration and resentment towards central Canada. When the federal government first announced its national television policy in 1953, no provision was made for television service in Saskatchewan. A number of Saskatchewan MPs argued that this neglect was part of a long-term pattern. Ross Thatcher, the MP for Moose Jaw, bitterly told the House of Commons, “As happens so often under this government, once again we appear to be the forgotten province” and “We do not think it [the television policy] gives us the same treatment as other provinces are being given.”\footnote{House of Commons, \textit{Debates}, 18 March 1953, 3059.}

The football coverage controversy of the 1960s inflamed the issue of television service in the province as it highlighted the need for a second channel in Saskatoon. The CBC’s decision not to allow CFQC-TV Saskatoon, a private CBC affiliate, to show CTV’s broadcast of the CFL western final in 1965 raised a storm of anger in the city. While comments on the football situation demonstrate how much Saskatoon people loved their football, they also show a nascent western alienation as the people of Saskatoon felt the CBC was ignoring their needs for the purposes of the Ontario market. I. Cherrier complained, “What I would like to know is what the people of Saskatoon would have to do to remove this discrimination, allowing us to see only one station...It looks very much like unfair discrimination when about 150,000 listening sets in this area
are restricted to one channel.” Jack Wray blasted the CBC, asking, “If, and when, the mighty powers of the east see fit to allow an NHL hockey team in Vancouver, will they continue to plague us with only eastern games as chosen by CBC?”

The problem was not merely that Saskatchewan did not have the same level of television service as other provinces. The problem was that many people in Saskatchewan believed the CBC, the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG), the federal government, and, later, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) deliberately denied Saskatchewan better television coverage and this action was part of a long-term pattern of neglect towards the province. The choice of words the people of Saskatchewan used to describe the television service are indicative of these feelings. Words such as “forgotten,” “deserve” and “discrimination” suggest that the level of service in Saskatchewan was intentionally stunted and if the federal government, CBC, or BBG actually heeded the needs of the province, the situation would be dramatically different. Television did not cause western alienation to develop in Saskatchewan. A slow developing television service was merely another issue added to the list of problematic federal policies which made the people of Saskatchewan believe that Ottawa ignored their interests.

Television’s arrival in Saskatchewan also played into other trends that were occurring in the province during these decades. One of the major changes taking place in Saskatchewan society after World War II was the growing number of people moving from farms and rural areas to the province’s cities. In 1951, 70% of Saskatchewan’s population lived in rural areas. Ten years later, this number had dropped to just 57% and by 1971, for the first time in the province’s history, fewer people lived in rural areas.

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53 “CBC strikes out once more!” Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 13 November 1965.
(47%) than in urban Saskatchewan. This trend was spurred primarily by changes in the number and size of farms. After World War II, farming became increasingly mechanized and new machines such as combines allowed farmers to cultivate more acres of land at faster speeds. Successful farmers were able to expand the size of their property by buying out smaller farms located nearby. While consolidation allowed farmers to work more acres, it also increased the distance between neighbouring farms. These fewer, larger farms resulted in fewer total people in the area. In 1951, there were 112,018 occupied farms in Saskatchewan and by 1971 there were only 71,319. In 1951, most Saskatchewan farms (51%) were under 500 acres. By 1971, most farms (58%) were over 560 acres.54

People in rural Saskatchewan soon realized they were losing many people and the question quickly became what could they do to stop it. One answer was to improve services to rural areas so that people who lived on farms and in small towns would not believe they had to move to the city to receive these same services. Television service was one utility that many people believed had to be provided to keep people in rural Saskatchewan. E. Whelan, the MLA for Regina City, remarked, “Television brought to the people, television in their homes, would be one more service, and one less reason for moving to a larger urban centre.”55

Many in Saskatchewan believed television, like radio, had the potential to lessen the effects of isolation in rural Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Branch of the

