

Italian newspaper's funding slashed by government sponsor

Corriere Canadese struggles after grant from Italian government cut in half

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Canada's only daily Italian newspaper faces serious financial troubles after the funding it receives from Italy's embattled government was cut by half.

Corriere Canadese, the top news source for many first-generation Italians in Canada, has launched a determined campaign to keep running after learning on Feb. 25 that the \$2.8-million grant it received from the Italian government would be cut by 50 per cent.

The government of Silvio Berlusconi has been trying to rein in its culture budget as it readies for an election at the end of March, said editor-in-chief Paola Bernardini when reached at home Tuesday. At first the trims were only for local media, but a day later that decision was reversed and the government decided it would cut funding for six international papers in countries including Canada, the United States and [Australia](#).

The grant, which has been coming to the Toronto-based paper for the past 15 years, will shrink the paper's budget significantly. The ink is barely dry on deals Corriere signed with the University of Ottawa, Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., York University and the University of Toronto to have the paper distributed to Italian language classes. That likely won't happen without the government funding, Ms. Bernardini said.

That money has already been invested in building the paper's website and in other programs, too, she added.

"We don't want to close because for 55 years we [have been] the Italian newspaper for the Italians here in Canada. We're the only [daily]," Ms. Bernardini said.

It's one of the few sources of news for many Italian Canadians who prefer or can only read news in their native tongue. It's also how many second- and third-generation Italians keep in touch with their culture and brush up on a language they may use only occasionally.

The paper's owner and operator, Toronto's Multimedia Nova Corporation, has been fighting hard to keep the paper alive, said Ms. Bernardini. The paper has reported on the budget struggles and received a great amount of support from readers, who pick up many of the 35,000 copies printed daily. Forty per cent of the readership, who take in national, international, arts and entertainment news in Corriere, are subscribers.

On Tuesday, Corriere staff began sending letters to Italian dignitaries in Canada, asking for their support. Ms. Bernardini says she hopes the gesture puts pressure on the Italian government to reverse its decision and give back the money after Italian voters go to the polls on Sunday and

Monday.

Despite the funding fight, the paper continues to keep a close and objective eye on the run-up to Italy's voting day. "It's funny for us to cover the election from here because we have a government who decided to cut funds running in the elections," Ms. Bernardini said.

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