

Local Journalism

♪ You don't know what you've
got 'til it's gone ♪

Joni Mitchell, Big Yellow Taxi

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The plan

- **Setting the scene:
Local journalism is
NOT okay**
- **Why it matters**
- **Suggestions**

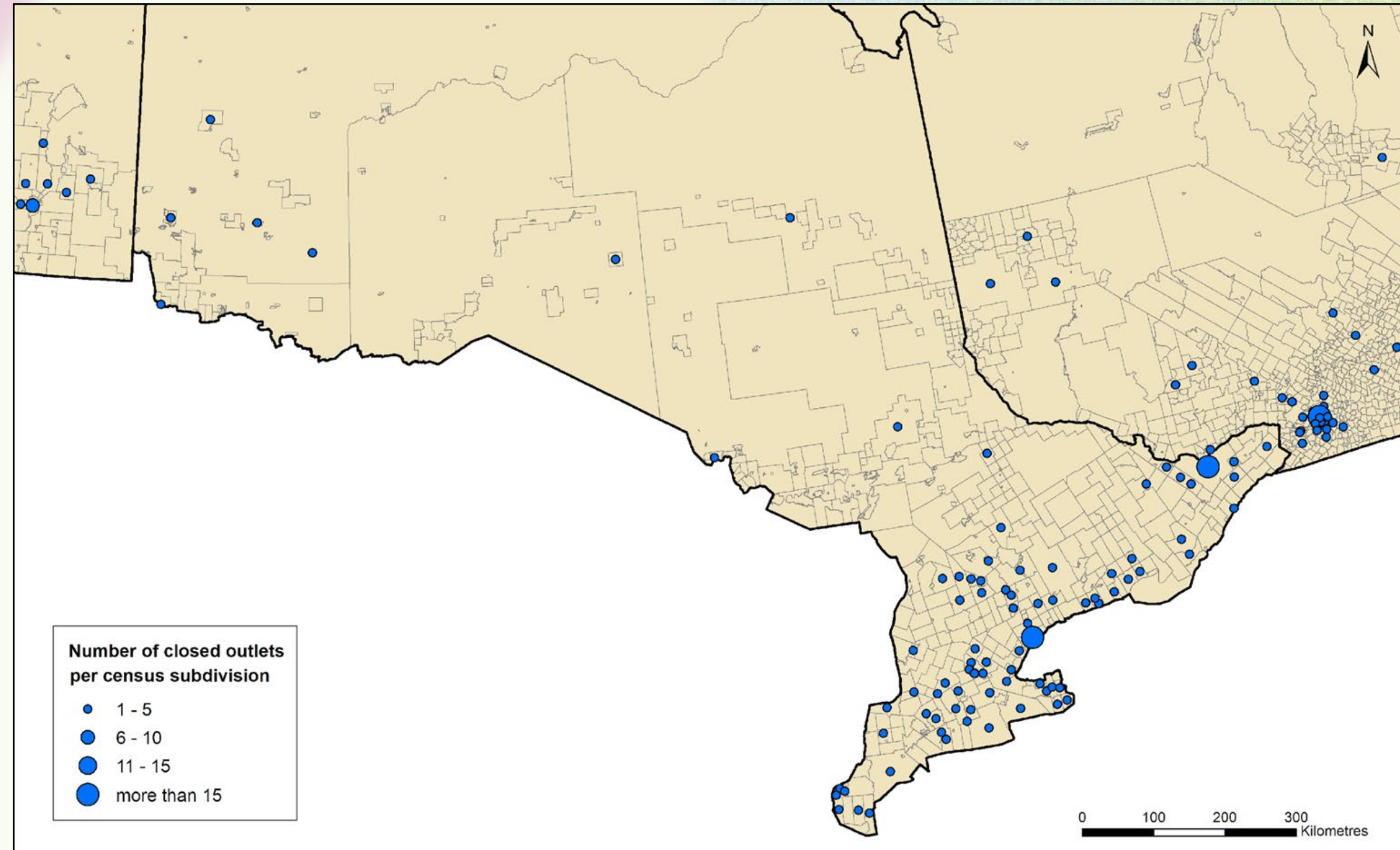
News outlet **closings** 2008 to April 1, 2024