55 Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Debates and Proceedings, 23 March 1962, 33.
Canadian Mental Health Association told the Royal Commission on Broadcasting that "Radio and television media offer an opportunity to reach an unusually wide audience including all levels and groups. This is of particular importance in Saskatchewan where most of the population could hardly be reached in any other way." Many residents of rural Saskatchewan were thrilled when television service reached them because it provided them with the opportunity to see entertainment that was not available in their area. Mrs. E.P. of Outlook wrote to the CBC Times to express her gratitude to the CBC for presenting a series of concerts on the network: "Many of us, living in small towns, miss the luxury of being able to go to concerts of this calibre, and do so enjoy and appreciate a series such as this on TV." Music lovers were not the only people in rural Saskatchewan pleased to get television service. Sports fans were happy, too. D.G. of Regina wrote, "The CBC had earned the gratitude of followers of sports with its policy of televising top-flight athletic events. But for these telecasts countless thousands, particularly in western Canada, would never see NHL Hockey, a major league baseball game, or a Grey Cup final."

Not everyone believed bringing television to rural Saskatchewan would convince people to stay. R.D.S. of Regina believed that television encouraged young people to move to the cities. He insisted, "It is high time we stopped foisting an urban education on rural youth...If this Canada is ever going to achieve mature nationhood, it's about time we started to preach something better than ice cream, television, hockey, films, the Twist, high heels, hair styles, college education and faster cars are [sic] the end-all and

56 NAC, Royal Commission on Broadcasting – Submissions, RG 33, series 36, v. 37, no. 296, “Canadian Mental Health Association – Saskatchewan Branch.”
be-all for our existence on earth.”

R.D.S. was not the only person who believed television was idealizing urban life and drawing rural people away from the farm. University of Saskatchewan professor William Baker was studying the changes taking place in rural Saskatchewan and argued, “Many farmers are now living in urban centres and travelling to their farms. This is because medias such as television have made city and town life seem more attractive.”

Similar arguments were advanced outlining the benefits of television for northern Saskatchewan. Politicians questioned why anyone would move to northern Saskatchewan to work in the resource industry if they could not be guaranteed the same standard of living as the rest of Canada. A.R. Guy, the MLA for Athabasca, argued that an entertainment medium like television would be welcomed in the northern part of the province where it “could fill probably quite a large gap in this lack of entertainment which people in these areas suffer from.” To emphasize the point, Guy turned to his own experiences in moving between the north and south. He moaned, “I didn’t think the time would ever come when I would miss television, but after spending the winter in Regina, I can hardly bear the thought of going back to La Ronge and not being able to find out what Yogi Bear, and Huckleberry [sic] Hound are doing.”

While many factors affected the increasing urbanization of Saskatchewan in the 1950s and 1960s, television was regarded as yet another reason for rural people to pack up their belongings and move to the city.

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60 “TV blamed by Baker,” Regina Leader-Post, 22 June 1957.
From the time television first appeared in Canada in 1952, it has been saddled with the responsibility of maintaining a sense of Canadian identity from coast to coast.\textsuperscript{62} This notion was partly encouraged and perpetuated by the work of Canadian media theorists of the day, the two most well-known being Harold Adams Innis and Marshall McLuhan. Innis, in particular, argued that an empire or country had to have effective systems of transportation and communication to bind it together. Innis died before television appeared in Canada but many intellectuals have used his arguments to support declarations that Canadian television must be both a beacon for Canadian identity and bulwark against American television if the country is to survive.\textsuperscript{63}

A later but more influential theorist was Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan offered a number of ideas about mass communication and television and what these inventions meant to the world of the 1960s. Among his other insights, McLuhan observed in 1964, “As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village.” By “global village” McLuhan meant that television and other electronic media essentially shrunk the world and made issues like distance and time irrelevant.\textsuperscript{64} While McLuhan focussed on the global scale, many Canadians felt that television had the power to facilitate understanding within Canada and create, to twist McLuhan’s phrase, a “national village.” Historian Alvin Finkel succinctly links the different approaches of the two philosophers to this issue of identity and mass media: “Where McLuhan saw an

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Marc Raboy, \textit{Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada’s Broadcasting Policy} (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 8; Collins, 3-5.
\item Harold Adams Innis, \textit{The Bias of Communication} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 33, 82; Collins, 214-22.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
amalgam of national and local cultures fusing to create new social values and cultural forms, Innis saw the imposition of American norms on other peoples."

