
As Journalism Goes, So Goes Democracy:

A HISTORY OF THE
CANADIAN JOURNALISM FOUNDATION



La Fondation pour le
journalisme canadien

The Canadian
Journalism Foundation

© 2024 The Canadian Journalism Foundation

All rights reserved.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: As journalism goes, so goes democracy / Jason McBride ; edited by Kathy English.

Names: McBride, Jason, 1968- author. | Canadian Journalism Foundation, publisher.

Identifiers: Canadiana 20240354117 | ISBN 9781778353727 (hardcover)

Subjects: LCSH: Canadian Journalism Foundation—History. | LCSH: Journalism—Canada. | LCSH: Mass media—Canada.

Classification: LCC PN4909 .M33 2024 | DDC 071/.1—dc23

Founded in 1990, **The Canadian Journalism Foundation** promotes, celebrates and facilitates excellence in journalism. The foundation runs a prestigious awards and fellowships program featuring an industry gala where news leaders, journalists and corporate Canada gather to celebrate outstanding journalistic achievement and the value of professional journalism. Through monthly J-Talks, a public speakers' series, the CJF facilitates dialogue among journalists, business people, academics and students about the role of the media in Canadian society and the ongoing challenges for media in the digital era. The foundation also fosters opportunities for journalism education, training and research.

The Canadian Journalism Foundation

77 Bloor Street West, Suite 600

Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1M2

www.cjf-fjc.ca

PRINTED IN CANADA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Table of Contents

About the Canadian Journalism Foundation	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Foreword: By Eric Jackman, CJF Founder	vii
Avant-Propos: Par Lise Bissonnette	x
CJF Chair’s Message: By Kathy English	xii
CJF Vice-Chair’s Message: By Maureen Shaughnessy Kitts	xiv
CJF President’s Message: By Natalie Turvey	xv
A History of the Canadian Journalism Foundation: By Jason McBride	1
Chapter 1: The Butterfly Effect	2
Chapter 2: How to Attack Complexity	10
Chapter 3: Consider the Source	20
Chapter 4: The Canadian Journalism Oscars	36
Chapter 5: New Blood, Fresh Oxygen	54
Chapter 6: Getting the Story - and the Storytellers - Right	62
Chapter 7: Pandemic Pivots	70
Chapter 8: The People, The Thinkers, The Visionaries	80
Journalism Matters: In Their Own Words	87
CJF Honours: Awards and Winners, 1990–2023	121

About the Canadian Journalism Foundation

Founded in 1990, The Canadian Journalism Foundation (CJF) fosters excellence in journalism through the support and recognition of emerging and experienced journalists and their organizations and enhances the public's understanding of fact-based journalism. The CJF facilitates dialogue about the role of journalism in Canadian society and the ongoing challenges for journalism in the digital era through its J-Talks public speakers series, which are hosted at venues across Canada and online. The Foundation recognizes excellence in journalism through its prestigious awards program, showcased at the CJF's annual gala. Through its fellowship programs, the Foundation provides opportunities for journalism education, training and research to encourage a diverse Canadian media.

OUR MISSION

The Canadian Journalism Foundation fosters excellence in journalism through the support and recognition of emerging and experienced journalists and their organizations, and enhances the public's understanding of fact-based journalism.

OUR VISION

Canadians understand the value of fact-based journalism and its importance to ensuring a strong and vibrant democracy. Canada's media are diverse, inclusive and represent the audiences they serve.

OUR LOGO

The CJF logo was designed in the foundation's early years by esteemed graphic designer Stuart Ash as a (pro bono) favour to CJF founder Eric Jackman. Considered one of the pioneers of graphic design in Canada, Ash earned national acclaim in the 1960s for his design of Canada's 1967 Centennial symbol of 11 equilateral triangles in the form of a maple leaf, selected by then prime minister Lester B. Pearson. With designer Fritz Gottschalk, Ash later formed Gottschalk+Ash, with offices in Montreal, Toronto and New York, creating ground-breaking visual identities that brought international renown.



La Fondation pour le
journalisme canadien

The Canadian
Journalism Foundation

Acknowledgments

Compiling a history project of this magnitude necessitates, above all, collaboration among a dedicated team of professionals aligned with the project's mission to tell the story of the Canadian Journalism Foundation since its founding in 1990 and to do so with the excellence that has become a hallmark of the foundation.

We extend our sincere gratitude to every team member who worked tirelessly for months to make this book happen. The many challenges involved in seeking and documenting the stories of the past and digging through archive files, stored in cardboard boxes and stashed deep in computers, at times felt insurmountable. But the conviction that we have an important story to tell about Canadian journalism and its evolution since the late 1980s propelled us moving forward into our past.

First and foremost, we owe an immense debt of thanks to CJF founder, **Dr Frederic (Eric) Jackman** for his generous financial support of this project and for suggesting, some 30-plus years since its founding, that perhaps it was time to document the foundation's history.

Special thanks to Lise Bissonnette for her foreword, en français.
Merci beaucoup, Lise.

This is the team primarily responsible for this book:

Maureen Shaughnessy Kitts, Natalie Turvey Publishers

Kathy English Editor

Jason McBride Writer

Joanna Rankin Designer

Michael Barclay Copy Editor

Patricia Treble Fact Checker

Megan Rampersaud Editorial Assistant

Jennie Worden Production Manager

Iris Fischer Legal Review



A heartfelt thank you to **Jason McBride** for his outstanding reporting and writing that skillfully intertwines the captivating CJF narrative with the broader evolution of Canadian journalism since the late 1980s. **Michael Barclay** and **Patricia Treble**, thank you for your meticulous attention to the many facts and details that excellence demands. **Joanna Rankin**, thank you for designing such a beautiful book that so seamlessly weaves together the words and images that tell our story. **Megan Rampersaud**, massive gratitude and props to you for your careful work transcribing years of CJF speeches, and your countless hours in the CJF photo archives finding the images that bring this history to life. And thank you, Megan, for your outstanding editing eye in proofing these pages. Special appreciation goes to lawyer **Iris Fischer**, a CJF board member and partner at **Blake, Cassels & Graydon**, for her invaluable prepublication review of this manuscript.

We extend enormous gratitude to CJF staff members, **Josh Gurfinkel**, director of operations, **Jennie Worden**, communications & program manager, and **Annicca Albano**, social media coordinator. We are truly thankful for the many times you set aside other pressing CJF business to facilitate the book's progress.

