

---

FREEWHEEL MARKET SPOTLIGHT

# Unlocking Addressable TV in Canada

---



# Key Takeaways

- 1 | Addressable TV offers **dynamic ad decisioning and data-enabled audience, geographic, and content targeting** against linear supply, providing significant opportunity for Canadian distributors and programmers.
- 2 | Leveraging highly accurate and scaled Canadian distributor data, multiscreen TV campaigns can **maximize the value of Addressable TV by utilizing distributor-owned first-party audiences**. This approach expands the qualifying Canadian targetable audience network available for programmer partners through appropriately anonymized identifiers.
- 3 | When generating an Addressable TV enablement strategy, it is crucial to **consider factors such as Canada's high distributor share of pay TV households and the regional penetration of advanced platforms** like smart TVs. These elements are essential in determining the expected scale of the mix from TV Everywhere (TVE) and in-home iterations of the workstream.
- 4 | **Addressable TV adoption is occurring worldwide**. To contextualize the Canadian market among its counterparts, **Spain serves as a particularly useful comparison** due to similar government-led industry modernization efforts but contrasted by the unique technical characteristics of each market.

# Introduction

The Canadian media landscape is undergoing significant transformations driven by regulatory changes and technological advancements. Addressable TV (also commonly known as linear addressable) is emerging as a strong method to increase audience incremental reach and reduce measurement fragmentation on quality inventory. This paper explores the legal context, technological developments, and future implications for content production and distribution in Canada, with a focus on the opportunities presented by Addressable TV.

## Legal Context for the Canadian Market

The Canadian Broadcast Act limits Canadian broadcast distributors' monetization of content through paid advertising. Unlike the inventory splits common in the United States, this rule is similar to many European regulations, such as France's Freedom of Communication Act.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Canadian distributors consistently will not sell advertising time or space within the channels they carry.

To review the history of this positioning:

- In 2023, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) expanded this regulation to include online streaming services under the "Online Streaming Act."<sup>2</sup>
- Starting in September 2024, it was determined that foreign online streaming services with annual revenues exceeding \$25 million, and not affiliated with a Canadian distributor, must contribute 5% of their Canadian-generated revenue to support the production and distribution of Canadian online content.<sup>3</sup>

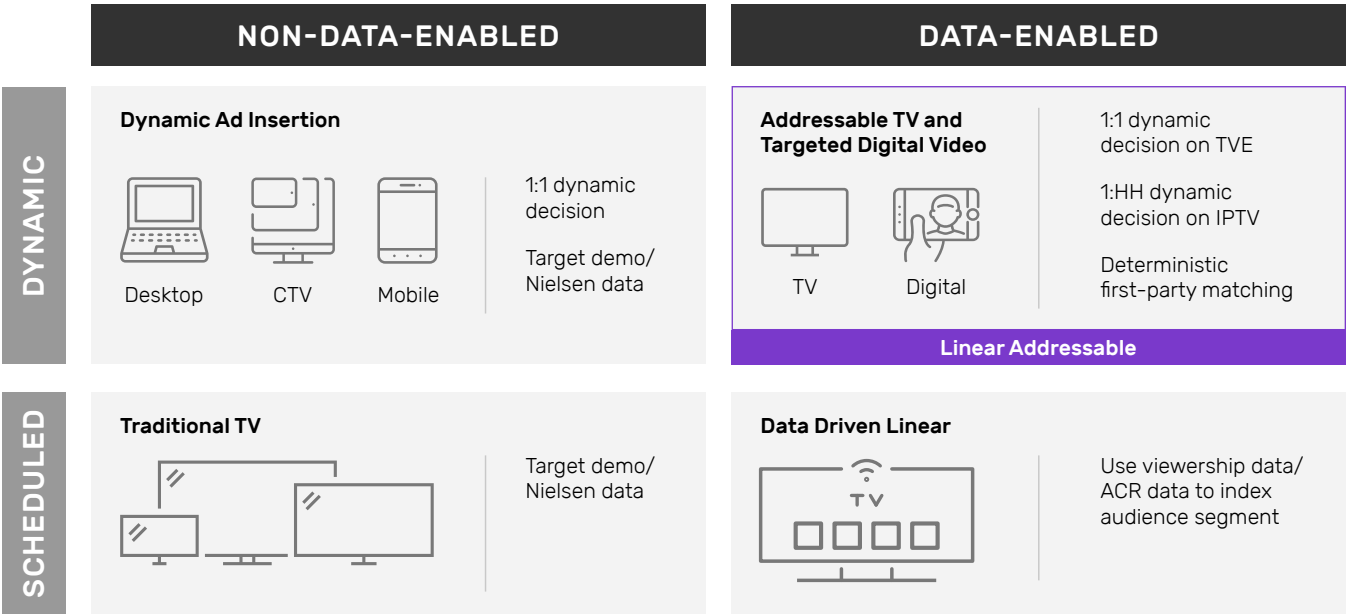
This 2024 determination's specific contributions are on hold until the scheduled public hearings in June of 2025.<sup>4</sup>