CANADA

- 519 local news outlets have closed in 344 places

ONTARIO

- 148 have closed in 96 places
- 50% closed in communities with fewer than 50,000 people
- 54% closed in places with fewer than 100,000 people
- community newspapers accounted for 79% of closings



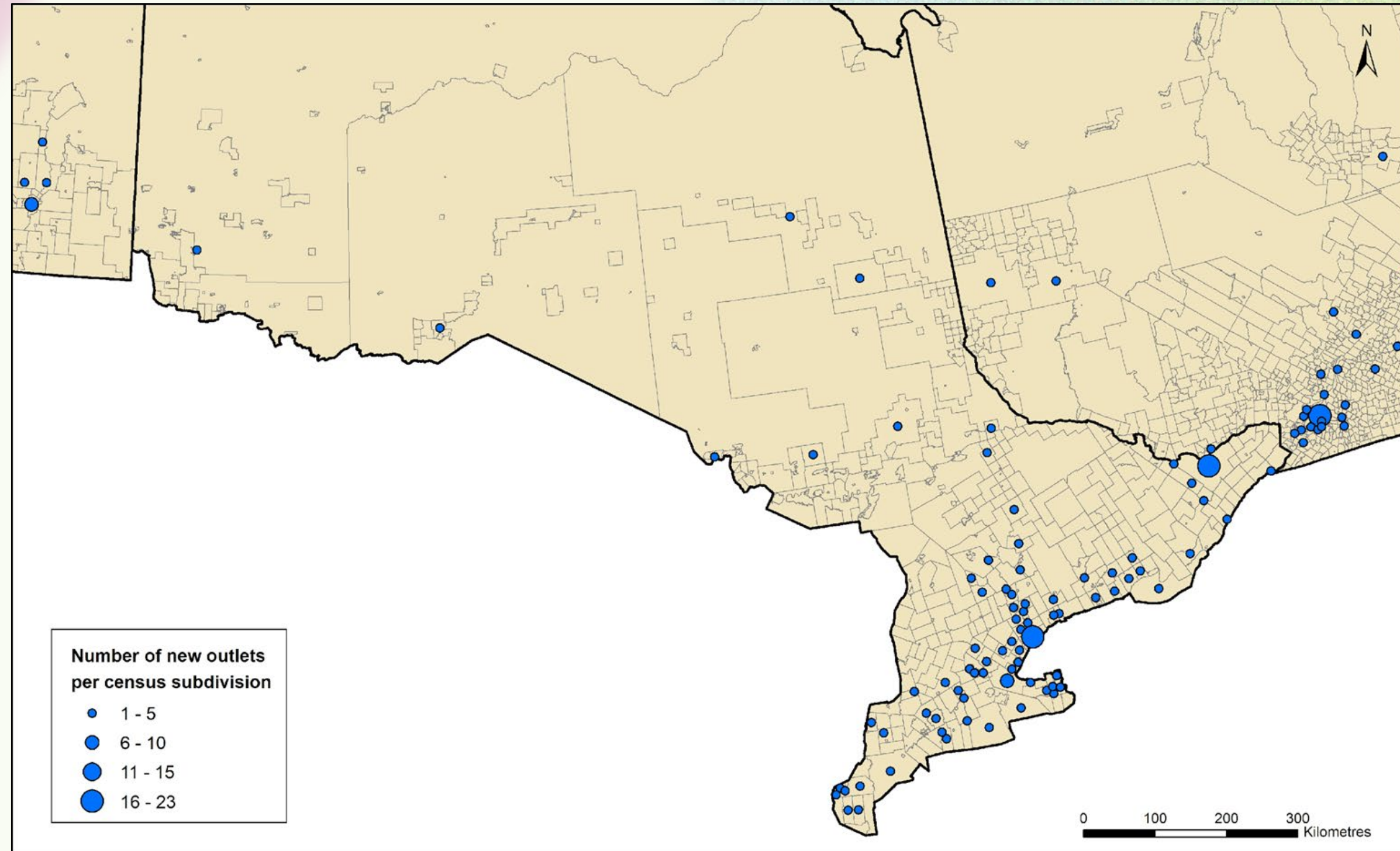
News outlet launches 2008 to April 1, 2024

