

Greening Our Story: Transforming CBC/Radio-Canada into a World-Class, Sustainable Public Service Media Company

By Athena Trastelis

Who We Are

CBC/Radio-Canada¹ is Canada's national public broadcaster. In response to our mandate to inform, enlighten, and entertain, we play a central role in strengthening Canadian culture. As Canada's trusted news source, we offer a uniquely Canadian perspective on news, current affairs and world affairs. Our distinctively homegrown entertainment programs draw audiences from across the country. In June 2021, CBC/Radio-Canada launched its environmental sustainability strategy, *Greening Our Story*.

Greening Our Story

We know that a majority of Canadians rank the climate crisis as a serious issue for the country and the world as a whole. An employee survey completed in June 2020 reflected a similar reality at CBC/Radio-Canada, with over 90% of our employees agreeing that we need to do more in the field of environmental sustainability and that we should be at the forefront of driving this change.

Our sustainability story did not start overnight. In fact, it is a result of almost two decades' worth of work, as we have been reporting on our environmental performance since 2008, and our environmental policy has been in place since 2003. However, we recognized that we needed to evolve our environmental program and focus our efforts much more strategically by applying an environmental lens to everything we do. This culminated in the development of our ambitious environmental sustainability strategy called *Greening Our Story*.

With the full backing of our senior executive team and our board of directors, this five-year plan is our roadmap for Canada's public broadcaster to take the leading role in advancing sustainable production practices in the country's media industry.

The strategy encompasses four main pillars:

1. Producing sustainably.
2. A light footprint.
3. Scripting a new path.
4. Shaping our narrative.

Our objective is to cover all aspects of our business, from our infrastructure to our productions to our technology, and create content in ways that actively eliminate waste and carbon emissions from production workflows. As

such, we are proud to showcase a few key examples demonstrating our progress under each of these pillars over the last year.

Our Commitments

Pillar 1: Producing Sustainably

- Produce and license content without doing harm.
- Advance sustainable production in Canada.

We, at CBC/Radio-Canada, all have a role to play in embedding sustainability in our work activities—and this includes production. Given our mandate as the nation's public broadcaster to inform, enlighten, and entertain, we are in a unique position to be at the forefront of environmental change. Although the media industry is not considered a heavy polluter, the great Canadian landscape is part of our culture. Our audiences have been directly impacted by climate change and we have shared many stories about climate-related disasters. It is up to us, as the Canadian public broadcaster, to push things further by involving our productions to create content sustainably and advance sustainable production in the industry as a whole.

In response to this, we developed Pillar 1, Producing Sustainably. We intend on leading in a field that no one else has led in Canada. We are the first media organization in Canada to license a carbon calculator tool that will help us measure what we want to manage, our environmental footprint by production.

Introducing *albert* to CBC/Radio-Canada

Developed in the U.K., *albert* is a project that supports the industry in eliminating its environmental impact on- and off-screen. Its toolkit includes a production carbon calculator that analyzes data from site locations, materials used, and energy consumed. The compiled results provide a baseline that lets us know what our footprint is for a given product and where we can target to make a difference.

In early 2021, CBC/Radio-Canada became the first broadcaster in Canada to use *albert*, starting with episodes from *L'épicerie*, *Moteur de recherche*, *Marketplace*, and *Gary's Magic Fort*. Since that time, we have significantly expanded the use of the carbon calculator. In French Services, 20 in-house productions began their calculations in the fall of 2021, while English Services focused on productions including *Family Feud Canada*, *Marketplace*, and the Olympic Games in Tokyo and Beijing.

While using the calculator, we quickly learned that the key to our success was ensuring the right support and resources are in place. In response, we developed

¹Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada

and launched several new tools, including a Green Production Information Guide, a microsite to share best practices and allow for a space to collaborate. Using *albert* is not without its challenges. We are still in the process of increasing familiarity with the tool and we continue to work through concerns and opportunities that are unique to our organization.

Integrating Sustainability in Our Olympics and Paralympics Coverage

Sustainability in production was prioritized as we prepared for the Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our Olympic Green Team worked hard to apply sustainable solutions to our work. Highlights included:

- Using our carbon calculator and light-emitting diode (LED) lighting (both in studio and for field operations).
- Minimizing waste by using less cabling in a more efficient way and by using reusable or compostable containers and cutlery.
- Aligning requirements for Tokyo and Beijing to leverage similar technical and equipment setups. This included reusing approximately 75% of the Tokyo set to build the Beijing set, and shipping items directly from Tokyo to Beijing, instead of back to Canada.

