



CBC Radio Program Development Group

# Pitch Guide

2010 / 2011 Season

*Revised:  
October 2010*

*CBC Radio*

What is the program development group looking for?

New radio shows; limited run series; segments for ongoing programs. We're also looking for potential – not only in ideas, but also in people. We want to find the writers, hosts and producers of tomorrow. We want to develop a contingent of creative people, from all regions of the country, who have the confidence and ability to create new shows.

Before you send us your pitch, here are a few things to remember:

- CBC is committed to developing predominantly Canadian shows, producers and hosts.
- CBC Radio receives hundreds of proposals every year and only a very few are selected for development.
- Submissions are usually processed within three (3) months.

## The Idea

Your proposal doesn't need to be long and complicated, but it should be well thought out. Make sure you've taken the time to dream it, debate it, mull it and polish it before you send it our way.

To help you get your idea down on paper, here are some questions you should ask yourself.

1. **When you tell others about your dream radio show, what excites them the most?** This is often a good way to start your pitch
2. **How would you describe your show's attitude toward its content?** Will it be light-hearted or more serious? Cheeky or respectful? Entertaining or informative? Probing or reflective? Is there anything new or different about how your show will sound?
3. **Who is the host?** Do you have someone in mind? If not, what qualities would your ideal host possess? What should they sound like? What's his or her role on the show? Does he or she have a strong point of view?
4. **What will we hear on a typical program?** A list of segment ideas or interview guests is a good start, but it's not enough. Help us

imagine what we'll hear coming out of the radio. How will your show's tone and attitude affect the content?

**5. What is the online component?** What opportunities do you imagine for the web and social networking? Does it make sense for your concept be expanded for multiple platforms? At CBC our shows drive people to our website ... can you tell us how your show will do that?

**6. What makes your show perfect for CBC rather than another broadcaster?** Why should it air now? Does it take CBC Radio somewhere new? Does it do something that we aren't already doing? Does it fit our values as a public broadcaster (high quality, distinctive programming that's intelligent, insightful and entertaining)?

**7. What format do you see your idea taking?** Is it a one-shot deal, a limited series, a feature within another show, a summer replacement series, a full run show? Is it a half hour or an hour?

## The Checklist

Once you've worked through your idea, here's a quick checklist of other things you should include in your proposal:

- 1. Who You Are:** Tell us why you're the best person to do this show. If you've hosted, produced or written for radio before, let us know. Also: what led you to your idea? Give us a sense of your background, your passions.
- 2. Who is Who:** If you've got people you want to work with, tell us who they are. Who's producing? Who's hosting? Assume we don't know these people. Give us an idea why they're the best people for those roles.
- 3. The Proposal:** Do the tone and style of the writing in your proposal reflect the tone of show that you're proposing?
- 4. Reach Beyond CBC:** Do you have plans for using social media or other tools to attract audiences to your site, beyond those who already come to CBC Radio or [cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca)?
- 5. Support:** What kind of support do you need? Mentoring? Coaching on your performance? In-studio training? Digital audio editing? Don't

be embarrassed - we're here to help and the more we know upfront the better.

**6. Online Support:** Radio production teams are expected to maintain the websites for their shows. Do you or any of your team members have digital production experience? Does your idea require a resource with specialized / advanced web skills?

**7. Timing:** Is your proposal time-sensitive? Are there times when you can work on this, times when you cannot?

**8. How to Get Hold of You:** Don't forget to include your e-mail, home phone, cell phone, etc.

## Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- 1. How original is the concept?** If your show brings something new to CBC Radio, and if it is creative or innovative in its approach and treatment, then you've cleared an important hurdle.
- 2. Does the show have a personality?** If your program has a distinct personality and tone – and if it has a host with a distinct and engaging personality – the pitch might move to the top of the pile. On the topic of hosts, you need to show a clear connection between the host and the content.
- 3. Is the proposal coherent?** Is your pitch grammatical? Does it make sense? Read it over before you send it in. Remember: you want the program development committee to be able to “hear” your show. And your program should come across as more than a bunch of segments strung together.
- 4. Will it connect with a broad audience?** How is your concept relevant to a target audience? What's in it for that audience – why will they bother to listen?
- 5. Does the show have a strong identity?** Ask yourself, why would a particular item be heard on this show? What can the audience expect to hear from this show?