Many officials believed television was the essential link that could tie the regions of Canada together. Woodrow Lloyd, the Leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan in the 1960s, said the CBC provided “opportunities for people in various parts of Canada to understand people in other parts of Canada, as people must understand if we are to act with the conscience and the purpose of one people.” Many people believed television would not only bind the country together but also shape the beliefs and ideas of the next generation, a generation of children who had never known life before television. J. Alphonse Ouimet, the General Manager of the CBC, said of television, “As it becomes the focal point of attention in every home, it is the one single factor which can, by itself, determine the social, cultural and intellectual development of the next generation.”

These lofty national objectives were soon bogged down in the reality of financing such an expensive medium and a problem quickly arose. If one of the provinces of Canada was not represented on the medium that was supposed to represent all Canadians, was that province still a part of the national exchange of ideas and culture? Saskatchewan found itself in this situation by the 1960s. Saskatchewan did not have a CBC-owned and operated television station until 1969 and, as a result, no television programs were created in Saskatchewan to be broadcast across the national network. As far as national television was concerned, Saskatchewan did not exist.

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Saskatchewan people often noted the absence of their province in national programming. Mrs. Lily E. Davies of Regina blasted the CBC after one such program: “I think Saskatchewan should receive an apology from the CBC regarding the Dominion Day program on July 1. Every province took part, one three times and another twice, but Saskatchewan was not represented. This province has lots of good talent but why discriminate against one province when it was supposed to be from coast to coast?” In 1966, Woodrow Lloyd passionately argued for a CBC-TV station for the province. “Our people and our institutions,” he insisted, “deserve the added service and opportunity which can come from it. I suppose we in this house would go so far as to say the rest of Canada deserves whatever we can give them as a result of the news of happenings and of our talent here in the province of Saskatchewan.”

In addition, many Saskatchewan artists were forced to leave the province for places where they could work on the national stage. A.M. Nicholson, the MLA for Saskatoon City, denounced the difficult situation which the CBC had created for Saskatchewan artists: “I think it is a great pity that young artists in this province have to go to Winnipeg or Calgary, or Edmonton, Vancouver or Toronto before having a chance to appear on the television programs which are so much of our everyday life.” While local stations gave Saskatchewan artists the opportunity to appear on television, if these artists wanted to work on higher calibre productions broadcast to more than just the local area, they had to leave the province. Their loss did nothing to foster a uniquely Saskatchewan culture or identity.

68 Letter to Editor, Regina Leader-Post, 14 July 1965.
69 Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Debates and Proceedings, 10 March 1966, 1039.
70 Ibid., 24 March 1966, 1474.
When film crews came into the province from elsewhere and presented Saskatchewan stories on the national network, many people were concerned about how these crews chose to portray the province. Edward Nasserden, the MP for Rosthern, gave a scathing review of one film crew working at Duck Lake: “they even had a man go down on his knees and wash his hands in a mud puddle. Then they called Duck Lake a mud puddle, situated halfway between Saskatoon and Prince Albert in the province of Saskatchewan.”71 If television was going to shape the identity of present and future Canadians, how would the young people of Saskatchewan understand their province if it were not properly presented on television? Similarly, how would the rest of Canada understand Saskatchewan if the province were not given the opportunity to showcase itself on the national network?