Committing to Reducing Carbon in Our Independent Productions

In the fall of 2021, CBC announced a new carbon footprint requirement for all original Canadian English-language productions beginning in January 2022. As part of this requirement, CBC mandated the use of *albert* to complete

and deliver a carbon footprint measurement on all original Canadian productions from independent producers with budgets over \$400,000. Similarly, our French-language programming colleagues have identified independent productions, such as Serge Boucher's new series *Fragments* (Amalga), the third season of *L'oeil du cyclone* (KOTV), and *Bonsoir Bonsoir* (A Média), where *albert* will be used. We continue to look for ways to engage with our partners to help achieve our environmental goals.

Collaborating to Advance Sustainable Practices

Along with the many partnerships, we have established with internal and external stakeholders across Canada, one of the biggest opportunities we have to advance sustainable production is our participation in the United Nations Consultation Workshop on the Entertainment Industry Net Zero Accord (ENZA) (working title). Organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat in collaboration with UNESCO and the ENZA Outreach Team, CBC/Radio-Canada joined nearly 50 film and television representatives from Europe and North America to form a global climate coalition focused on an industry-wide collaborative climate action initiative toward net zero.

Pillar 2: A Light Footprint

- Enable low-carbon, efficient work environments across our activities.
- Reduce our travel, consume as few resources as possible and minimize waste.

We have all heard the news reports—to keep the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C (2.7 °F) above



FIGURE 1. CBC/Radio-Canada *Greening Our Story*, Our Targets by 2026. www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/green.

pre-industrial era levels, we need to get to net zero by 2050. There is an immediate need to achieve this target. To do so, we as members of society, as Canadians and as CBC/Radio-Canada need to decarbonize our processes, our activities and our behaviors. Since we at CBC/Radio-Canada started our environmental journey, we have been on a downward trajectory in terms of our emissions and consumption. But, there is more to do. Pillar 2, A Light Footprint, is focused on our consumption and emissions and introduces new concepts we need to achieve to meet these targets. Divided into two sections, Fuel and Energy; and Material Use and Waste, our goal is to have the smallest environmental footprint possible by focusing on our impact and prevention methods.

Measuring and Managing Using a Standardized Framework

One of the most important activities as part of the *Greening Our Story* strategy is for us to re-establish our emissions baseline using the comprehensive global standardized framework known as the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol. Used to accurately measure and report our GHG emissions, the protocol helps identify opportunities to reduce emissions and save energy and increase awareness about potential and future climate-related risks. Emissions are split into one of three scopes:

- **Scope 1:** Direct emissions from owned assets (e.g., company facilities, equipment, and vehicles).
- **Scope 2:** Indirect emissions from energy purchased (e.g., purchased electricity, heating, and cooling).
- **Scope 3:** All other indirect emissions (e.g., transportation and employee commuting, waste, leased assets, business travel, purchased goods and services, etc.).

Using the operational control approach, where an organization accounts for 100% of its GHG emissions from operations over which it has control, CBC/Radio-Canada selected the 2019–2020 fiscal year (1 April 2019–31 March 2020) as the baseline year. This decision was determined by the impact COVID-19 had on the operations of our facilities and activities in 2020–2021.

Figure 2 shows that Scope 1 emissions account for 3% of our overall footprint, largely attributed to our fleet. Electricity consumption accounts for the majority of our Scope 2 emissions for a total of 9%. Finally, 88% of our overall footprint is related to our Scope 3 emissions, the main source being from purchased goods and services and the associated supply chain. These results are consistent with other broadcasters and media organizations.¹

In the upcoming fiscal year, we intend on undergoing a third-party verification of the data before working toward the science-based targets initiative (SBTi). Targets are considered “science-based” if they are in line with what the latest climate science says is necessary to limit global warming to 1.5 °C above preindustrial levels. Science-based targets provide a clearly defined pathway

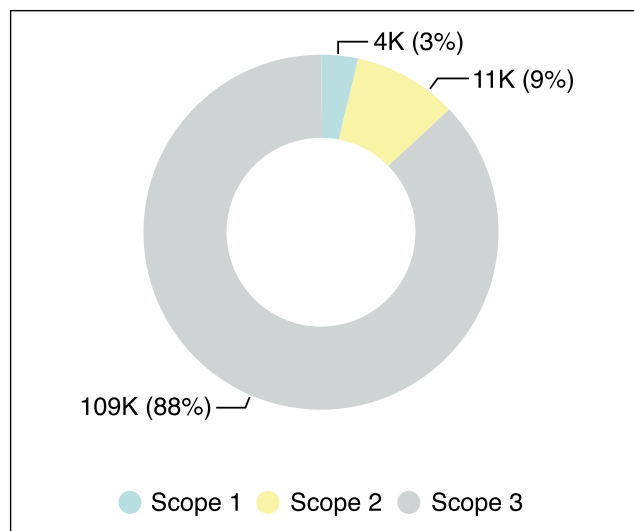


FIGURE 2. Total emissions (tCO₂e) by scope.

by specifying how much and how quickly an organization needs to reduce its GHG emissions over a specified period of time.