6. **Does the show contain diversity?** Can't put a fine enough point on this one. Reflecting Canada's diversity is hugely important for the CBC. Diversity of region, opinion, ethnicity, economic class, age and gender. Show proposals that are diverse and regionally reflective are a priority.

7. **Will your show help develop people?** We want to discover great talent and put it to work. If you can introduce the CBC to new people and ideas, then that's a point in your favour.

8. **Does this show have the potential for "magic"?** Will your show cause delight, ignite laughter, or inspire deep thought? Will it hold listeners captive in their cars in the Canadian Tire parking lot? With radio, that's always the goal.

## Questions?

Got questions? Need help getting your idea down on paper? Get in touch with a member of the Program Development Group:

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## To Get Your Pitch To Us

Please send your pitches via EMAIL to [proposal@cbc.ca](mailto:proposal@cbc.ca)

We prefer to receive proposals as attachments in Microsoft Word format. Feel free to send short audio samples as well – in mp3 format please!

## FAQ

### **When will I hear back?**

You should hear from someone within 12 weeks.

### **Who decides if my show gets on the radio?**

The program development group will review your pitch. The PD group is a collection of programmers from across the country. They meet once a month to go through all the proposals that come in.

### **My idea is for a series that would just run for a limited number of weeks, could I still submit it?**

You bet. In fact, most of the programs we try out on-air will have a limited run. If your idea only sustains ten episodes, then make it a ten part series.

### **Is there a deadline for getting my proposal in?**

We consider proposals year-round, but the deadline for summer proposals is January 31.

### **I have no idea how much my show will cost, do I have to submit a budget?**

No. Your suggestions are helpful, but we can manage this part ourselves. Still, you should have a realistic sense of what resources are likely to be available. If your concept is only workable with a team of ten full-time employees making a weekly show, then it's likely not going to get made as you're imagining.

## **Sample Pitch 1: "SPACING RADIO"**

Public space is at the heart of democracy. It's where people bump into each other and learn to live with fellow city dwellers. These spaces are where tolerance is taught, and it provides the public with a forum to freely express ourselves, both politically and socially. But environmental degradation, commercial self-interest, and infrastructure neglect have come to dominate our cities' streets. Fortunately, imaginative and passionate city-dwellers all over Canada — and around the world — appreciate the endless possibilities that cities can offer. They are resisting the co-option of their communities by understanding the problems and looking for solutions.

Spacing Magazine, and now by extension Spacing Radio, covers the political, cultural and social issues affecting our lives in the public realm. We are an integral, independent, and unique voice that brings to life the joys and obstacles surrounding urban public spaces. Cities are special places — the people, the neighbourhoods, the sidewalks and the graffiti excite us. Spacing Radio helps our audience understand and take ownership of the urban landscape.

### **What an episode of Spacing Radio sounds like:**

As you may know, Spacing Radio already exists. Since spring 2009, we've been producing a new episode every two weeks (with time off from June to August 2009), all of which are available as podcasts at [www.spacing.ca/radio](http://www.spacing.ca/radio) and on iTunes. The response has been tremendously positive. Our web site traffic has 15,000 listeners of the podcast at the moment. Our early shows were focused mainly on Toronto, but more recently we've been working hard to broaden the scope of the program, to make it appeal to a national and even an international audience.

For CBC Radio, we're proposing a national, half-hour show, in ten parts over the summer season. Each episode will focus on a particular theme or topic, and will exist somewhere in the public space. In other words, there is no "studio" on Spacing Radio. The program lives where the stories live - in the urban public environment.

Spacing Radio draws on compelling stories and ideas from across the country and around the globe, and finds imaginative solutions that could make our cities better. Some ideas may be iconoclastic,

contrarian, even shocking. But after each show, you'll look at your city in a whole new way - especially the parts that we all share.

### **A few examples of stories and themes we'd put on the show:**

Something we'd like to illustrate is that Canadian cities — large and small — are facing many of the same issues. In some cases, they deal with them in a remarkably similar way. In other cases, it's amazing how different they can be.