2025 is expected to bring significant decisions impacting content production and distribution in Canada, with hearings scheduled on various topics under the CRTC's "Modernizing the Broadcast Framework" initiative.<sup>4</sup>

# Addressable TV: Precision Meets Scale

The critical components of Addressable TV are its capability to provide dynamic ad decisioning and its data-enabled audience, geographic, and content targeting on a 1:1 basis with the end viewer. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) defines Addressable TV as the ability to serve different ad content to different audience segments watching the same TV program on IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) and set-top boxes, based on specific audience targeting in either live, playback, or VOD mode.<sup>5</sup> In all cases, an IP-based linear feed is essential, allowing client-side ad decisioning within the IP-enabled set-top box or server-side ad decisioning on supported TVE apps.

FreeWheel believes a structured approach is necessary for implementing Addressable TV, including a focus on both targeting and dynamic ad decisioning.



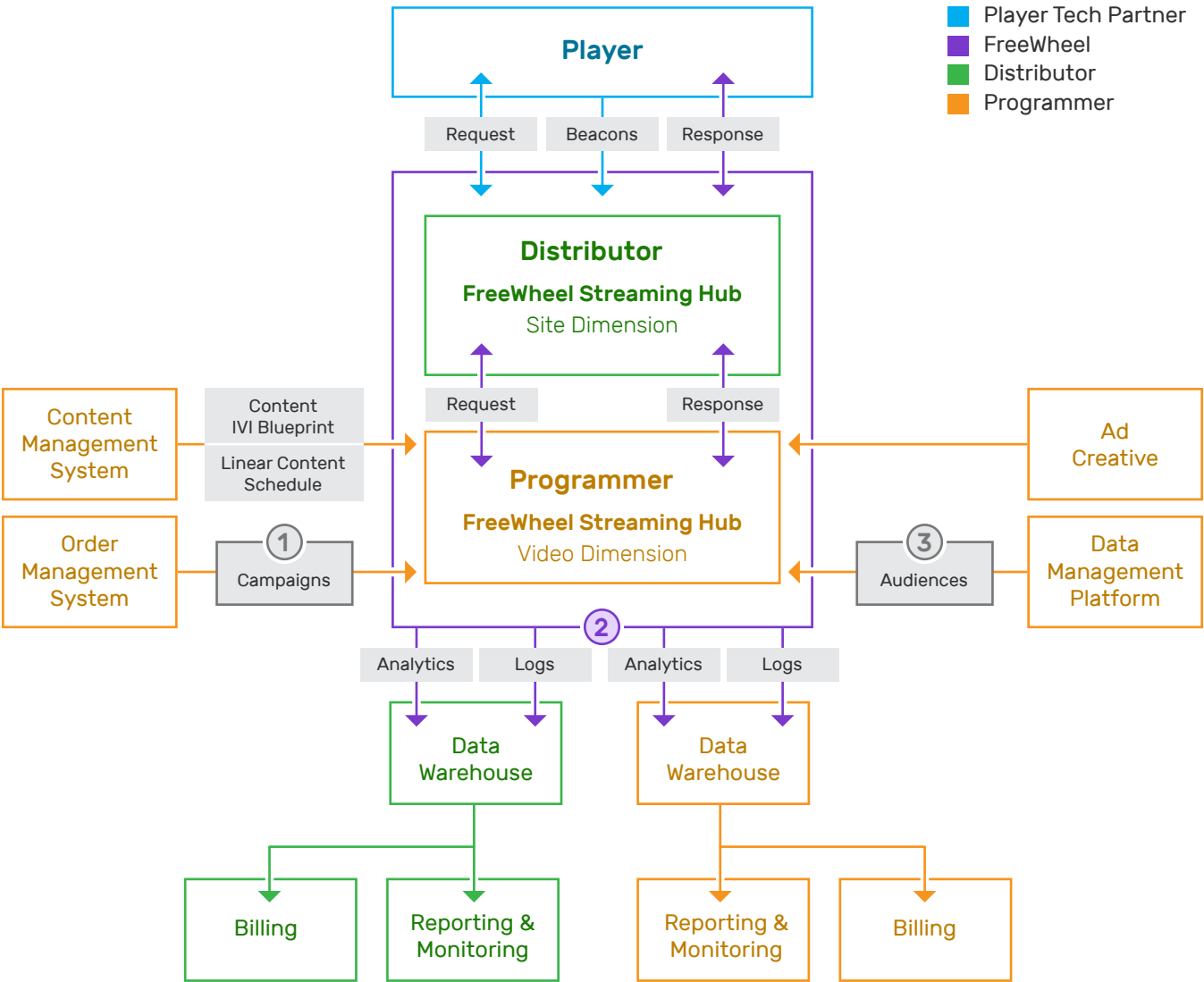
## Unlocking Addressable TV in Canada

In addition to the tens of millions of Canadian users of TVE mobile applications, IP-enabled set-top boxes are now widely available and gaining significant traction with all major Canadian distributors. 38% of Canadian pay TV households (3.5 million out of 9.2 million total) have IPTV, with this number expected to grow to 42.3% by 2027.<sup>6</sup>