Our heartfelt appreciation extends to the broader CJF community: current and past board members, Canadian journalists, our many committed sponsors, and all who grasp the profound truth that "As journalism goes, so goes democracy."

Thank you, all.

The CJF history project leadership team

Kathy English

Maureen Shaughnessy Kitts

Natalie Turvey

Foreword

By Eric Jackman, Founder, CJF

That the Canadian Journalism Foundation is thriving in 2024, 34 years after its incorporation in 1990, is extraordinary. The organization is unique in the world. Knowlton Nash, Canada's eminent news anchor, was its first chair and, sadly, is no longer with us. Before all the founding board members took their leave, I, being one, was invited to write about the CJF's beginnings. Here it is.

HAVING RETURNED TO TORONTO IN 1978 AFTER 17 YEARS IN CHICAGO, I noticed changes in my Canada. Another sad change: my father, Harry Jackman, passed away in 1979, but his estate provided me with the opportunity to volunteer full-time. Given my academic background, I chose to work for a healthier Canada.

In the U.S., I studied at the University of Chicago for a doctorate in human development and psychology. These studies gave me different ways of thinking about people, society and cultures. My principal work in Chicago was as a psychologist, providing group psychotherapy, teaching how groups worked, and occasionally consulting with large organizations about how different departments might reduce conflict and work



more optimally. So, what had this to do with returning to Canada? My Canada had changed, and I needed to figure out the who, what, and why.

Regarding journalism, reporters were not getting business leaders to talk. As often as not, my daily newspaper would write that so-and-so had said “No comment” to the journalists’ questions. To me there seemed a disturbing degree of distrust between reporters and those being reported upon. Then I ran for public office.

I became the Progressive-Conservative candidate in Toronto’s then-Liberal riding of Spadina in the February 1980 federal election. There was little expectation that Conservatives would do well. Prime Minister Joe Clark’s minority government had been defeated on a budget vote after only nine months in office. To have any chance of success, even being noticed, an unusual campaign was conducted. Unsurprisingly, the newspapers paid attention and had a field day. Despite our efforts and media attention, I lost. But I attended more keenly to how reporters dealt with people in public life. I thought the reporters were getting minimal, obscure, or no information at all. And what the public was getting was less than optimal and often critical of politicians the people had just elected.

The CJF was born 10 years after my 1980 election attempt. Between 1980 and 1990, I explored with media leaders and business people the idea of “improving media” by creating a prize that would acknowledge great journalism while simultaneously shining a spotlight on an accomplished journalist so that young journalists would perhaps follow and learn. I thought a prestigious new prize for excellence in Canadian journalism with the degree of significance and substantial financial reward of the American Pulitzer Prize would benefit Canada. How successful was I? Not very. Media was uncertain about me, most thinking I represented business trying to influence (control) the media, and the business community was reluctant to divvy up any money for the journalism prize. How could I get them together?

Then I met Bill Wilton of the Niagara Institute. He had been bringing together groups of business, academic, labour and government people. They discussed various problems and, while not necessarily agreeing, learned

to respect each other. Bingo: Sociotherapy for society, I thought. Let's try to bring media and business together. Bill Wilton brought a host of senior business and media leaders to the Niagara Institute, where it was decided to create an organization to continue the discussion. A critical societal foundation was born.

In 1990, Knowlton Nash came on board as CJF's first chair. Then Lise Bissonnette, as co-chair. Business leaders, including CEOs from Royal Bank (Allan Taylor), Molson's (Marshall "Mickey" Cohen), Royal LePage (Bill Dimma), Brascan (Trevor Eyton), and several others helped fund the organization.

My idea of "improving media" was challenged. What do business people know about media anyway? A journalist suggested the word "enhance" might be more acceptable. It was, and so it continues. I was reluctant to call it a "journalism" foundation because doing so reduced the importance of the business side of the equation. But a better name was not forthcoming. At present, the CJF is a vital, going concern. It is now, as it has been from the outset, staffed by extraordinary people, supported by Canadian journalists and media leaders. Its board continues to be filled with keen, outstanding members from journalism and business.

During the early days, there was substantial reluctance among journalists to create an "excellence" prize for journalists or media organizations. I believe this had to do with two issues: Media not wanting to evaluate each other and journalists not wanting to be evaluated by those outside their business.

Eventually, Peter Desbarats, dean of the journalism school at the University of Western Ontario (now Western University), agreed to create judging criteria for the "excellence" prize and received a muted blessing from all. Years later, "Jackman" was added to the "excellence awards." And some years on, the CJF named me, for my earlier efforts, as its founder. Today, the foundation exists because of the contributions of so many journalists, media owners, business people and others who have made it excel.

The CJF is a societal organization from which every country would benefit. Lucky Canada!

Avant-Propos

Quelques notes sur la fondation d'une Fondation

Par Lise Bissonnette

Lise Bissonnette a été coprésidente fondatrice de la Fondation pour le journalisme canadien

Dans mon fonds d'archives déposé et conservé aux Archives nationales du Québec, j'ai retrouvé un modeste dossier relié à la Fondation pour le journalisme canadien. Il contenait une correspondance administrative et un flamboyant certificat frappé d'un sceau rouge, émis le 21 octobre 1990, qui confirmait mon titre de « co-présidente fondatrice » de la Fondation.

TROIS DÉCENNIES PLUS TARD, on m'invite à évoquer ces débuts alors que mes archives sont plutôt muettes. Quelques souvenirs heureux émergent néanmoins. La réunion de Fondation avait eu lieu à Niagara-on-the-Lake, site poétique et flamboyant en automne, qui fut naturellement propice aux réflexions amicales. Je m'y retrouvais, plutôt étonnée, nantie de ce nouveau titre parce que la Fondation, propulsée par un intérêt bien intentionné mais assez maladroit des milieux d'affaires envers le journalisme, avait voulu confier un rôle titre à des praticiens du métier. Au premier chef, ce fut au très émérite Knowlton Nash, qui avait bien voulu m'associer à l'aventure. Nous formions une sorte de couple idéal : presse parlée et presse écrite, homme et femme, langue anglaise et langue française, Canada et Québec.