A great example of this is the waterfront. Canada's biggest cities all have them, and yet, it's hard to imagine four more different places. Vancouver's and Halifax's waterfronts are an ocean; Toronto's is a lake; and Montreal's is a river. A long time ago, they all started out as ports. Since then, they've all morphed in different directions. Vancouver is still a port, of course. In fact, Canada's biggest. But Vancouver has embraced its waterfront in a way like no other North American city has. Some of the water's edge makes up Vancouver's great public space. The development of the waterfront has been deliberate, and has made the city a highly desirable place to live. Contrast that with Toronto. The city's waterfront was transformed years ago into a wall of private property - condos. Other parts remain industrial wasteland. Small portions have been rehabilitated. And a once-sleepy airport is now becoming a major transportation facility, against the wishes of City Hall and local residents. Toronto's waterfront is a story of neglect, wasted opportunity, and startling lack of vision.

Montreal and Halifax are both a mix of the other two. Montreal is, in many ways, a sad case. It was established as the hub of the St. Lawrence Seaway — an inspired bit of vision in itself. Unfortunately, it happened at a time when the seaway itself became obsolete. Halifax was once a vital military port and often the first place a newly landed immigrant would see in Canada. With the changing geopolitical winds and the significant shift in how people travel long distances, Halifax's ocean waterfront has had to adapt to the times and deal with conflicting interests that limit the height of buildings on the water's edge in order to preserve the view of the historic Citadel Hill from Georges Island in the harbour. All these cities have treated their waterfronts differently. As a result, each waterfront has helped shape the livability of its city. We'd talk to the tour guides, ship captains, bar owners, condo dwellers, live-aboards, and beachcombers to show how city-building decisions can significantly shape a city's relationship with its most important natural connection.

Another example is the changing face of garbage and recycling. The way Canadian city dwellers interact with the stuff they throw away is undergoing huge change. In recent years, Canadians have been increasingly asked to sort their own trash into garbage, recycling and organic waste. This has made our trash far more visible. In some Toronto neighbourhoods, large bins of various colours dominate the residential streetscape. In Calgary, trash remains largely hidden in back alleys. And yet, in other parts of the world - Stockholm in particular - garbage disappears from view entirely, whisked away in pneumatic tubes installed under the streets, eliminating the need for garbage trucks. Not only that, a new class of underworld urban citizen has emerged: those who operate at night, pillaging bins for the cans and bottles that carry deposits. In Ontario, this is a relatively new class of people, who emerged after Ontario began putting 20-cent deposits on wine bottles.

All of this makes our wastefulness and responsibility to the environment more visible. It forces us to ask questions about the role cities have in damaging - and protecting - the environment.

Here's one more final example for you. Spacing has already begun working on a public space etiquette guide. How we deal with one another in the urban environment is a fascinating, and incredibly complex thing. Our behaviour in certain times of day and in certain situations is acceptable. Change the circumstances slightly, and everything is different. Crushing against someone else on a crowded subway at 8am is just fine. Bump into them at 3pm on an empty subway, and you would be expected to apologize. In Tokyo, people think nothing of the gloved guards with paddles, who shove people into the subway car. There are rules about escalators, holding doors, and all other manner of the way we interact in urban public spaces. It helps us all live together without tearing each other's throats out. We would propose an episode themed on the public space etiquette guide.

### **Who hosts this show?**

David Michael Lamb, currently a senior producer of World Report. He is also the host of the Spacing Radio podcast. In recent years he has hosted World Report, every other National Radio News program, and The Current. Before that, he was CBC Radio's City Hall reporter for six years. During that time, he covered the gamut of urban issues for the local Toronto audience, and frequently to a national audience on The Current. As the host, David is on the street, in the public space. In one sense, he's the audience's guide through our stories. But just as often,

it is he who is guided through the urban landscape by the people with stories to tell: the scavenger of wine bottles in people's recycling bins at 3am; the volunteer who rescues injured birds (and collects the dead ones) that have flown into high rise windows by the thousands each day; the man who introduced scramble intersections to Toronto, in an attempt to improve traffic, but also to keep people on foot from getting killed. David is, in a sense, a flaneur; a wanderer through the urban space, finding the people who can describe what's happening in cities. Talking about what's wrong, but more importantly, how to make it better.

### **Who will make this show?**

As we described, we already have a track record of being able to produce radio programs in the form of the regular podcast. David has worked closely with XXX, who is a producer at CIUT's Take Five program. Matthew Blackett, the publisher and creative director of Spacing, has overseen everything we've done, and is active in story selection, development, and commentary.