CANADA

- 384 launches; 226 remain open in 158 places

ONTARIO

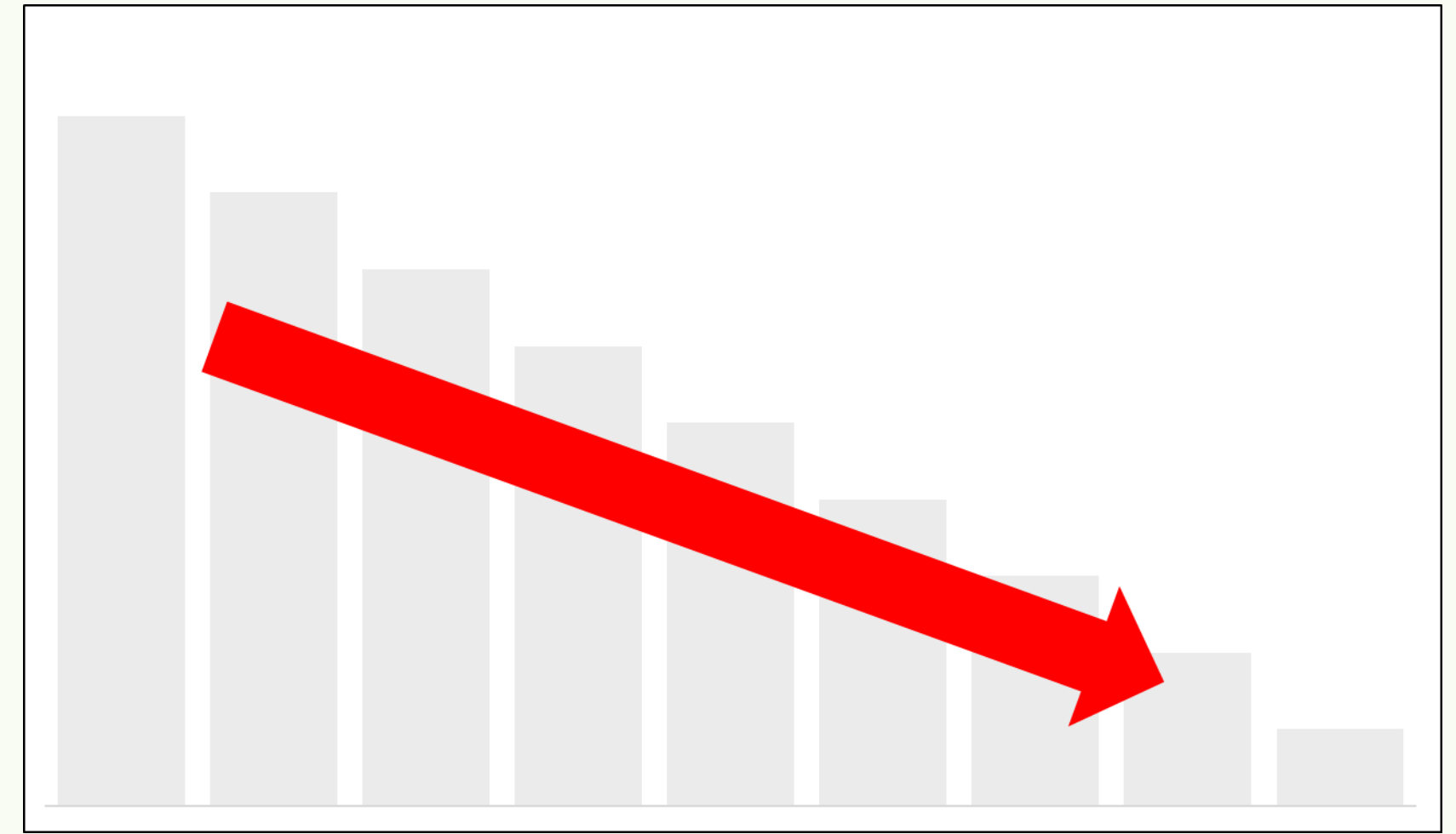
- 165 launches in 95 places; 118 remain open in 79 places
- 77 or 47% were digital news sites
- 35% launched in places with fewer than 50,000 people
- 44% launched in places with fewer than 100,000 people