Media theorists John Fiske and John Hartley note that television contributes significantly to the maintenance of cultural identity. They argue television accomplishes this feat by using common codes and showing that these codes are widely shared through the culture. In Saskatchewan’s case, since Canadian television could not present Saskatchewan in such a way that people from the province, as a group, could relate to it, television actually encouraged the formation of a new cultural identity for the people of Saskatchewan, largely based on a prairie and Canadian identity.72

Through the 1950s and 1960s, Saskatchewan was bombarded with images from McLuhan’s global village. Saskatchewan television sets flashed with sitcoms and

71 House of Commons, Debates, 11 March 1968, 7502-3.
72 Fiske and Hartley, 129. Richard Collins argues that Canada’s national television system came to be one that excluded or subordinated regional voices and interests despite the CBC’s commitment to develop a system that would include contributions from the regions. Collins, 58. David Hall suggests that mass media generally cause unity, centralization, and integration regardless of the type of media or place in which it is introduced. David Hall, “The Growth of the Mass Media in Canada,” in Communications in Canadian Society, eds. Craig McKie and Benjamin D. Singer, 5th ed. (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc., 2001), 12.
dramas from Hollywood, plays and national news features from Toronto, and a smattering of programs from the Maritimes, British Columbia and Winnipeg but nothing showcasing Saskatchewan. While the CBC, BBG, and federal government were worried about protecting Canadian identity on television no one was worried about protecting Saskatchewan's provincial identity. As historian Gerald Friesen points out, "a viable, politically involved community requires communication vehicles, and when the dominant communication technology changes it must adapt to the new media if it is to remain a viable community."73 Sadly, Saskatchewan's adaptation to television was difficult at best. With the rural population slowly moving to new suburbs in Regina and Saskatoon, the older tiny villages disappearing in favour of larger regional centres, and farms becoming larger and more isolated from their neighbours, Saskatchewan's unique identity and culture was quickly becoming assimilated into a greater North American society. At the same time, the province's artists were denied the weapon of national television exposure to fight the trend.74 In the end, perhaps Woodrow Lloyd's fears about television were realized. Saskatchewan was slowly becoming "Mr. Everybody Else."

74 Thompson, 155. John E. O'Connor comments that the same process occurred in the United States. He writes that America was a collection of regions with different traditions and tastes and radio and television served to "reinforce a trend of sameness." O'Connor, xvii-xviii. Canadian historian Gerald Friesen comments that a similar "trend of sameness" was occurring on the prairies after World War II but he also writes that a great deal of support for local art and heritage still existed. He notes that a regional voice and audience developed on the prairies after World War II, particularly in the field of literature. While a regional voice may have developed on the prairies in this period, Saskatchewan's provincial voice was hurt by the province's lack of exposure in the post-television era. Friesen concedes that while this buttressing of prairie identity occurred in literature, it may not have been true for other types of cultural expression, including television. Friesen, "The Prairie West since 1945," in The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945, 7-8.
CONCLUSION

A SASKATCHEWAN SEINFELD

The people of Saskatchewan were part of a historic television moment in July 1969. People all over the province watched with fascination and disbelief as Neil Armstrong become the first person to walk on the moon. The Regina *Leader-Post* described the scene in Regina: “Streets for most of the day were silent as residents of the city, with few exceptions, stayed glued to television sets answering for future generations the question: What were you doing when man first set foot on the moon? Developing television squint.”1 The Apollo 11 moon landing demonstrated the greatest benefit television brought to Saskatchewan. It made the people of the province aware of the larger world around them. People from Saskatchewan could watch events occurring any place in the world, even in space, at the same time as people in Toronto or New York. Starting in the 1950s, television joined the people of Saskatchewan to the rest of North America in a new way and this connection between Saskatchewan and the rest of North America would grow only closer as the twentieth century marched on. Unfortunately, the price for this new connection was the province’s sense of community and culture.