Au mois de juin précédent, j'avais assumé la direction du quotidien *Le Devoir*, intellectuellement et politiquement le plus prestigieux journal de langue française au Canada. Le journal était en crise à tous égards, le pari de sa reconstruction était immense, comme le scepticisme qui l'entourait. La Fondation pour le journalisme canadien, conçue dans un univers torontois, ignorait probablement ce contexte. Je devais plutôt son estime à mon parcours de journaliste et analyste indépendante, de 1986 à 1990, qui m'avait amenée à parcourir le Canada d'un océan à l'autre. Je faisais partie du petit groupe des interprètes des guerres constitutionnelles du Canada, notam-



ment de l'amer débat qui allait, au cours des mêmes années, mener à l'échec de l'Accord du lac Meech. *What does Quebec want?* C'est ce qu'on me demandait un peu partout et Knowlton Nash avait souvent été, en ondes, le plus aimable et intéressé de mes interlocuteurs. L'Accord est mort dix jours après mon arrivée à la tête du *Devoir*.

J'étais donc, quatre mois plus tard, une créature symbolique assez appropriée. Mais on comprendra – et on me le pardonnera peut-être – que mes journées et semaines d'après juin 1990 ont été accaparées par mes fonctions éditoriales cumulées à d'énormes charges de refonte économique du *Devoir*. Avec des résultats heureux, certes, mais je ne pouvais fréquenter la Fondation que de loin. Observatrice surtout, je la voyais évoluer vers une prise en charge efficace par la profession elle-même, comme il le fallait.

Ce qui m'a attirée lors de la création de la Fondation pour le journalisme canadien, ce n'était certes pas le discours assez naïf des philanthropes fondateurs qui espéraient discuter éthique des médias, en laissant plus ou moins entendre que notre morale devait être réformée... Un discours qui m'était familier. *Le Devoir* est un journal qui, depuis son avènement en 1910, a toujours compté sur des mécènes tout en arrivant à les tenir parfaitement à distance, je ne craignais pas l'appropriation du métier par les possédants. J'étais surtout séduite par un soutien possible au développement professionnel des journalistes en exercice, un domaine négligé alors que les écoles universitaires de journalisme prenaient un envol centré sur la seule formation initiale. Cette piste est d'ailleurs devenue la plus féconde pour la Fondation.

Notre cadre socio-politique étant déterminant, cette fécondité a trouvé beaucoup moins de résonance en milieu de langue française, qui a mis fin en 2017 à l'excellent programme ProjetJ, mené avec la collaboration des départements de journalisme dans nos universités, faute de financement adéquat. Dans ce domaine comme en tant d'autres, l'idée d'une relation fusionnelle entre le Québec et le Canada ne pouvait être qu'utopie. Les lauréats des Prix annuels de la CJF, les principaux programmes d'activités, et son conseil d'administration où la présence francophone est de nature honorifique, ne peuvent faire illusion. Je le dis sans la moindre irritation ou déception. Un regard sur le Canada, je l'ai constamment écrit et formulé, nous impose la lucidité : il n'y aura jamais un seul pays en ce pays, la modeste coexistence pacifique est la seule entente possible, elle suffit, en journalisme, à nourrir l'amitié.

Vingt ans après sa naissance, la Fondation pour le journalisme canadien m'a octroyé son Prix pour le couronnement de carrière en 2010. Je l'ai accueilli avec un enchantement singulier. Qu'est-ce qu'une carrière? Un parcours qui a des qualités. Je salue à mon tour celui de la Fondation, durable, vivace, fructueux.

CJF Chair's Message



When Eric Jackman first proposed the idea of documenting the history of The Canadian Journalism Foundation, I signed on immediately. As a student of Canadian history, I have long been enamored of the connection of journalism and history, that cliché - and truth - that news is the first draft of history.

WHAT CONNECTS JOURNALISM AND HISTORY IS *STORY*. Undeniably, the Canadian Journalism Foundation has a compelling story to tell about its almost 35 years of nurturing excellence in Canadian journalism.

Since its founding, the CJF has been a steadfast champion of journalistic excellence and integrity. Accuracy, fairness, accountability, independence, diversity, public interest – the pillars of quality journalism that do not change however journalism evolves – remain core to the mission and vision of the CJF’s many vital initiatives.

I became involved with this unique organization some 15 years ago while serving as public editor of the Toronto Star where I was entrusted with upholding journalistic standards and explaining the Star’s journalism to its many readers. I was drawn to the CJF’s commitment to journalism’s highest standards and its mission to enlighten the Canadian public about the critical value of journalism to democracy. Our CJF motto, “As journalism goes, so goes democracy,” captivated me from the outset.

This history stands as a testament to the multitude of Canadians who know that #JournalismMatters, understanding that fact-based, responsible journalism makes a difference to the public discourse democracy demands. That fact persists whether your news and information is printed on the front page or the homepage, broadcast on radio or television, or flashed to you on TikTok or whatever new, new thing comes along.

Democracy falters without quality journalism. The CJF was founded on that principle. Through the years it has fostered a community of support for this essential idea among journalists, business people, academics, public policy and public service officials, and our nation's public. I am continually inspired – gobsmacked, actually – by the fact that so many individuals from these diverse Canadian constituencies have come together within the CJF to champion the value of real news to a robust democracy.

We hope this book provides all of you with the opportunity to learn more about the history of the CJF and the evolution of journalism in Canada through the transformative past decades rocked by immense technological change. Our goal is to inform, inspire and evoke memories of the foundation's past, while strengthening commitment to the CJF mission and motto, now and into the future.

Numerous individuals deserve to be thanked for this project, and they are duly recognized in our acknowledgements. On a personal note, I extend heartfelt thanks to CJF president Natalie Turvey for her outstanding, inspiring leadership since 2009, and to CJF vice-chair Maureen Shaughnessy Kitts for her generous mentorship throughout my tenure.

Special thanks to Eric Jackman for his unwavering support of both this project and the CJF since its inception; and his invaluable memories, some of which have found their way into this book.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Our history is, indeed, your story too.

**Kathy English,
Chair, CJF**

CJF Vice-Chair's Message



In the earliest days of Eric Jackman’s mission to create the Canadian Journalism Foundation and its goal to bridge the gap between the skeptical private sector and the Canadian media, I had the good fortune of meeting Eric in my role as head of communications at McDonald’s Restaurants of Canada.

ERIC REINFORCED MY CONCERN TO BUILD THAT BRIDGE between the “two solitudes.” A few years later, he convinced me to accept a position on the CJF’s board of directors, where I have been honoured to hold various roles, including vice-chair and CJF Awards gala chair for many years.