To support our journey toward SBTi, CBC/Radio-Canada has developed an initial draft of our proposed carbon budget. The carbon budget will provide the framework for future decision-making, based on our GHG emissions.

LEED Gold Certification

Part of enabling a low-carbon, efficient work environment means continued effort to provide a sustainable workplace to our employees. That is why we are proud to share that in early 2022, the CBC Toronto Broadcasting Centre (TBC) was awarded a gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for operations and maintenance.

Achieving a LEED gold certification at the TBC positions CBC/Radio-Canada as a leader in green buildings and demonstrates our commitment to healthy, resource-efficient, and resilient buildings. It also makes the TBC the first federal building in Toronto to obtain this certification for existing buildings, achieved by satisfying prerequisites and earning credits in seven impact categories. Buildings generate nearly 40% of annual global CO₂ emissions. Approximately 28% stems from operations (e.g., lighting, heating, and cooling) and 11% is embodied carbon from building materials. LEED provides a framework for healthy, resource-efficient, and resilient buildings.

This is a significant milestone for our environmental strategy as there is a clear synergy between the LEED criteria and our corporate targets to reduce our carbon footprint, efficient energy, and water consumption, zero-waste goals, and sustainable procurement guidelines across our entire real estate portfolio. For more information about LEED and its prerequisites, refer to <https://www.usgbc.org/leed>.

Greening Our Data Center

With our focus on more environmentally sustainable initiatives across the corporation, we announced a new five-year project to employ Enwave cooling technology in our Toronto data center. This new system will help keep critical equipment and technical services used for production, control, and IT safe at the optimal operating temperature. It will also result in a 75% reduction in power consumption for the center. In essence, cold water (4 °C/39.2 °F) from the bottom of Lake Ontario is drawn into the building to cool the equipment. As the water warms, it is used to provide heat to neighboring businesses, before being returned to the lake at its original temperature.

Other initiatives in the data center include:

- Increased energy efficiency, as we expect to reduce our data center power usage by 50%.
- A significant reduction in the number of servers by using “virtualization” to optimize resource usage. Data previously stored on hundreds of old servers will now be hosted virtually on fewer than 20 servers—taking up a lot less space and using less energy.
- A decreased footprint that allows for the optimization of equipment and layout to maximize cooling and power consumption. This frees up space in the building for other uses.

Greening Our Fleet

We have been working on greening our fleet for several years now, starting with the introduction of hybrid, electric, or fuel-efficient vehicles (Quebec, Toronto, Charlottetown, and Montreal). Since 2008, we have seen a 47% reduction in our fleet-related GHG emissions (Scope 1) through various actions such as reducing the fleet size, purchase of vehicles with better efficiency, purchase of hybrid vehicles, and so on.

Following the launch of our strategy in June 2021, the Fleet group has been busy analyzing our current status and the status of the similar activities planned by the Canadian government. There are several realities that are impacting the speed with which we can proceed, from the increased capital investment in purchasing the vehicles to the installation of charging stations and the impact on our buildings and infrastructure to the full adaptation of the fleet management industry.

These challenges are not unique to CBC/Radio-Canada and we continue to work with the Centre for Greening Government to explore options and solutions. Our plan is designed as a mobility plan that holistically reviews how our fleet and employees operate within the corporation. We need to challenge ourselves to rethink our needs when it comes to vehicle use and finding sustainable solutions.

One final point: As technology evolves, so will our solutions. The best solution today may not be the best one in five years. The market is ever-evolving and we have to remember that the retail market operates at a different pace than that of the fleet market. We anticipate more options in the future to help achieve our targets.

Setting a Framework for Zero Waste

While recycling alone cannot solve the climate issue, a zero-waste framework is a climate action strategy that society can implement today to reduce GHG emissions. We know that applying the zero-waste approach conserves natural resources and reduces pollution from extraction, manufacturing, and disposal. One of the most important examples is the responsible disposal of excess assets from our old Montreal Radio-Canada building. A specialized firm has been retained to manage and recycle all end-of-life technical and IT equipment that is no longer compatible with operations. Excess equipment will also be offered to institutions and organizations as appropriate. We intend on recycling or repurposing as much as possible, to keep the ecological footprint to a minimum.