As Regina’s new CBC-TV station led Saskatchewan into the 1970s, many of the same issues that had haunted television in the province in the 1950s and 1960s continued to linger. The major issue in the 1970s was undoubtedly the expansion of cable television service in the province. Cable television provided viewers with a wide array

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1 “TV screens on all night,” Regina *Leader-Post*, 21 July 1969.
of channels as well as fantastic reception. As with earlier developments in television, cable television spread more slowly in Saskatchewan than in the rest of Canada because of Saskatchewan’s large rural population. The new provincial NDP government led by Allan Blakeney recognized that cable television service in Saskatchewan was lagging far behind the rest of Canada and decided to create a plan that would close the gap in service.

In 1972, the provincial government announced a policy designed to encourage the development of cable television service across the province via community-owned, non-profit groups. Under this plan, SaskTel, a provincial crown corporation, would own and install all of the hardware for these services. The Blakeney government believed this measure was the only way to ensure that people in all parts of the province would reap the benefits of cable. The provincial government wanted non-profit groups to run these operations because they were aware that cable television service, as provided by private companies, usually consisted of one or two already existing local channels along with several American television stations. The provincial government believed locally based co-operative groups would offset the impact of the American stations by providing local programming. The provincial government planned to eventually have a “provincial cable network” that would connect all of these community groups together.2

While this plan seemed to be ideal for the province, the provincial government did not have the power to license cable television operators in Saskatchewan. That responsibility fell to the CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission) and they did not endorse the provincial government’s plan. The CRTC

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argued that broadcasting was the sole responsibility of the federal government and refused to allow SaskTel or the provincial government to become involved in the process. The provincial government argued its case to the CRTC and federal government. They asked for “recognition of the need for a meaningful cross-fertilization between locally-owned, autonomous, broadly based community controlled undertakings and regional and national programming networks and agencies.” The provincial government also wanted “recognition of the inadequacy of the quantity and quality of over-air broadcasting services in Saskatchewan.” Finally, the provincial government endorsed its non-profit, community-based groups as “a most appropriate means of achieving community relevance in broadcasting.” They argued that for most of Saskatchewan’s history the creation of co-operatives had been a “socially acceptable” method of ensuring that services were spread evenly across the province. According to historian William Wells, the provincial government basically insisted that “Saskatchewan was, in fact, unique in the Canadian or North American context and, therefore, the CRTC must engage new concepts in making licensing decisions.”

In the end, the CRTC allowed only two co-operatives, one in Regina and the other in North Battleford, to provide cable television service in Saskatchewan. Private companies would service the rest of the province. By the time the dispute between the two levels of government was settled and a cable television system was in place, it was 1982, which made Saskatchewan one of the last regions to receive a widespread and regulated cable system. In 1977, only 5.8% of Saskatchewan homes could receive cable

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3 Ibid., 58-9.
4 Ibid., 77-86.
broadcasts compared to 71.7% of Canadian homes.\textsuperscript{5} In the end, cable television was another force that affected the province’s identity as these cable providers merely enabled the Saskatchewan public to watch the American channels they had been missing due to the province’s distance from major American cities without providing any corresponding local content.

The province’s local stations also evolved in the 1970s and 1980s. All of the remaining stations except for CJFB-TV Swift Current were bought by Toronto broadcasting giant Baton Broadcasting Inc. As a result, these stations underwent major transformations in the 1980s as they changed from locally run businesses to ones that were part of a national corporation. When John Bassett, the owner of Baton Broadcasting, came to Saskatoon to accept the keys to CFQC-TV in 1972, he told a reporter it was “his first and last visit” to the station.\textsuperscript{6} Due to this change in ownership and the increased competition from American stations provided by cable television, Saskatchewan stations stopped creating and broadcasting local programs. By the 1990s, news, sports, and weather broadcasts were basically the only local programming left.