Broadcast media feels the pinch

- CBC cuts
- CTV cuts local newscasts in 21 markets
 - says it loses more than \$40 million a year on news
- Bell Media closes six local radio stations



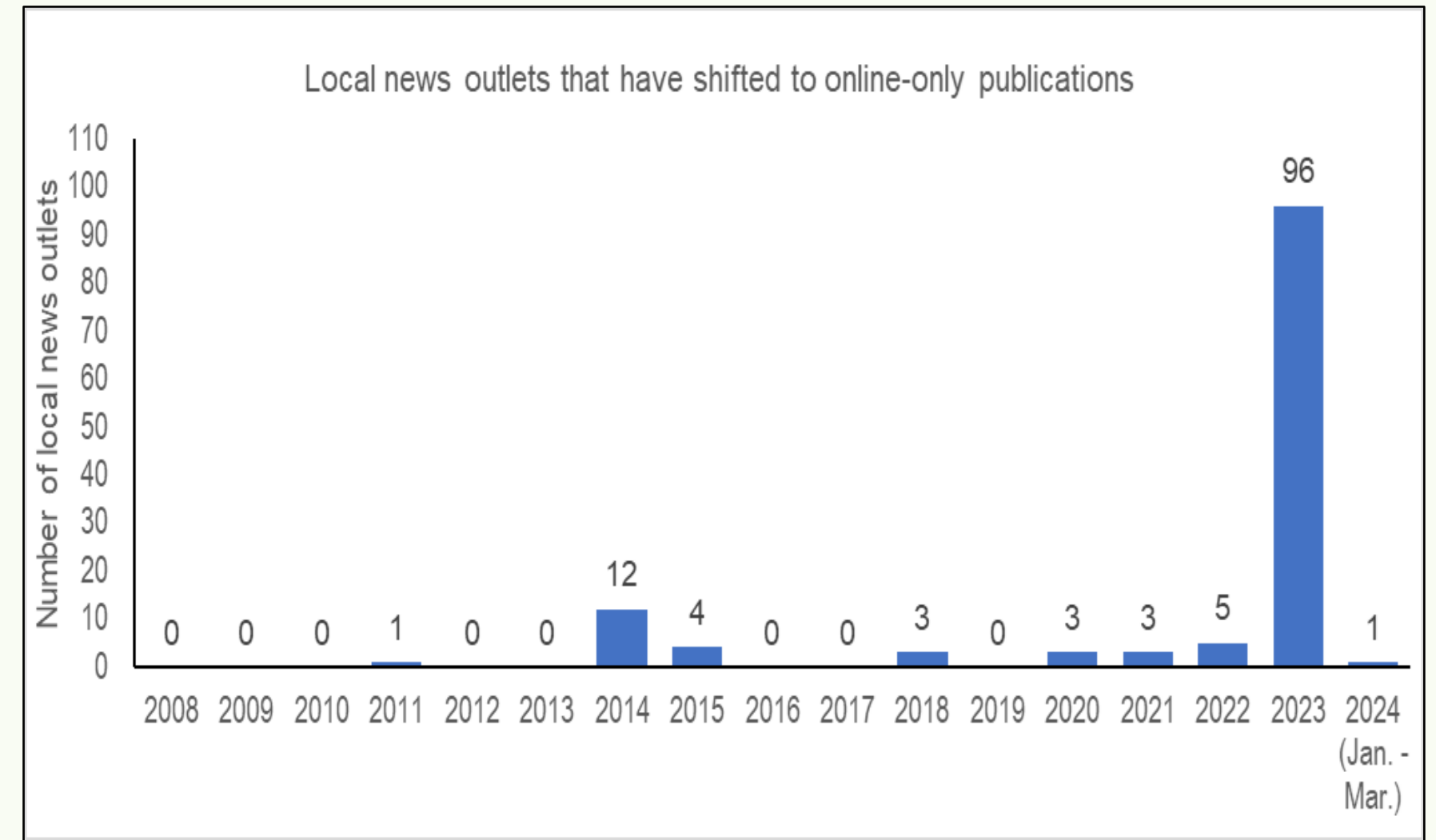
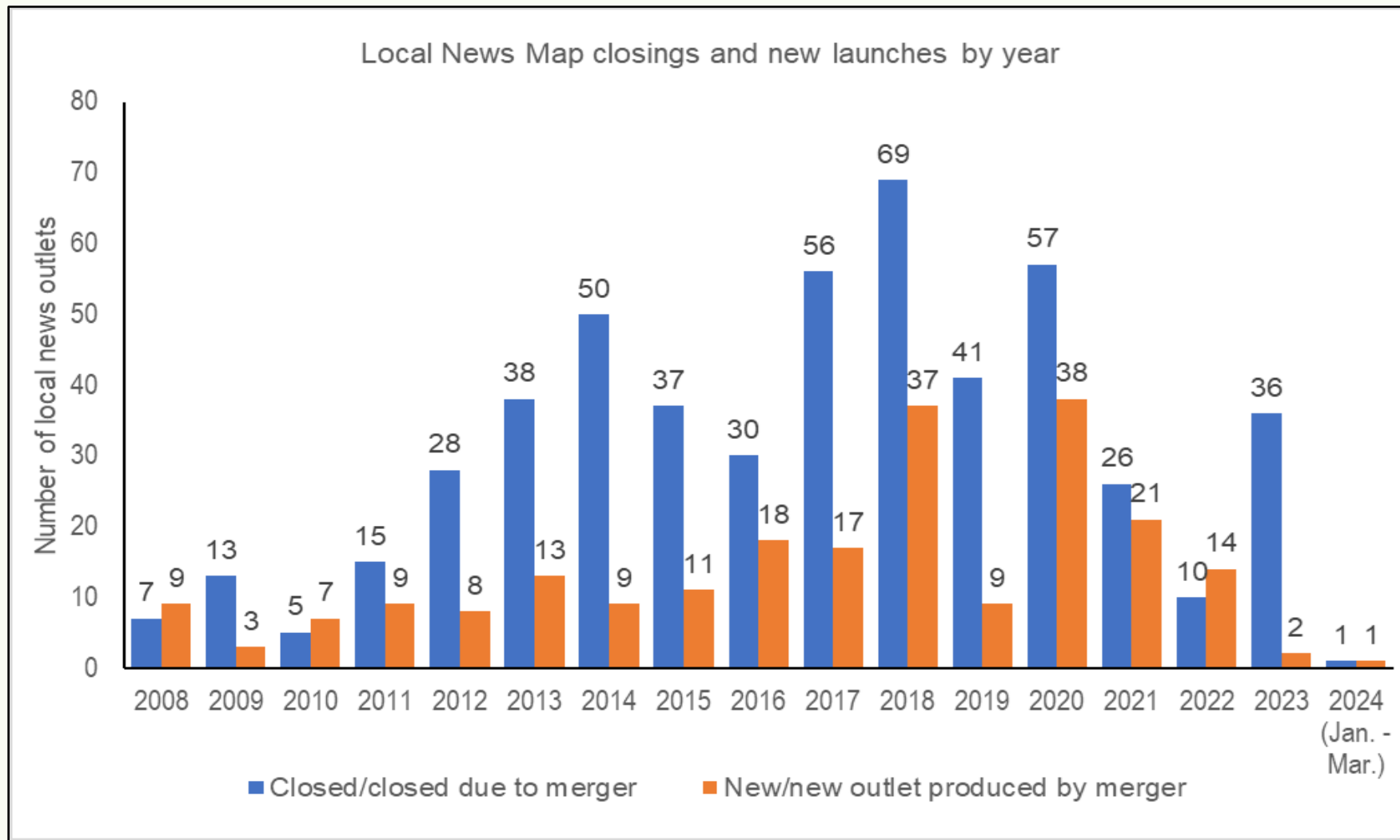
Shrinking newsrooms