What has inspired me to continue my support, and passion for CJF? Its evolution. Yes, from its earliest days, its lean days, its financially challenging days, its “bridging days,” the CJF has become the “pillar, face and voice for” our Canadian media. Its role is to uphold our CJF mission – “As journalism goes, so goes democracy” – in whatever form, when our media is challenged at any given moment.

I see CJF’s legacy enshrined through the courage and lens of our annual award and tribute recipients’ commitment to provide citizens with ethical, fact-based, local, national and international coverage of stories and events that impact them in an ever-threatened democratic society.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to Eric Jackman and Kathy English for their vision and dedication to this project, and for the countless hours and days they gave to ensure this book became a reality.

It has been an honour to have fulfilled whatever role I could to support the CJF during my tenure.

**Maureen Shaughnessy Kitts,
Vice-Chair, CJF**

CJF President's Message

In 2009, when I took on the role of Executive Director of the Canadian Journalism Foundation, I made it my mission to thoroughly understand the landscape of Canadian journalism. Reflecting on my 15-year tenure, I'm reminded of the incredible journey marked by meaningful interactions with journalists, business, and news leaders from every corner of the country. I've often referred to the CJF as "my foundation" – a reflection of the profound investment and personal connection I feel toward our work.

FROM THE OUTSET, I WAS ACUTELY AWARE of the pivotal role journalism plays in the fabric of our democracy. My time with the CJF has been a front-row seat to this work. I've witnessed the resilience of the industry amidst digital upheavals and financial challenges, and I've been inspired by the dedication of journalists who consistently strive for excellence.

Leading the CJF is a privilege. Our initiatives – from awards and fellowships to national public talks – have been catalysts for upholding standards of quality journalism. It's been rewarding to see the impact of these efforts: nurturing emerging talent, educating the Canadian public, and celebrating exemplary journalism. Each step has reinforced my conviction that what we do matters, because journalism matters.

It has been an honour to collaborate with our chairs, esteemed leaders in Canadian journalism, including John Macfarlane, Robert Lewis, John Cruickshank, David Walmsley and Kathy English. Each brought fresh perspectives and vision, propelling the CJF to new heights. I am deeply grateful for their confidence in my



leadership, empowering our shared dedication to making a meaningful and lasting impact on the future of journalism in our country.

The achievements of the CJF would not be possible without the exceptional support and talent of our staff. A heartfelt thank you goes to Josh Gurfinkel, our director of operations, who has been a cornerstone of our team since 2011. His contributions have been invaluable.

I'm filled with gratitude and pride as I look back. We've been part of a collective effort to support and celebrate journalism, contributing to a well-informed society. I am also immensely thankful for the support of our many sponsors who believe in a healthy and vibrant press in Canada and its vital role in our democracy.

I'm honoured to be part of the stewardship of CJF's legacy, a legacy that upholds a commitment to journalistic excellence while ambitiously supporting the industry's future.

Natalie Turvey,
President & Executive Director, CJF



Josh Gurfinkel, 2023.

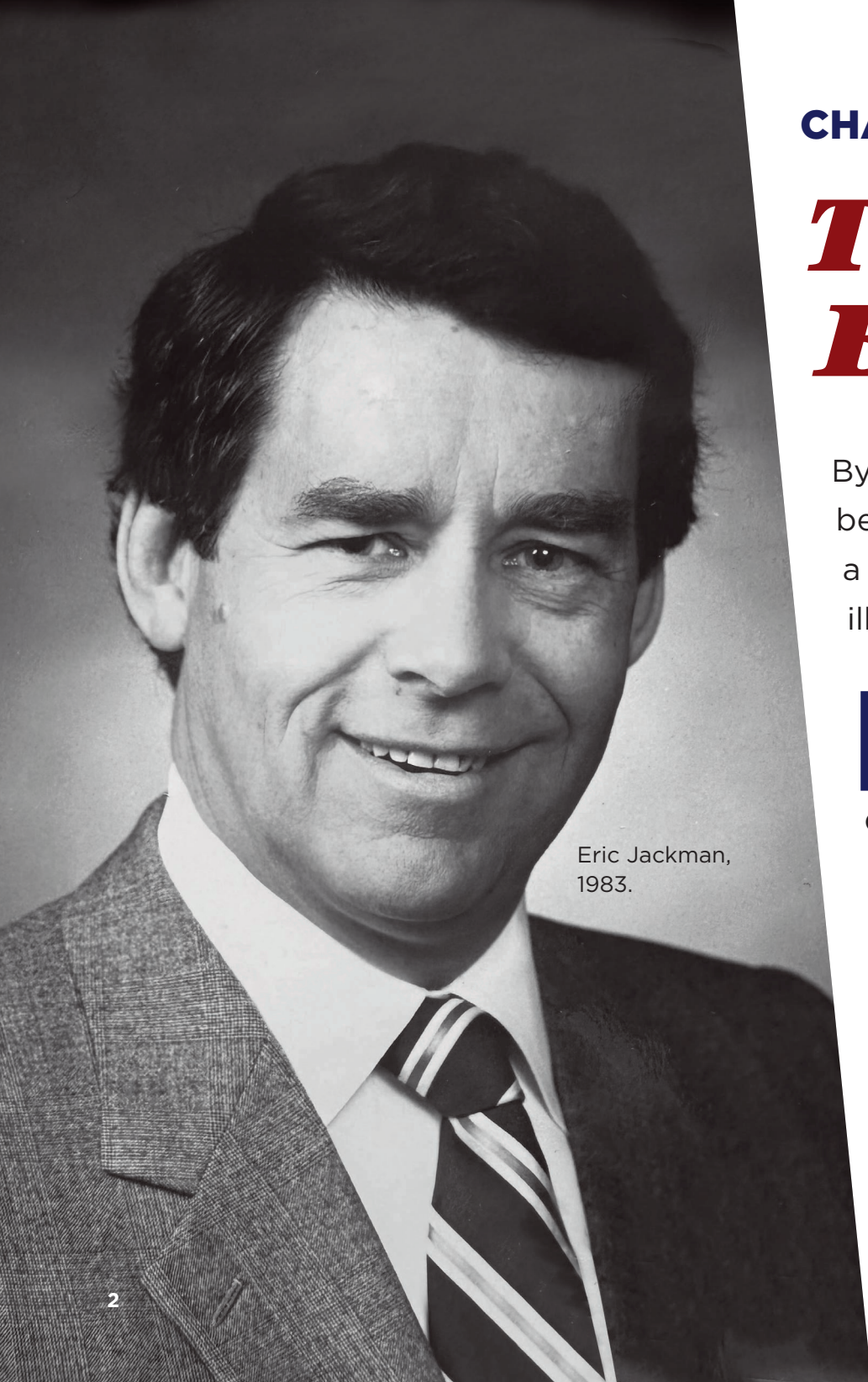
As Journalism Goes, So Goes Democracy:

A HISTORY OF THE
CANADIAN JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

BY JASON MCBRIDE

“The very survival of our democracy depends on how well journalists do their job, and we all have a stake in that.”