The CBC also experienced important changes in Saskatchewan. The CBC suffered a series of major cutbacks in the 1990s that forced the closure of the Saskatoon studio that the people of the city had fought so hard to receive in the 1960s. The CBC in Saskatchewan was now based almost entirely out of Regina. Another station to all but close in the 1990s was CKBI-TV Prince Albert which basically became a transmitter for the signal from CFQC-TV Saskatoon. CJFB-TV Swift Current was the last of the


locally owned and operated stations in the province and it closed its doors permanently in May 2002 to become a transmitter for the CBC signal from Regina. The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s saw continued centralization in the provincial television system. The local stations were blended together and the CBC increasingly focussed its efforts in Regina. Saskatchewan’s television stations produced fewer programs which meant not only was Saskatchewan still under-represented nationally but was no longer present on the local channels either.

It was not all bad news for Saskatchewan television at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In January 2004, Tisdale comedian Brent Butt scored a surprise hit on the CTV network with his sitcom Corner Gas. With the tagline, “Forty kilometres from nowhere and way beyond normal,” Corner Gas is set in the fictional Saskatchewan town of Dog River and pokes gentle fun at the foibles of life in small-town Saskatchewan. Written primarily by Butt, Corner Gas is the only primetime network series to be filmed completely in Saskatchewan. The show used Regina’s new Canada/Saskatchewan Production studios and was filmed on location in the town of Rouleau, Saskatchewan. Corner Gas was the highest rated Canadian television series on any network in the 2003-2004 season with over one million viewers for each episode. Bill Brieux of the Toronto Sun even called the show a “Saskatchewan Seinfeld.”

Through Corner Gas, modern Saskatchewan was able to present itself on a national television network for the first time in fifty years.

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2004 is the fiftieth anniversary of television’s arrival in Saskatchewan and presents a wonderful opportunity to look back at the development of this influential medium in the province. Television’s most important contribution to Saskatchewan has been its ability to connect the people of Saskatchewan to other people and places around the world. People from all parts of the province were able to see and hear popular programs from across North America. They were also able to watch news and current events taking place around the world. Television bound Saskatchewan to the rest of North America in a way that no other medium could have. The proof is in the shock and sadness Saskatchewan people expressed at the assassination of American President John Kennedy as well as in the excitement and awe of watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon.

For many Saskatchewan people, the potential of the new medium was seemingly limitless. Television was a radio, a movie theatre, and a newspaper packaged in one box and placed right in one’s own living room. People were fascinated with the new gadget and became desperate to own one to share not only in the entertainment it provided but also in the feeling of entering a new world. This feeling of excitement and sense of promise for the future was so strong that buying that first television set, setting it up in the home, and watching television for the first time became common and powerful memories for many people.

Television’s place in the province was unique. The development of the television system occurred more slowly in Saskatchewan than in any other part of Canada, except the northern territories. While Saskatchewan’s privately-owned CBC affiliates worked hard to bring television service to many parts of the province, the lack
of a CBC-owned and operated station was a source of frustration for many people in the province during the 1950s and 1960s. Television’s slow expansion in rural Saskatchewan was another point of contention since many rural areas had to wait until the private stations decided it would be profitable to build a satellite station in their area. If the private stations did not believe it was in their interest to build a transmitter in a remote area like northern Saskatchewan, they would not bother.

Saskatchewan was one of the last provinces to receive a CBC-TV outlet, to receive television coverage for more than 90% of the provincial population, to receive signals from American stations directly, and to receive widespread cable coverage. Saskatchewan’s television experience was also different from its neighbouring provinces as Manitoba had a CBC-TV station in 1953 and Manitobans could watch American stations starting in the early 1960s. On the west side, Alberta had a CBC-TV station by 1961 and full cable coverage by the 1970s.