Pillar 3: Scripting a New Path

- *Embed environmental sustainability as a key value through which our work is carried out.*
- *Enable our employees and partners to be agents of change.*
- *Inform and train employees and engage partners to implement change.*

True and meaningful change is only possible through the collective action and engagement of our employees and external stakeholders. Each individual needs to participate in the journey toward sustainability and participate as an agent of change. Pillar 3, Scripting a New Path, is all about evaluating and addressing our internal processes to facilitate the integration of sustainability practices in all we do. This pillar will help ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada creates the conditions to achieve and potentially exceed the goals and outcomes from all other pillars, supporting the anticipated culture shift. It is also the pillar that emphasizes collaboration and engagement of both internal and external stakeholders. As we have indicated before, we all have a role to play.

Procurement Strategies

Our supply chain and supplier engagement as a whole is widely recognized as a significant area where corporate relationships can be leveraged to amplify results on sustainable outcomes, specifically, reducing emissions. This is evidenced in the results of our carbon baseline evaluation, where 77% of our Scope 3 emissions are related to purchased goods and services.ⁱ

In response, we hired and integrated a dedicated resource focused on sustainable procurement. A new procurement policy is anticipated in 2022–2023 that will incorporate sustainability, both from the environmental and equity as well as diversity and inclusion perspectives. Our supply chain management team has been hard at work revising guidelines, drafting a vendor code of conduct, as well as developing a survey for 50 of CBC/Radio-Canada’s vendors across various categories and spend, to better understand their corporation’s involvement in sustainability. This particular survey not only helps structure

ⁱAs per 2019–2020 Baseline.

the framework for future work, but also identifies additional opportunities to amplify results, select environmentally preferable goods and services as well as strengthen partnerships by enabling others to join in our sustainability journey. These responsible procurement directives, the policy, and procedures are the first step in engaging CBC's vendors in reducing our Scope 3 emissions.

Pillar 4: Shaping Our Narrative

- *Demonstrate leadership and partner with industry stakeholders.*
- *Promote the responsible development of Canadian content.*
- *Enable audiences to understand our role and contribution to sustainability.*
- *Showcase our contribution to the communities we serve.*

Environmental sustainability is not just about decarbonizing or focusing on our production. It is about transparency and accountability. It is about aligning our actions toward the environment with the public service mandate of our corporation, in alignment with our values of integrity, relevance, and inclusiveness. Sharing our environmental journey encompasses a multifaceted approach. As noted earlier in this article, we have been reporting our environmental performance since 2008. In 2021–2022 as part of the launch of the sustainability strategy, we decided to restructure our reporting such that it is more aligned with both the GHG Protocol as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. A new report reflecting our progress since the launch of the strategy is expected in November 2022. This is the foundation upon which we will continue to build our reporting as we move toward science-based targets and eventually the Task Force for Climate-Related Financial Disclosure—a disclosure project that we recently initiated.

However, it is not just about reporting our progress. It is also about connecting with Canadians and informing them about climate change and its relevance to their lives through environmental stories. As the public broadcaster, we have a unique opportunity to strengthen and prioritize these connections in the communities in which we operate. Featured across multiple platforms, our content highlights the current environmental issues we are facing, and the overall impact human activities have on our habitats. Examples include Radio-Canada's *Sérieux?* an independently produced environmentally-themed project produced for ICI EXPLORA; the award-winning CBC Radio program, podcast, and newsletter *What On Earth*; and our French and English kids programming *Série ABC Environnement de MAJ* and *CBC Kids*. We have also spotlighted countless stories over many years through programs like *Découverte*, *La semaine verte*, *Quirks and Quarks*, and *The Nature of Things*.

CBC/Radio-Canada has been and will continue to focus on how climate change is impacting Canadians and the world. This commitment was reinforced through our CBC News Editorial Team announcing more climate change journalism and our Radio-Canada colleagues launching their new environment page. Not only will we report on the environment, following standards set in our journalistic standards and practices, we will include this as part of our strategy to promote the responsible development of Canadian content. The pillars, while independent, strongly rely on each other to support the successful implementation of our sustainability strategy.

In summary, *Greening Our Story* is our opportunity to transform CBC/Radio-Canada into a world-class, sustainable public service media company. This new strategy significantly raises the bar by encompassing all the work we do as Canada's public broadcaster and by taking a leadership role for the environment with goals and targets we will be working toward over the next five years. At CBC/Radio-Canada, we are committed to building an environmentally sustainable public service media company that current and future generations can be proud of. We intend on doing our part to curtail the threat of climate change. And we will accomplish this by embedding environmentally sustainable thinking in all we do. This report shares some of the progress we have made in the past year. There is much more to come.

Reference

1. *Our Plan, The BBC's Path to Net Zero*. Accessed: Mar. 31, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sustainability/our-plan/>

About the Author



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