



CONSORTIUM

des médias communautaires
de langues officielles
en situation minoritaire

of Official Language Minority
Community Media

TRUTHS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PATHS FORWARD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 2025

WHY A WHITE PAPER NOW?

Present in all 10 provinces and three territories of Canada, **Official language minority community media (OLMCM)** are essential pillars of the vitality of Canada's minority anglophone and francophone populations, democratically, culturally, and as anchors of identity.

Despite their **recognized and valued role by most**, this sector remains financially and organizationally fragile, little known in some segments of the population, excluded from many (public and private) funding and discoverability networks, and marginalized in public policy.

The White Paper aims to:

- provide a **rigorous, contextualized portrait of the situation** of OLMCM;
- define the **specific and systemic issues** that compromise the role and sustainability of the sector;
- propose an **attainable and pragmatic path forward**, supported by **levers that foster gradual and sustained evolution**, along with **stronger engagement** at the organizational, sectoral, community, and governmental levels.

COMMUNITY MEDIA REFLECTS THE VITALITY OF MINORITY LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES

“These media are the glue that holds our communities together.”

(Comment received during the consultations that led to the drafting of the White Paper.)

Official language minority community media (OLMCM) are **an essential driver of linguistic and cultural vitality** of Canada’s minority anglophone and francophone populations and play a **fundamental role in grassroots democracy**. More specifically, they:

- ensure access to **local information in the minority language**, **sustain collective memory**, **give a voice to minority anglophone and francophone populations**, and **foster citizen engagement**;
- **fulfill a crucial identity mission**, enabling these populations to preserve their language, culture, and traditions, while strengthening their sense of belonging and promoting cultural transmission.
- **represent essential partners** on which all levels of government can rely — and on which they would in fact benefit from relying — to fulfill their obligations in supporting the development of these communities and, in particular with regard to the federal government, **uphold the fundamental principles of substantive equality** between English and French, as set out in the **Official Languages Act**, modernized in 2023.

Yet, the recognition and valuing of the unique role of OLMCM remain limited, and today, **the sector finds itself at a crossroads** due to a series of factors. However, **it is still possible to set the sector back on track** if coordinated, concerted, and collective actions are undertaken without delay.

VITAL, BUT STILL VULNERABLE

OLMCM consulted consider their organizational health to be **fragile**.

Their vulnerability is compounded by the upheavals affecting the Canadian media sector as a whole:

- **Accelerated and complex digital transformation:** Domination by U.S.-based digital platforms (the GAFAM group consisting of Google, Apple, Facebook (Meta), Amazon, Microsoft), the proliferation of non-journalistic content, the ban of news outlets by Meta, audience fragmentation, and a revolution in how people access information (mobile devices, social media, etc.).
- **Ongoing erosion of traditional advertising revenues:** A **\$6 billion drop since 2008**, with the gains going to digital platforms — **80% of digital ads investments flow exclusively to Google and Meta**.
- **Mass closures:** Between 2008 and April 2025, **nearly 600 local media outlets have shut down in Canada**, worsening the rise of “news deserts.”
- **Erosion of public trust:** Fewer than **40%** of Canadians consider news to be trustworthy. Rising concerns about disinformation and generative artificial intelligence are fuelling this decline.

These pressures are even **more acute for OLMCM**, given their specific context:

- **Small, diverse, and fragmented markets:** 35% serve communities of fewer than 10,000 people.
- **Limited revenues:** Most operate with **less than \$500,000 annually** and rely heavily on short-term, project-based government subsidies.
- **Precarious workforce:** Difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff in the minority language, uncompetitive salaries, high turnover—at least for organizations able to fill vacant positions.
- **Increased competition:** Their markets are dominated not only by **majority-language media and global platforms**, but increasingly also by **public broadcasters**.
- **Limited reach:** **Up to 20% of people from OLMCs are unaware these media even exist**. In a saturated digital environment, **the discoverability and visibility of OLMCM remain limited**.
- **Sometimes complex relationships with representative community organizations:** Tensions arise from the obligation of media to maintain independence and critical journalistic oversight, while some organizations expect them to serve primarily as channels for messaging or institutional promotion. These dynamics sometimes place OLMCM in **ambiguous and uncomfortable** positions within the very communities they serve.

Taken together, these pressures — along with declining revenues and short-term funding — leave OLMCM teams in a **state of chronic exhaustion**. They struggle to maintain balance and fight to stay afloat, while striving to **deliver quality content tailored to the needs and expectations of their readers and listeners**.

DIGITAL: IT'S SIMPLY NOT FINANCIALLY VIABLE AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

Even if it does not represent a miracle solution to the challenges faced by OLMCM, digital transformation has become an unavoidable strategic necessity:

- **Consumption habits are changing rapidly:** among 18–34-year-olds, 40% get their news primarily via social media.
- **Loyalty to traditional media is declining,** while simultaneous use of multiple platforms has become the norm.
- **Attracting and engaging younger generations** requires adapting content and formats (videos, podcasts, newsletters).
- **Diversifying revenue sources** requires deploying a range of discoverability and monetization strategies, which are growingly dependent on digital platforms, and in the case of META which Canadian news outlets do not have full access to due to news bans.