KNOWLTON NASH



Eric Jackman,
1983.

CHAPTER 1

The Butterfly Effect

By the time Eric Jackman was in his mid-40s, he had been an investor, an academic, a practising psychologist, a philanthropist, and the scion of one of Canada's most illustrious and wealthy families. That wasn't enough.

HE WANTED TO DO MORE, thought he could do more, and, like many other members of his distinguished family, felt the more he could do was in the realm of public service. Jackman's maternal grandfather had been leader of the Ontario Liberal Party; his father, Henry, known as Harry, was Tory MP for Rosedale in the 1940s. Eric's older brother, Hal, a celebrated financier, had run, albeit unsuccessfully, in three federal elections in the 1960s and '70s. In 1980, Eric decided it was his turn. In February of that year, he ran for the Tories in the federal election, representing the Toronto riding of Spadina. He claimed no exceptional political acumen, but argued that he knew what was "best for the riding."

Jackman was charming, affable, feisty. Despite having been out of Canada for 17 years, his name was well-known in the community. But running for public office suddenly exposed him to a level of scrutiny he hadn't anticipated or enjoyed. The *Globe and Mail* called his bid "one of the most bizarre local campaigns in recent political history," mocking everything from his apparent indifference to

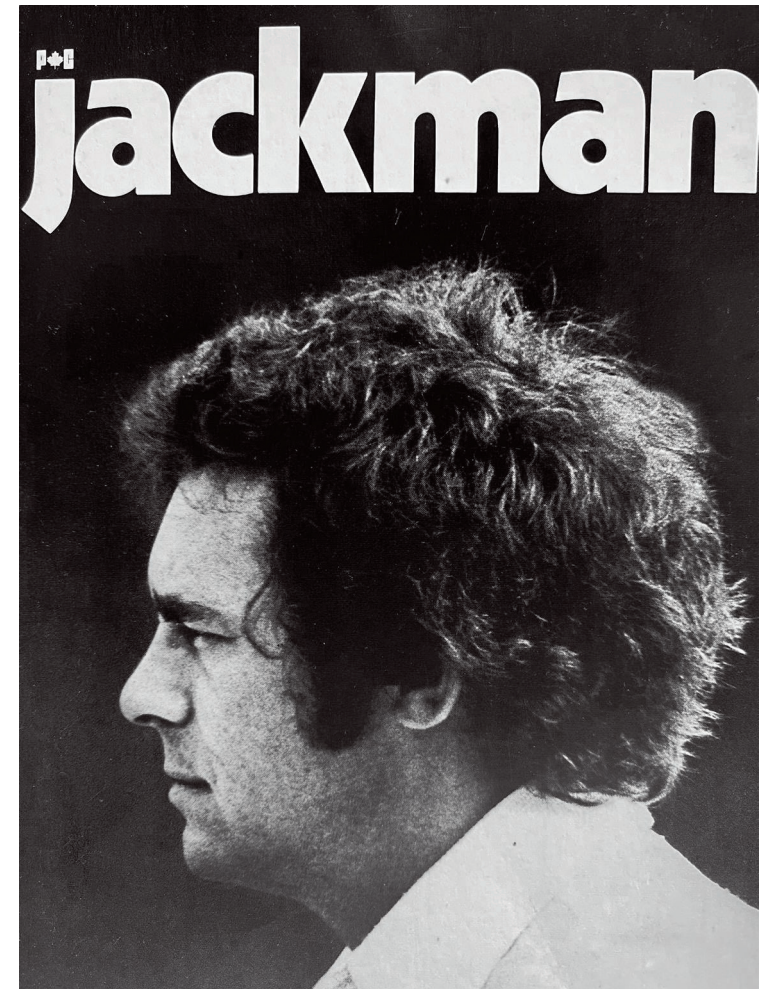
policy matters to his idiosyncratic voter outreach. Thanks to his campaign buttons – blue-and-yellow ones, emblazoned with the inscrutable words, “Butterfly for Jackman” – his campaign was dubbed “the Butterfly Campaign.” In the end, Eric fared no better than Hal. Incumbent Liberal Peter Stollery beat him easily, and Pierre Trudeau’s Liberal party defeated Joe Clark’s Progressive Conservatives..

The loss stung, as any public defeat does. But what really nagged at Jackman was the way he felt he’d been manhandled by the media. It was one thing to be mocked, but he also insisted that he’d been misquoted and mischaracterized. And it wasn’t just him: to his mind, journalists were unduly critical and demeaning of all politicians. He worried that they were often inaccurate, incapable at times of balance.

He liked to tell an illustrative joke about Joe Clark. One day, Clark is walking along the Rideau Canal with his dog. He throws a stick into the water and the dog runs down the bank, *walks* across the water, retrieves the stick and brings it back to Clark. What was the newspaper headline the next day? “Joe Clark’s Dog Can’t Swim!”

That was kind of funny. What wasn’t funny, in Jackman’s view, was what this was doing to Canadian democracy. He worried that negativity and inaccuracy in the media was leading to cynicism about politics. It was scaring people away. Journalists were happy to damage a person’s reputation for the sake of a clever quip. Who, in their right mind, would go into government knowing that they were likely setting themselves up for a constant drubbing – or worse? “I think that what we will get in Canada is a decreasing level of candidate,” Jackman said in an address he later gave at the Empire Club in Toronto. “That is, the quality of candidate is going to drop further and further.”