Ottawa Citizen

- 190 newsroom staff in 1990
- About 20 today (Citizen/Sun combined)

Kingston Whig-Standard

- 55 newsroom staff in 1990
- 8 in 2019



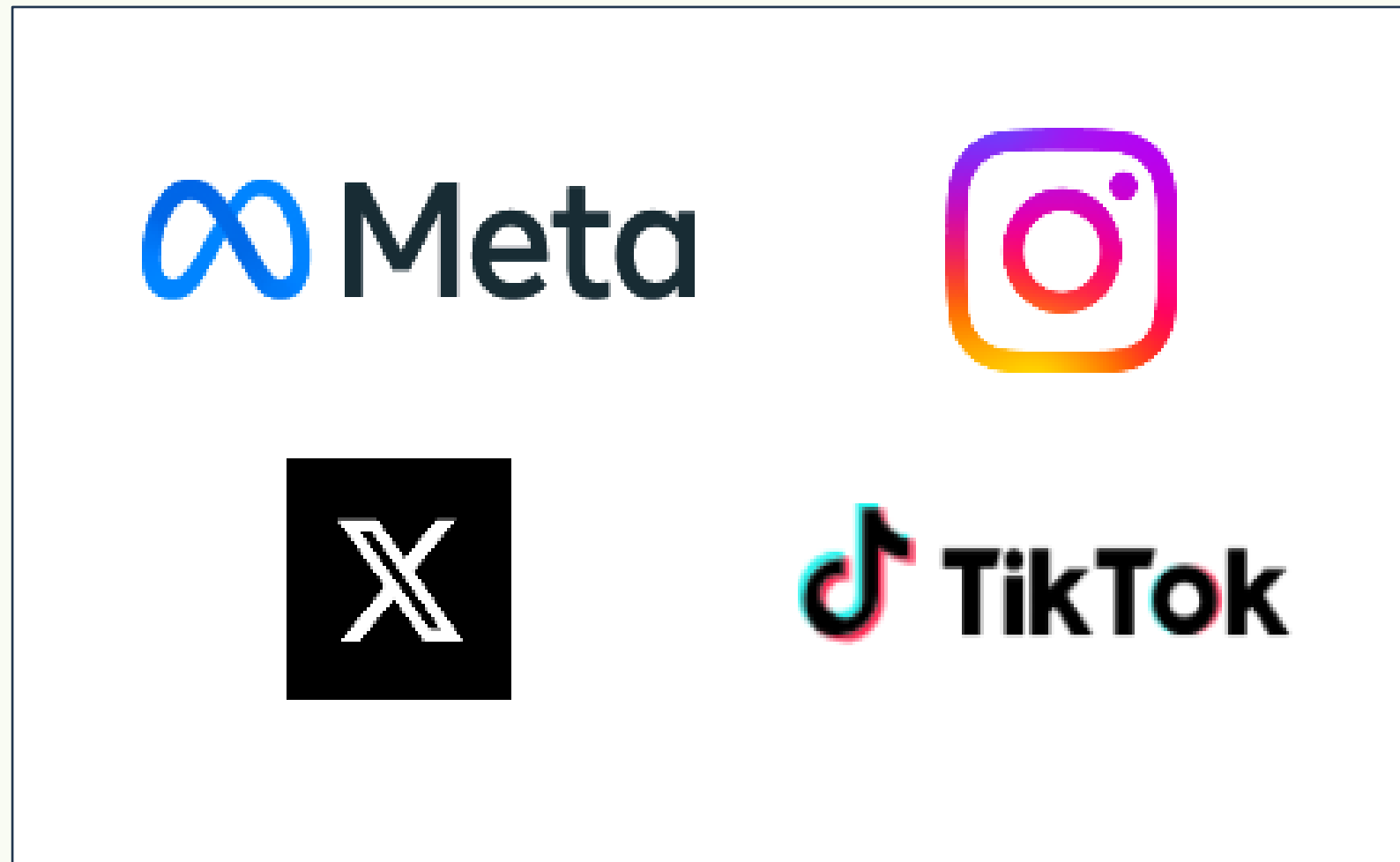
Closings have resumed post-pandemic

Jan. 1, 2023-April 1, 2024

- 30 community newspapers
- 7 radio stations

Physical reminders of news are disappearing

- Post-pandemic, news outlets are abandoning physical newsrooms
- Print newspapers are shifting completely online



Social media referrals to news sites are down

- More difficult for people to find local news content
- More difficult for news outlets to reach and expand audiences

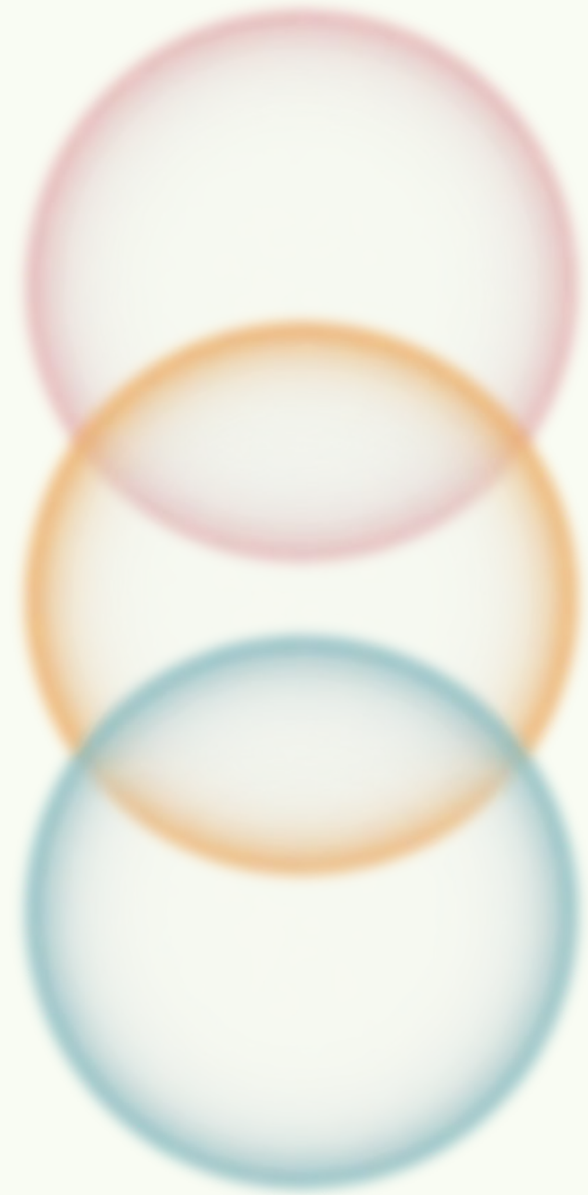
Political uncertainty

- Labour tax credits and other subsidies
- Local journalism initiatives that have created more than 1,000 journalism jobs
- CBC English-language service



Why it matters

Risk factors for communities poorly served by local journalism



- Rumour, conspiracy theories fill the vacuum
- Power is not held accountable
- More polarized debate & less capacity to arrive at fact-based compromise/solutions
- Reduced sense of community belonging
- More difficult for residents to participate in decision-making processes
- Lower voter turnout/more acclamations
- More difficult to coordinate emergency responses

Suggestions

**INFORMATION
VS
JOURNALISM**

There's a difference



Information-related initiatives

- Municipal websites, press releases
- Make agendas available in advance
- Timely release of meeting minutes



Journalism-related initiatives

- Lobby the CBC for a local/regional reporter
- Will a scaled-back English-language CBC serve the interests of your community?
- Talk to your local community foundation about support for a local news fund
- Can the local library do more?
- Make it policy to answer ALL FOI requests in a timely manner
- Be available to ALL local journalists

Thank you!