To capitalize on this inventory, Canadian distributors and partners must connect in a single ecosystem, referenced in this paper as the ‘Addressable TV Workstream.’ This integration is critical in Canada due to the strict requirements for data transparency and advertising campaign enablement under the Broadcasting Act. Once integrated, by leveraging Addressable TV, distributors, programmers, and advertisers can maximize campaign effectiveness and reach highly accurate and scaled audiences for the Canadian market.

# Addressable TV Workstream

The following diagram outlines the Addressable TV workstream, highlighting the components owned by the distributor, the distributor's player tech partner (if any), the programmer, and FreeWheel as the supply-side platform. Callouts have been added to the areas of audience enablement, campaign management, and data transparency which have particular requirements in the Canadian market.



## Localized Callouts for the Canadian Market

①

Due to the requirements of the Broadcast Act, in the Canadian Market ad campaigns come exclusively from the programmer ADS systems.

②

One notable business impact of the Canadian legal structure is a high level of data transparency between the programmer as content rights owner and the distributor as endpoint owner in Canada.

③

Sourced from IP-enabled set-top boxes, distributor first-party data is one of the most valuable sets of targetable audience resources available to programmers in Canada for linear addressable campaigns.

## LINEAR ADDRESSABLE

# Drive Audience Scale for Canadian Distributors and Programmers

First-party data at the device level is a critical asset for Canadian distributors to maximize footprint value for their programmer partners. Integrating IP set-top boxes that have direct access to this data into the non-linear workstream is a significant advantage. Addressable TV further maximizes the value of appropriately anonymized identifiers to expand the targetable audience network available for programmer partners.

As the challenge of fragmentation persists, Canadian programmers with content on Addressable TV endpoints will benefit from enhanced cross-platform demand enablement. Platforms such as FreeWheel's Programmatic Module and Marketplace Platform empower programmers to expand programmatic demand for Addressable TV supply and cohesively integrate these endpoints into their DAI-enabled ecosystem.

Leveraging extensive experience in enabling Addressable TV endpoints globally, FreeWheel assists both distributors and programmers in creating a clear, interoperable workstream. Specific recommendations are offered on best practices for critical touchpoints such as endpoint player signals ([SCTE-35](#)), linear schedule formatting ([BXF](#), [SCTE-224](#), or FreeWheel's [HyLDA Schedule Builder](#)), creative transcode requirements ([Rendition Requirements](#)), and data rights management ([FreeWheel Allowlist](#)). These supportive best practices and the growing maturity of the technology greatly improve speed to market and reduce the operational lift required for Addressable TV enablement.

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

# A Comparative Exploration of Linear Addressable in Canada and Spain

Addressable TV has gained, lost, and regained attention as an industry buzzword over the past five years, with various markets from the US to France to Serbia taking notice in their own ways and at their own scales. Therefore, perspective on the current movement to enable Addressable TV in Canada can best be gained through comparison to a peer market. Currently, Spain is a particularly useful peer market to provide this context because of parallels in the two countries' recent focus on technology modernization across their television footprint and helpful differentiators in how viewers consume content.

## Canada

## Spain



### Structural Landscape

CRTC's "Modernizing the Broadcast Framework" initiative includes the 2023 "Online Streaming Act" which expanded industry regulation to include online streaming services, as well as additional efforts to build a modern and sustainable broadcasting system for the Canadian market.

SIMILAR

In 2022, Spain's "Ley General de Comunicación Audiovisual", extended obligations for accessibility to streaming platforms among other provisions.<sup>7</sup> Following in 2024, the region finalized its SD to HD DTT signal transition. Currently, the market is planning its upcoming transition to UHD at scale.<sup>8</sup>



### Technical Footprint

Market intelligence organization eMarketer reported that currently 3.5 million out of the 9.2 million total pay TV households in Canada have IPTV.<sup>6</sup>

SIMILAR

According to the most recent report by CNMC (Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia), just over 6 million of the country's 10.9 million pay-TV subscribers have access to an IPTV feed.<sup>9</sup>

In-home Addressable TV holds critical scale due to the market's commitment to broadcast TV. Domestic cable and satellite services account for over 60% of total pay TV households.<sup>6</sup>

DIFFERENT

TVE platforms hold scale and value in Spain where smart TV and smartphone usage is especially high (62.5% and 97.7%, respectively).<sup>10</sup>

Canada saw a relative scale of 92.5% penetration of streaming usage in 2024.<sup>11</sup>

SIMILAR

Spain had 93.6% penetration of streaming usage in 2024.<sup>10</sup>

The comparison between Canada and Spain demonstrates the robust and evolving landscape of digital media consumption in both countries and the value Addressable TV can have in a variety of contexts across the globe.