Not all OLMCM are at the same stage in this respect, but the barrier is undeniably high for the sector:

- Few OLMC media have dedicated — or are in a position to dedicate — **financial, material, or human resources to digital.**
- Three-quarters have **no digital action plan**, because **digitization, on its own, has not demonstrated the capacity to ensure financial viability** for small-scale operations.
- **Expertise in discoverability and monetization is absent or very limited**, as are training opportunities.
- Dependence on short-term grants undermines the capacity for long-term planning, **as digital often costs more than it generates.** Unable to cover even basic expenses, OLMCM are being driven into a state of **chronic financial instability.**

OLMCM teams are already struggling to carry out their core mandate and, in addition, **must confront the challenge of integrating digital tools** in order to strengthen their position more effectively in the marketplace.

The sector is therefore faced with another major challenge: **the urgency of advancing and succeeding in its digital transition and presence.** Addressing this **requires resources to identify adapted and viable digital solutions**, while simultaneously **tackling the shortage of both human and financial capacity to implement them.**

THE ROOF IS ON FIRE : EVERYONE NEEDS TO RESPOND

In this context, an evolution of the **OLMCM sector is indispensable**.

Despite the challenges identified, the consultations highlighted many potential solutions. There are, in fact, numerous opportunities to seize and **concrete ways to modernize and, above all, strengthen the OLMCM sector**.

OLMCM naturally have a central role to play in this transformation, but **the responsibility cannot rest solely on their shoulders**. Success depends on **a collective and coordinated effort**, mobilizing all key players in the sector: the media themselves, the Consortium of Official Language Minority Community Media and sectoral representative organizations, communities, and governments.

Framed as a mobilization plan, the White Paper proposes four complementary and inseparable pillars:

1. Organizational pillar: Role of each OLMCM

- Raise awareness and actively solicit support from their local ecosystem.
- Secure recognition of their structuring role by documenting their actual reach.
- Redefine governance, management, and business models, with support from the Consortium and sectoral representative bodies.
- Rethink digital transition strategies in light of their limited viability.
- Adapt content and platforms to the real needs of audiences through a community-centred approach.
- Strengthen discoverability and digital presence.
- Actively engage younger generations.
- Leverage audience data to guide strategic decisions.

2. Sectoral pillar: Role of the Consortium and sectoral representative organizations

- Support media in overhauling their structures and business models.
- Encourage pooling of key resources (training, digital, marketing).
- Advocate for sustainable and equitable funding.
- Establish national and international strategic partnerships.
- Develop a coordinated strategy with GAFAM.
- Strengthen digital presence through innovation labs and shared tools.
- Develop a structured framework for data collection and analysis.
- Launch a national campaign to promote OLMCM.

3. Community pillar: Role of the associative movement, institutions, and the populations served

- Integrate OLMCM into community action and local development plans.
- Foster a living bond between OLMCM and the populations they serve by encouraging consumption of their content.
- Increase visibility and discoverability by sharing OLMCM content throughout their respective networks and on their different platforms
- Support the financial sustainability of OLMCM (subscriptions, advertising, sponsorship, philanthropy).
- Support the production of relevant local content.
- Build partnerships with local institutions (schools, libraries, etc.).
- Engage post secondary institutions as training partners.
- Raise awareness among municipal, provincial, and federal elected officials of the importance of OLMCM.
- Reiterate to government authorities the need for structural measures and targeted strategic support.

4. Governmental pillar: Role of the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels

- Explicitly recognize the role of OLMCM in laws and public policies.
- Allocate a fair and stable share of government advertising to OLMCM.
Introduce new tax incentives and adapt fiscal criteria and programs to include small media outlets.
- Ensure multi-year funding tailored to the sector's realities.
- Conduct consultations with OLMCM to reframe public policy on the digital presence of local media.
- Support research and the collection of evidence-based data.

These four pillars must advance together: **only their synergy will enable genuine, effective, and sustainable change in the sector.**

CONCLUSION : WE HAVE A PLAN. WE HAVE PATH FORWARD. LET'S MOVE AHEAD TOGETHER.

The White Paper offers a **clear-eyed and courageous portrait**. Despite their essential role in the vitality of official language minority communities, OLMCM are in difficulty.

Much more than just a mere diagnosis, **the White Paper is intended first and foremost as a tool for mobilization.**

Despite the sector's numerous challenges and obstacles, the White Paper identifies many avenues to **ensure not only the survival, but also the growth** of these community pillars. More importantly, it emphasizes that **true, lasting progress** can only be achieved through **collective and concerted action**.

The White Paper is, therefore, addressed to **OLMCM, sectoral representative bodies, institutions and community organizations, sectoral partners, governments, and the populations themselves**. All these actors have a role to play in carrying this evolution forward.

The issue goes beyond the survival of fragile media organizations. It is, quite simply, about **preserving grassroots democracy and Canada's linguistic vitality**, two dimensions at the very core of the country's distinctive DNA.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
WHITE PAPER OR OTHER CONSORTIUM ACTIVITIES:**

Linda Lauzon

Coordinator and Authorized Representative

Email: coordination@olconsortiumlo.ca

Web : olconsortiumlo.ca