We also have contributors with varying levels of expertise in other parts of the country, all of whom have experience with CBC Radio. We'd love to work with existing staff that can add the right mix of curiosity and a knack for uncovering the details of our shared public spaces.

### **Who is the audience and how will they interact with the show?**

Spacing's urban blog network has become the go-to source for commentary and analysis of city issues in Canada. Our blogs in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Halifax and Vancouver (Vancouver starts in March 2010) attract over 13,000 visitors a day. The Spacing Radio podcast has roughly 15,000 listeners each episode. With this already built-in dedicated audience, we'd use these websites to ask listeners to help to develop specific content within the show. Examples would be to have a repetitive short feature called Urban Myth or Fact: listeners would ask a question related to the show's theme ("is there an unused subway station at Yonge and Queen in Toronto?") and we'd have a reporter seek out the right people to confirm or deny the myth. The show could also solicit photos related to an episode's theme and add them into a slideshow onto the show's web site (potentially using snippets of audio from the show as a loose narrative).

The visitors to Spacing's blogs and readers of the magazine have a varied background much like today's modern Canadian. But a series of reader surveys illustrate some general points: they are young (50% are 18-35 while 28% are 36-45), they are tech-savvy and on the move (95% own digital cameras and cell phones, 73% own laptops), and they are active in their communities (80% vote in at three levels of government, 49% volunteer). These highly engaged people care about their surroundings and are well connected to the media environment. Maybe most compelling for the people deciding the potential for our show: 84% of readers said CBC Radio One is their primary radio station of choice.

### **About Spacing:**

Spacing magazine was launched in the fall of 2003 by a group of young journalists who felt Toronto needed a publication that would bring together a number of key urban issues that were not being discussed by the local media. Topics like cycling infrastructure, public transit, pedestrianism, public art, community planning, and sustainable development were brought together under one umbrella to create a forum for residents and the urban curious to discuss these pressing topics.

## **Sample Pitch 2: "Relish"**

*(A food show proposal from Khalil Akhtar and Michael Tymchuk)*

### **The Concept:**

If you are what you eat, don't you think it's time you got to know yourself better? *Relish* is a half hour weekly current affairs program that explores food and food issues.

Food is essential for life. But we've taken it for granted for too long. And now we face extinction of species to satisfy exotic palates, agricultural monocultures killing off eco-diversity, poisonous additives... the list goes on. Our audience deserves to be served solid probing journalism about the nourishment we all require. Our audience deserves a show that can be at the forefront of vital food issues facing Canadians. *Relish* will be the show that does that. And food sells! Entire TV networks are tackling food topics. Books about food...and not just cookbooks... are becoming bestsellers. The BBC has been

producing a flagship program about food for years. Canadians don't have a food program that has a Canadian perspective. *Relish* can be that program.

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### **The Inspiration:**

Khalil Akhtar's Content Factory food column is a starting point for *Relish*. Forget about cooking lessons. Forget about hosts swooning over gourmet food. *Relish* will be a journalistic and probing investigation into the real food real people eat, past, present and future. *Relish* will feed your head.

### **The Content and Sound:**

*Relish* will be anchored by one major story idea or theme in each show.

### **Examples:**

#### ***Episode 1***

*Culinary Colonialism. Why are 10-million rice eaters being encouraged to eat potatoes? The United Nations is pushing the tuber to countries that have depended on rice for centuries. They call it the 'food of the future.' What can be gained from replacing the staple grain of Asia with a food from the New World?*

#### ***Episode 2***

*Watch the salt. It's Public Enemy Number One. A look at the mineral we aren't supposed to love. For centuries, salt was a treasured commodity. Wars are still fought over the salt trade in places like Eritrea. But in modern western society it is synonymous with fast foods and high blood pressure. So what happened? When did sodium chloride become the enemy in Western cuisine and why?*

#### ***Episode 3***

*Food Trickery. In China, fake food products have destroyed the world's confidence. In Italy, arrests have been made for tampering with cheap oils to make them taste like olive oil. The fish industry is making products more marketable by inventing names for endangered species, and by labeling farmed fish as wild stock. How heavily does the food economy depend on fake products making their way onto our plates?*

**Episode 4**

*Local goes Corporate. Did you know that you can buy a bag of Lay's potato chips and trace the origin of the potatoes using a code on the bag? It's the company's latest attempt to capitalize on a growing consumer obsession with the word 'local.' 'Organic' was co-opted by the corporate food world a couple of decades ago. These days it's 'local.' How is the 'local food movement' changing the way big corporations market their globetrotting foods? Can multinational corporations actually produce real local food for every market?*