# Conclusion

The expansion of the Canadian Broadcast Act to include online streaming services and the rise of Addressable TV are key developments that will shape the future of the Canadian media industry. By leveraging expert partnerships and tested best practices, Canadian distributors and programmers have a clear path for enabling Addressable TV endpoints and ensuring a seamless, interoperable workstream. Armed with an expanding network of IP-enabled set-top boxes and first-party data, Canadian distributors and programmers can increase audience incremental reach, reduce measurement fragmentation on quality inventory, and maximize the value of Addressable TV for both their partners and their viewers.

---

## About FreeWheel

FreeWheel empowers all segments of The New TV Ecosystem. We are structured to provide the full breadth of solutions the advertising industry needs to achieve their goals. We provide the technology, data enablement, and convergent marketplaces required to ensure buyers and sellers can transact across all screens, across all data types, and all sales channels, in order to ensure the ultimate goal – results for marketers. With offices in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, London, Paris, Beijing, and across the globe, FreeWheel, A Comcast Company, stands to advocate for the entire industry through the FreeWheel Council for Premium Video.

For more information, please visit [freewheel.com](https://freewheel.com).

## About FreeWheel's Advisory Services Team

FreeWheel's Advisory Services is a team of dedicated consultants who combine product, business, and industry experience to strategically help clients drive business outcomes. With skill sets that range from ad operations and programmatic to yield management and data science, our global team provides strategic insights, managed services, and consulting and professional services.

For more information, please visit [freewheel.com/advisory-services](https://freewheel.com/advisory-services).

---



### About the Author

**Jenna Lettieri** | *Lead Consultant, Advisory Services*  
[thoughtleadership@freewheel.com](mailto:thoughtleadership@freewheel.com)

Lead Consultant on the Advisory Services team, Jenna works with FreeWheel's publisher and distributor clients with an emphasis on new platform strategy and solutions architecture enablement. She serves as an organization subject-matter expert on Addressable TV and a regular resource to FreeWheel clients. Prior to FreeWheel, Jenna developed her expertise in cross-platform integrations with positions at major US programmers and media technology companies.



# Glossary

**Dynamic Ad Insertion** – A technology that allows video ads to be served into live linear programming and video on demand content.

**Data-Enabled** – Targeting may be audience targeting, or geographic, or even content.

**Data-Driven Linear** – Leverage 1st-party viewership data/ACR data to index what types of channels particular custom audience segments are most likely to be watching.

**Dynamic (unique 1:1)** – With dynamic ads, viewers have different ad experiences. Commercial breaks are still placed at set times in the content, but the time, quantity, and specific ads shown will vary from viewer to viewer.

**Non-Data-Enabled** – Standard linear age/gender demographics, or device traditional categories, and video content traditional categories (e.g., CTV, desktop, mobile or News, Sports, Entertainment, etc.)

**Scheduled (mass, 1 to many)** – Scheduled ads are shown to everyone watching a TV network at that specific time. Specific ads are selected to run at a certain programming “break.” Each break is broken up into “units” or “spots” that are sold to advertisers or used for internal promotion.

# Sources

1. [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. “Freedom of Communication Act No. 86-1067 of 30 September 1986.” 2025.](#)
2. [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. “Broadcasting Information Bulletin.” May 12, 2023. 2025.](#)
3. [Government of Canada. “CRTC requires online streaming services to contribute to Canada’s broadcasting system.” June 4, 2024.](#)
4. [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. “Regulatory plan to modernize Canada’s broadcasting framework.” April 2025.](#)
5. [IAB Digital Video. “Advanced TV Targeting.”](#)
6. [EMARKETER. “Canada Connected TV: The Viewership Shift Is Accelerating.” Briggs, Paul. November 17, 2023.](#)
7. [Government of Spain. “Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado.” July 2022.](#)
8. [Government of Spain. “Proyecto de Real Decreto...” 2024.](#)
9. [Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia. “Quarterly Telecommunications Markets from 2020 to the present.” April 11, 2025.](#)
10. [EMARKETER. “Global Media Intelligence 2024: Western Europe.” Briggs, Paul. October 30, 2024.](#)
11. [EMARKETER. “Global Media Intelligence 2024: Canada.” Briggs, Paul. October 30, 2024.](#)