Jackman had another favourite example. Five years after the 1980 election, over lunch, a friend of Jackman’s was grousing about the way John Black Aird had been treated by the media. A lawyer and former senator, Aird had then just completed his term as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. A newspaper article wondered what Aird would do now, speculating that he would go back to his former job as “bagman for the Liberal party.” Jackman’s friend was incensed – all of Aird’s hard work, his dedication and sacrifice, were reduced by this petty potshot. Jackman didn’t care that much one way or the other, and he



Eric Jackman federal election campaign poster, 1980.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CANADA'S MEDIA

A Report on Interviews With Canadian Leaders

W.C. Wilton
The Niagara Institute

Directly or indirectly, the media provide most of the information used by Canada's leaders to form their opinions about the actions and agendas of the other sectors in our country, yet the media and their operating constraints are not well understood by this important consumer segment. Despite this lack of understanding, both media executives, and leaders in other sectors who rely on the media (and often appear in their coverage), voice similar concerns about the media's ability to set agendas, achieve balance and accuracy, and establish and maintain professionalism in their reporting.

This report summarizes ideas expressed in more than 70 confidential interviews with Canadian government, business, labour and media leaders on the subject of Canada's media — the role they play, how well they perform, and ideas for improvement. The interviews, conducted by The Niagara Institute, are part of an ongoing effort to improve understanding and constructive interaction among the sectors of Canadian society.

Funding for the interviews was provided by the Jackman and Southam foundations, together with Southam Newspapers and Brascan.

Lists of those interviewed and of the members of the Niagara Institute Media Advisory Committee are found at the end of this report.

MAJOR THEMES

The interviews uncovered a wide range of views about the media and their work, and the not-surprising fact that the same symptoms are frequently diagnosed differently by those within and outside the media, and differently by non-media leaders in different sectors. Nevertheless, a pattern developed in which certain themes were repeated. These themes, and the expansion of each in the report that follows, attempt to give views the same weight as they were given by the interviewees.

¶ The media's role is to provide citizens with the information needed to exercise their rights and privileges as Canadians. The media have a responsibility to their consumers which is greater than that of other businesses.

¶ On balance, Canada's media do a good job of informing their consumers.

¶ The professionalism demonstrated by Canada's media practitioners has improved,

could see why Aird would be a target for a journalist – Aird, a lawyer, represented high society, government, the Crown – but he was also certain that if his friend was this upset, then hundreds of other people were likely upset too. “Sometimes I wonder that, if in the power struggle between media and society,” he told the Empire Club, “the power has shifted to the media so that the ‘ink-stained wretches,’ as they were called in the publishing houses of yesterday, have become the ‘lords of the manor’ without realizing it.”

There was a corollary to this. Jackman felt that the media's ill will toward politicians was borne, at least in part, of mutual ignorance, and that this ignorance extended into other sectors as well – primarily business and finance. At the time, the business community was more inaccessible. They often delayed, or fudged, or outright lied. The press, rebuked and frustrated, attacked them in turn. The result was too often, in Jackman's view anyway, stories that were misleading and slanted, half-truths that served no one well – especially the public. Jackman said the suspicion of the other had ballooned into outright paranoia. He called this the “paranoid gap.”

He acknowledged that business controls the advertising in media, judges can impose gag orders, and government can, at times, muzzle media. But the media has the ability to attack reputations and invade privacy. Those attacks, he argued, had become far too frequent.

Ever the psychologist, he saw this paranoid gap as a kind of sickness. And, as a psychologist who had studied the behaviour and dynamics of groups, he thought he had a remedy. The media and the business community needed to speak more frequently and openly with each other. They needed to better understand what the other needed and to develop a more empathic relationship. The result, he hoped, would be better-quality journalism and a healthier democracy.

How best to do this, though? It was a problem that continued to nettle Jackman throughout the decade. He brought it up with media and business colleagues whenever he could. Journalists, understandably, were wary and skeptical, especially when Jackman started talking about “improving” journalism. To them, he was both an outsider and an insider, perhaps the worst of both worlds.

John Fraser, then-editor of *Saturday Night* and who happened to have a cottage directly across from Jackman's in Georgian Bay, called Jackman “sweetly naïve.” Others, like John Macfarlane, then at the *Financial*

Niagara Institute report on attitudes toward Canadian media, 1988.

Times, also thought Jackman had it all wrong. “It’s a journalist’s job to be both nobody’s friend and everybody’s friend,” he said. “You know the old saw: afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.” Macfarlane’s friend and colleague, Robert (Bob) Lewis, managing editor of *Maclean’s*, echoed this: “It wasn’t a concern of mine that the bank chairs might have been a little bruised by something that had been written about them. They were all big boys and they could take care of themselves.”

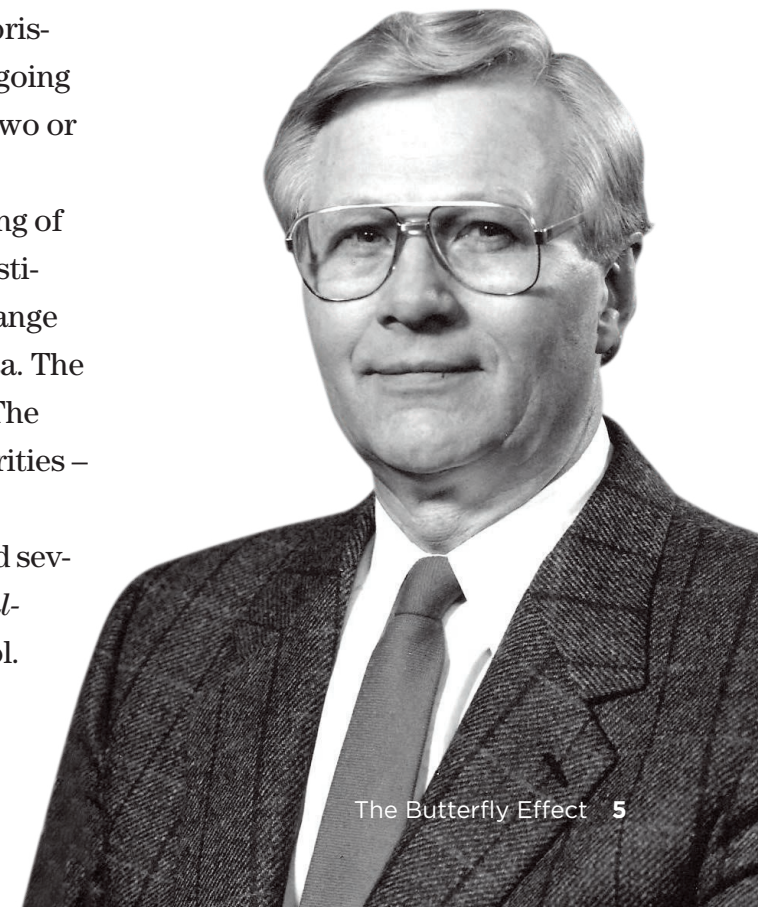
Jackman found a more receptive audience in a civil servant named Bill Wilton. Wilton was a senior executive with the federal Department of International Trade, and a man described by long-time journalist and consultant Pauline Couture as “all-heart.” He had been seconded to the Niagara Institute, a non-profit corporate retreat centre and think tank, founded in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1971. Its mandate was, in Wilton’s words, “to improve understanding among government, business, the not-for-profit sector and labour.” To that end, Wilton, as director, coordinated conferences and seminars that brought these various sectors together to ponder problems and air new ideas.