*In addition to the one major story anchor in each show, Relish may include short segments like a regular feature examining food in pop culture, be it books, music, movies or the web. The show may also include a weekly roundup of 'wire' stories about food. And there are the feature stories... stories that take the Relish host out of the studio.*

**Episode 5**

*Backyard Barnyard. You may be next door to a backyard chicken operation. You may even have a backyard beekeepers in your 'hood. But backyard fish farming? It may be next. Researchers on Vancouver Island have developed an innovative way to grow fish in backyard tanks with hydroponic vegetables fertilized by the fish waste. Is this the future in a world where conventional fisheries are going extinct? How are municipal governments reacting? What about DFO? Relish visits a backyard fish farm for answers.*

*Turn a willing ear to a host who sounds intelligent but with a playful side and a wit drier than apple cider, whether interviewing guests, introducing docs or strolling through a market with microphone in hand. Listen to a show that is studio based but moves into kitchens, stores and barnyards where you'll hear the primal energy of a stock yard, the electronic cacophony of trading orange juice futures at the New York Board of Trade, or even the bubbling of water and the sizzle of bacon behind the babble of Ukranadian being spoken in a local kitchen.*

**Episode 6**

*Another Dimension of Time and Space. Every Friday night at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre in Victoria, little old women and men serve up a tasty meal of homemade food from the old country. But does anyone in the old country still eat this food? Are immigrant communities to Canada culinary 'time capsules'? Are old-world chefs and anthropologists coming to Canada to study lost cooking traditions?*

**CBC.ca/relish:**

*Relish* on the web won't be an afterthought. *Relish.ca* will embrace the online audience with content that complements the on-air program. And it will collaborate with the existing food-related content being generated by CBC.ca contributors. CBC.ca already has some wide ranging and eclectic food coverage. CBC.ca contributors and bloggers will be encouraged to gather audio and bring relevant content to *Relish* the radio show. In turn, CBC.ca/relish would add to the volume of print-based coverage on CBC's website. It would also be a portal... a way for users to link to existing cbc.ca food coverage. CBC.ca/relish will be more than just podcasts and print versions of the radio show. Beginning with a blog, *Relish* producers will keep content flowing to listeners. That means the show doesn't end on the air. The blog will be a place to post stories that don't make it on the radio. It will also be a place to chat and provide insights into what is coming up on the show. And the blog will be a place to keep up with new developments on stories covered on past shows. CBC.ca/relish will also be a place for listeners to delve deeper into stories we've covered on the show. Photo content, additional audio that was snipped out of on-air interviews and even video segments will be available for *Relish* fans. Those fans will be able to contribute through 'comment' sections and share our content via networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Digg. And then there is the recipe and reference guide. *Relish* is not a cooking show. But there will be room online for a recipe and resource guide based on issues mentioned on the radio. For example, for a show on the rise of backyard tilapia farming, cbc.ca/relish will have links and recipes for curious listeners wanting to learn more.

**The Crew:**

Host/Producer Khalil Akhtar has been CBC's national food columnist for more than two years. His weekly food column is heard on more than 20 local morning programs across the country. Khalil has also worked as a news reporter, producer, newsreader and host. Currently, he is an Announcer-Operator for On The Island, the morning radio program broadcast from Victoria. Khalil's passion for food issues and his experience as a journalist and food columnist make him an ideal candidate to host *Relish*. He also cooks a mean lamb curry.

Producer/Technician Michael Tymchuk worked with the Program Development Group to produce an award winning show called 28 Days a few years back. Formerly he was a legislative and acting national

reporter. Since '98 he's been a jack-of-all trades including producing and teching various shows. He is also an A-O with Khalil in Victoria, where he has produced award-winning segments for On The Island and Ideas. Michael loves food and actually stands in grocery store aisles reading labels. And he defies anyone to create better hummus.

**\* And remember:**

*Relish* is a lot of stuff. But it's *not* a lifestyle show exclusively for foodies. *Relish* will never pander to gourmet chefs and their trend-driven cuisine. It will never become a how-to resource on picking the best olive oil or making the best meringue. *Relish* will bring a journalistic, edgy, surprising and informative take on food issues to CBC Radio One.