Despite the slow development of the television system in Saskatchewan, viewers in the province who could receive a signal were rewarded with a variety of programming that would have been the envy of people in Canada’s largest cities. While most Saskatchewan viewers had only one channel and believed they were missing many fantastic programs, the reality was that their local stations made an extra effort to broadcast most of the finest programs available at the time. Saskatchewan viewers did not miss the best programs of the era. On the contrary, they were able to watch most of these shows because they were broadcast one after the other and not at the same time on two different channels. Without question, viewers did occasionally miss a key football game or an unexpected hit program that their local station had neglected to buy that fall,
but for the most part, the viewers of Saskatchewan were not punished for living in a province with a second-rate television system.

People from Saskatchewan embraced television and made it part of their daily routine. Many viewers began to spend several hours everyday watching television and this investment changed how Saskatchewan people used their free time. Instead of going out to visit neighbours, seeing a movie, or watching a local sports team, increasing numbers of people chose to stay home and watch television. They decided to watch television because the initial purchase was expensive, it was a novelty, it was convenient, it was entertaining, and, later, because it was a habit.\(^8\)

Television’s arrival in Saskatchewan also fit into other events occurring in the province at the same time. In many ways, television encouraged the urbanization process underway in the province by the 1950s or, at least, it did not discourage people from moving into the cities. Television signals were basically available in or near Saskatchewan’s cities so for many people, moving off the farm or away from a small village would be the only way to have television reception until the late 1960s. It is unlikely that people moved to the city solely because they wanted a television signal, but the availability of television could have been another factor in the decision to leave rural Saskatchewan.

The anger over the slow development of the television system played into a budding sense of western alienation in the 1960s. People were angry that rural Saskatchewan was still not receiving good television service, that Saskatoon was stuck with only one channel, that northern Saskatchewan still received no service, and that

American channels were basically unavailable in the province. Many believed that the CBC, the Board of Broadcast Governors, and the federal government made decisions based on what was best for central Canada and not for Saskatchewan. These feelings were strengthened in the 1970s when the CRTC would not allow the provincial government to set up a cable television system that would serve the whole province. Whether or not these federal agencies deliberately stymied television development in Saskatchewan, many people in the province believed they did.

Television also affected provincial identity. Canadian television, particularly on CBC-TV, encouraged the development of a Canadian identity and culture at the expense of regional identities. While the success of the CBC’s nation-building project varied from province to province, it succeeded in Saskatchewan for the simple reason that television did not provide Saskatchewan with a forum to showcase the talent and culture of the province. Saskatchewan was not represented on the national network to other Canadians and was not represented to people in the province.

While Saskatchewan’s sense of provincial identity was being ignored by television in the 1950s and 1960s, a prairie identity was slowly blossoming to take its place. Escalating feelings of western alienation across the prairies encouraged people from Saskatchewan to associate themselves with a prairie identity instead of a Saskatchewan one. Television also encouraged this new prairie identity. The CBC often broadcast productions from Winnipeg and, to a lesser extent, Edmonton that were only received by stations in the three prairie provinces. Saskatchewan was not given the opportunity to participate in these prairie broadcasting ventures so the idea that Saskatchewan was a unique place in the prairies, in Canada, and in North America
began to erode. Even today, a mention of Saskatchewan on national television excites the whole province because it happens so rarely. The provincial frenzy over Dick Assman of Regina who was the butt of a David Letterman joke for a few weeks on the Late Show in 1995 is an excellent example.

It would be simplistic to argue that television was the only force behind many of these changes. Urbanization, western alienation, and the development of a sense of prairie identity were the result of many changes taking place in the post war decades. However, television’s role in Saskatchewan should not be overlooked. After fifty years in the province, a television set has become a necessary household appliance and television watching has become a daily activity for the majority of Saskatchewanians. Television brought the rest of the world closer to Saskatchewan but was unable to bring Saskatchewan closer to the rest of the world. While television may be supplanted by another form of mass communication in the next fifty years, presenting Saskatchewan to the rest of the world will remain television’s greatest challenge as long as it remains in the province. Judging by the recent success of Corner Gas, that challenge is being met head on.
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