The Niagara Institute was a kind of a safe space for big business. Wilton maintained that – with the proper environment, given enough time and frank, respectful discussion – big problems could be solved in surprisingly short order. But it soon became obvious that, for the Institute to fully achieve its mandate, he was going to have to bring the media in, too. Wilton began inviting journalists, editors and bureau chiefs to spend two or three days rubbing elbows with other power brokers.

Soon enough, Jackman and Wilton had entered each other’s orbit. For Wilton, at least, it was a “meeting of the minds.” They shared a concern about the undue influence of the media and a belief in the Niagara Institute’s quasi-therapeutic method of dialogue. The two men decided that Wilton would interview a wide range of senior people in the media, as well as what Wilton called “the Institute’s target clientele” to gather data. The Institute would use that to develop programming to “improve understanding of and within the media.” The Jackman Foundation – a charitable body established in 1964 by Henry Jackman to bankroll various charities – would fund the project, along with the Southam Foundation, Molson’s and others.

Wilton interviewed more than 70 people, including business leaders, academics, lawyers, politicians and several members of a so-called media advisory committee, including Patrick O’Callaghan, publisher of the *Calgary Herald*, the *Toronto Star*’s John Honderich, and Peter Desbarats, dean of Western’s journalism school. It also included Jackman and Bill Dimma, onetime president of the *Toronto Star* and former chair of the

Bill Wilton, director of the Niagara Institute.



Niagara Institute. In July 1988, the Niagara Institute released the results of these interviews in a survey entitled “Canada’s Media.”

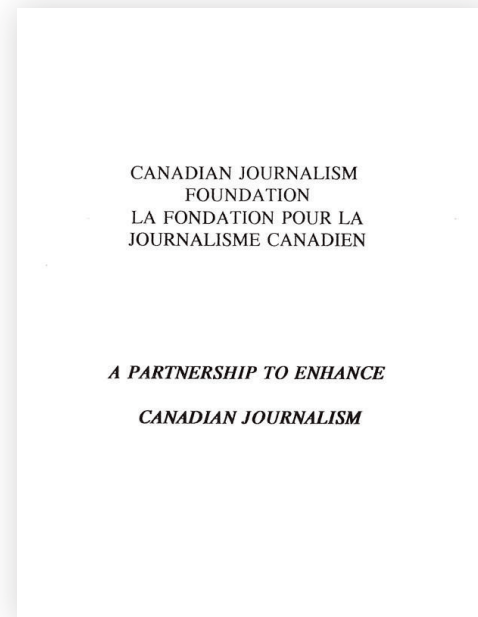
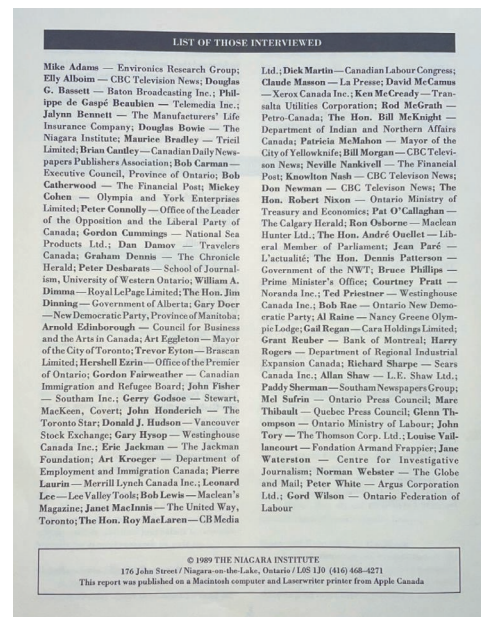
Wilton’s findings appeared to confirm his and Jackman’s suspicions. In his introduction to the survey, Wilton wrote, “both media executives and leaders in other sectors, who rely on the media (and often appear in their coverage), voice similar concerns about the media’s ability to... achieve balance and accuracy, and... maintain professionalism in their reporting.” He went on, accusing the media of having a shallow understanding of business, even being anti-business, attacking or villainizing the business community at every opportunity.

Not surprisingly, the media didn’t love this characterization. A number of journalists – including Rick Salutin, Margaret Wentz, and the *Calgary Herald’s* O’Callaghan – later publicly took issue with Wilton’s findings, claiming that he and Jackman fundamentally misunderstood how journalism worked, and, worse, were themselves conspiring to better shape, even control, the media. “We have to keep them all at bay,” O’Callaghan said, “if we value our freedom.” Salutin put it more bluntly: “If you don’t like the coverage you’re getting in the press, then write a letter to the fucking editor.”

Jackman was undeterred. He still felt strongly that change was badly needed, and that he could incubate

LEFT More than 70 media and business leaders and academics provided their perspective for the Niagara Institute report on attitudes toward Canadian media, 1989.

RIGHT The CJF, a partnership to enhance Canadian journalism. Backgrounder document, 1990.



this change. But he’d also come to recognize that journalists were, as he put it, a “brotherhood or sisterhood.” In other words, they were, at heart, a tribe that stuck together because journalism can be a difficult, often dangerous, profession. He sweetened his pitch accordingly. Forget improving journalism — he was going to *enhance* it. One surefire way was to throw some money at the problem. Perhaps a prestigious new prize with the cachet and cash of America’s Pulitzer Prize for journalism would have the dual effect of inspiring young journalists and making more established ones more aspirational.

