Building Trust One Coffee at a Time

David Storey on journalistic standards, fighting fake news and building relationships between CBC PEI and the business community.

David Storey

Managing Editor, CBC Prince Edward Island

Adapted from an interview with David Storey, Managing Editor of CBC Prince Edward Island, by Bianca McGregor, CEO of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, at Speakers Corner at Confederation Court Mall on October 21, 2026.

What builds trust in the CBC, and how do you keep it locally?

We recently ran focus groups across the country with people who have a positive view of the CBC and people who do not. Almost universally, even those who do not love us agree that our journalism is solid and that what we deliver is factual and has gone through many checks and balances. We have a document called our Journalistic Standards and Practices. If we do a story on the Chamber and you say, "Wait a minute, I don't agree with that," our job is to defend the journalism, and we go back to that document to guide our response.

In those focus groups, even people who said they disliked the CBC would tell us, "Well, I have your app, and I watch my nightly newscast." We are open to criticism, and we defend our journalism every day. We reply to the emails we get from viewers, explaining why we made a decision. If someone is not satisfied, they can take it to our ombud. When a complaint comes in, it comes to me, I write a defence of the story, and the ombud rules one way or the other. I think that openness builds trust with the audience.

How do you make it easier for people to engage with the media?

It is a lot to have a camera (and/or a mic) in your face, and I understand that. So we are building relationships first. Once a month we hold coffee chats, and organizations come in to talk. This week it was the PEI Potato Board. The idea is to get to know you before we do a story with you, so that when we call, you feel a connection to us. We have done the same with the RCMP and others. We want to know why you make the decisions you make, and we want you to know why we make ours.

And we are not "gotcha" journalism. If we do a story with a business owner or the Chamber, we do not want to catch you off guard or put you in a bad light, because then we burn that bridge, we lose that relationship. So building those relationships before we ever need to cover a story is something we are really focusing on this year. If you want a coffee, you can email me. Our doors are open, because without PEI, the CBC does not exist here. We are here for you.

It works the same way with community groups. I have told several of them: invite us to your events. We do not need to cover them, but if we ever do have to cover a hard story, we will already have an

understanding of your organization and a relationship started. We do not want to be knocking on your door for the first time with a story pitch having never met.

How is the newsroom responding to the shift to digital?

PEI is a special place, and Compass is one of the strongest supper-hour newscasts in the country. But appointment television is going away. People are not sitting down at a set time to watch the news. They are consuming it through social media and digital platforms. You can now watch Compass on our on-demand fast channel and on YouTube. At our recent open house, a man in his late seventies showed me his phone and told me he watches Compass on YouTube every night. That is the future.

I think of Compass as the Island's newspaper, feeding journalism into everything else we do. My job is to keep Compass strong - and trust me, it is going nowhere, there would be a riot - while making sure that journalism also reaches people on our website, our fast channel, the app and radio. In our newsroom we are content creators: we create the content and then find the right home for it.

We are also proud of this newsroom. Our newscast was recently named the best in Canada. I cannot take credit, since I only just joined, but it speaks to the strength of this team.

How are you dealing with fake news and AI-generated images?

It is a real challenge, and we have been training our staff to identify fake news and AI in news. Take the weather pictures that viewers send us for Compass. A growing number have been altered by AI, often unintentionally, because someone ran a photo through a phone app. We have trained team members who track fake news and artificial intelligence. When something comes in, it goes through their process, and if we need a second opinion, there is a national team.

We recently received a picture of a cruise ship that had supposedly crashed into the dock on the Charlottetown waterfront. It had not happened. We called emergency services and sent a team downtown to drive by. Someone had gone to the trouble of manipulating an image and sending it in, hoping we would run it. Here in PEI, we do not put artificial deadlines on ourselves the way a newsroom in Toronto or New York might. We want to fact-check everything and hear from all the right voices before we run a story. We have the luxury of doing that here, but it gets harder every day.

How is the CBC funded, and what does it cost?

About 70% of CBC funding comes from government and about 30% from commercial revenue, mainly advertisers. It costs every Canadian taxpayer about $33 a year. Compare that with what people pay for streaming services, or with the BBC licence fee in the UK, which is several hundred dollars a year. It is real value for money. I have worked for commercial broadcasters in Canada and the U.S., and I think the service we provide is worth every penny of that $33.

Is there anything you would like Islanders to know?

We know we have to do more work covering the business community, and the CBC is making a commitment to that. We are launching a national business show on CBC News Network, fed by journalists across the country, and there are plenty of stories from PEI that can go national. Our reporters on the ground here will be feeding those stories.

I know not everyone is media trained, and it can be intimidating to have a camera and a microphone in front of you when you are worried about how your responses in an interview might affect your

business. It is a two-way street, and creating relationships is how we make it easier. Come in, have a coffee with me, and we will build it from there.

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- CBC Prince Edward Island
- CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices

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