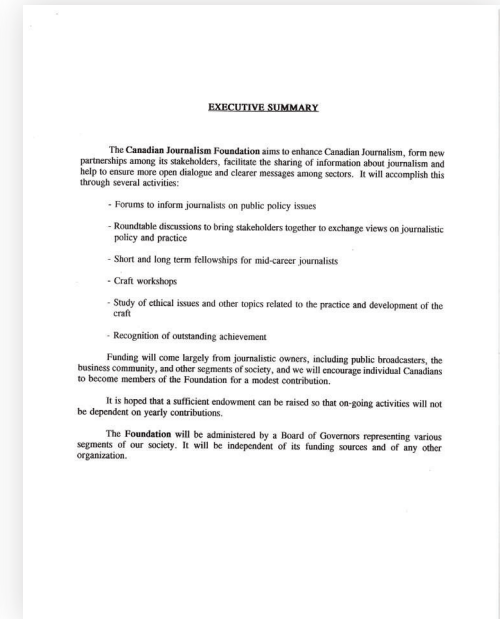
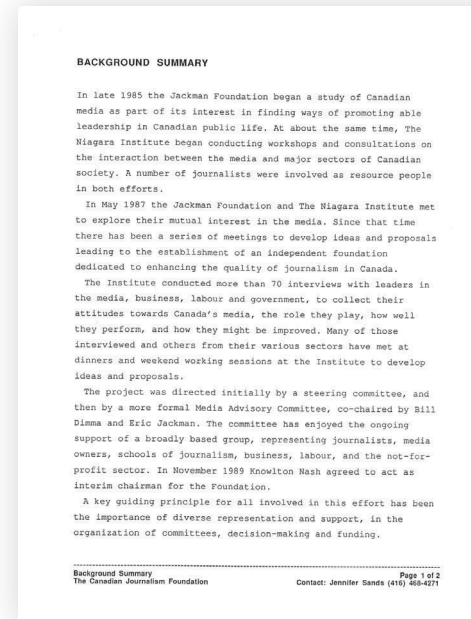
“I know that if you want somebody to change, you need to use positive reinforcement – rewards instead of punishments,” he told the *Ryerson Review of Journalism* in 1991. “So I said: ‘How can we encourage Canadian journalists in a way that’ll make them feel good about themselves, so they don’t have to take potshots at other people, and also create

examples for young people to emulate?” Jackman’s largesse had its admirers. “The idea that someone might start something that would have philanthropic engagement at one level or another seemed like a good idea to me,” said Christopher Waddell, then at the *Globe and Mail*. While there was no real tradition of philanthropic giving to journalism or the media in Canada, there were a number of examples south of the border: the Knight Foundation, the Poynter Institute, the Nieman Foundation. Jackman’s proposal was similar to those organizations, but also unique in its ambition to bring the media together with everybody else.

Jackman was an admirer of institutions. His frustration with journalists stemmed, at least in part, from the fact that they didn’t always share this admiration. But to bestow this new journalism prize, he wanted to create a new institution, one that would, he said, “serve Canada through better journalism.” The prize would reward outstanding achievement, but the institution wouldn’t stop there; it would also conduct research and facilitate professional development. It would, he hoped, make Canadian journalism the best in the world.

After a couple more meetings at the Niagara Institute, the last in late October 1990, this institution officially came into being on October 21, 1990. Jackman and his lieutenants assembled an impressive cross-section of the media elite and Canadian business bosses that would comprise a volunteer board of governors. Among these 30-odd journalists and executives were Elly Alboim, CBC’s Parliament Hill bureau chief, and *Macleans*’ Robert Lewis. To give the nascent organization the greatest possible credibility he went to the country’s best-known news people – broadcast journalism’s *éminence grise*, Knowlton Nash, the CBC-TV news anchor, and Lise Bissonnette, the editor and publisher of *Le Devoir*. After some persistent persuasion, the two agreed to be founding co-chairs. “We formed a kind of ideal couple,” Bissonnette remembered, “spoken press and written press, man and woman, English-language and French-language, Canada and Quebec.” The organization was called the Canadian Journalism Foundation.

Jackman would frequently insist that it was not, however, a journalism foundation, but rather a *societal* one, a coming together of those reporting and those being reported on. By which he meant it was controlled by



LEFT A summary of the CJF’s first award and fellowship development document.

RIGHT The CJF’s executive summary of its founding mandate, 1991.



Lise Bissonnette, founding CJF co-chair, wins Lifetime Achievement Award, 2010.



no one group, neither the business community from which he and his colleagues had sprung, nor the media, which he hoped to improve. “I think the media is so important to democracy,” he said. “We have some of the best right now. Let’s make it better.

“It is time to start creating a better journalism and a healthier society,” he said.

Some 20 years later, at a May, 2010 tribute to Jackman held at University of Toronto’s Massey College, Nash recalled Jackman’s “dream” of higher quality journalism in Canada and their first discussion over lunch in Toronto.

“Eric and I met for lunch at the very Tory Albany Club, where amidst its starchy white tablecloth atmosphere, we spooned our vichyssoise and I was full of high flown talk about the importance of journalism as a central force in the health of a democracy. Eric was frustrated by what he thought was the media too often misunderstanding the role of business in democratic society. It was immediately clear that this was the key knot we would have to untie,” Nash wrote, in remarks read by CJF board member, Dick O’Hagan.

“By the time we were scooping up the last of our chocolate ice cream at the end of lunch, we had agreed on at least one thing: trying to improve the quality of journalism would be a good thing,” Nash wrote. “And, so here we are tonight saluting the founding father of the Canadian Journalism Foundation.”

Longtime CJF board member Mark Sarner, president of Manifest Communications, also paid tribute at that 2010 event, stating that from the outset Jackman was “invested in the ideals of a better Canadian democracy.

“Twenty years is a long time to be the stalwart steward of an idea,” Sarner said. “Eric has been here for CJF from day one. He has given direction, moral support and critical financial support. When the going got tough he stayed the course. Thanks Eric. From us. For journalism. For Canada and Canadians.”

Eric Jackman was never nominated to run for political office again. But that 1980 “Butterfly Campaign” had its effect. Just as the small movements of a butterfly’s wings can influence much larger and complex systems, so too did Jackman’s personal experience of the media lead to a broader, more profound understanding of its role in Canadian life. From the pulpit of the CJF, he, alongside hundreds of journalists and corporate leaders, would undeniably and irrevocably shape the relationship between our political officials and business elite and the people who covered them.