

## Audio Transcript

Episode 275 of "[E&P Reports](#)" Vodcast Series  
with *Mike Blinder*

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### **Paul Deegan: Trade war threatens survival of local media on both sides of the border**

As tensions rise between the United States and Canada over tariffs, newspapers on both sides of the border are feeling the strain. Paul Deegan, CEO of News Media Canada, joined *E&P Reports* to discuss how the trade war is affecting the news industry, the broader economic implications, and the efforts being made to restore balance in a historically strong relationship.



Mike Blinder:

Paul Deegan, CEO of News Media Canada, I have a question for you. If I were to take you back in time—when you were the Deputy Executive Director of the National Economic Council for Bill Clinton’s White House, working in the office of the late Ted Kennedy, or at the Democratic National Committee—and told you that in the future, it would be considered patriotic for a U.S. citizen, not all, but some segment of my population, to boo the Canadian national anthem, would you say I was completely out of my mind?

Paul Deegan:

I would have had a lot more hair back then, but yes, I would’ve thought you were nuts. And I also would’ve thought you were crazy if you told me that Canadians would boo the American anthem. It just doesn’t make sense. We’re best friends and have been for a very long time.

Mike Blinder:

At least, I thought so. I mean, I feel like I’ve walked into the looking glass. Do you ever feel that way, like the universe is just upside down sometimes?

Paul Deegan:

Yeah, it feels like we’re waking up from a bad dream right now.

Mike Blinder:

Alright, so here we are—welcome to E&P Reports, a podcast we host at Editor & Publisher Magazine, dedicated to the news publishing industry. I decided, with your consent, to bring in the face of Canadian news media, Paul Deegan, CEO of News Media Canada. Paul, by the way, I don’t even believe you’re Canadian because of all the stuff you’ve done here in the U.S.

I have three questions I ask every Canadian to prove they’re Canadian. Do you mind if I put you to the test?

Paul Deegan:

Go for it.

Mike Blinder:

Okay, spell the word “color.”

Paul Deegan:

C-O-L-O-U-R.

Mike Blinder:

Wrong. Now, pronounce this word: P-R-O-C-E-S-S.

Paul Deegan:

Process.

Mike Blinder:

Wrong again. Alright, what is the last letter in the English alphabet?

Paul Deegan:

Well, I actually grew up watching American Sesame Street over a border station, so I’m going to say Z.

Mike Blinder:

Okay, so two out of three make you Canadian.



Paul, I know we're laughing, trying to make light of a very serious situation. But technically, our two governments are at war—not the kind of war happening in Ukraine or the Middle East. We're in a trade war. I'm getting emails daily from U.S. newspapers showing me how much their costs have increased just to keep the presses running—to get a lithoplate, to get paper. I'm sure you're facing the same pressures up there.

And all we're trying to do, both of us, is tell our stories and do our jobs: to produce great local journalism. Am I right?

Paul Deegan:

Absolutely. And one of the interesting things is that a lot of newsprint for U.S. newspapers comes from Canada. So, if you stick a 25 percent tariff on that, it puts enormous pressure on U.S. publishers.

Conversely, for Canadian publishers, most of our ink comes from the U.S., from Flint Group and Sun Chemical. Some of that ink is actually made in Tennessee and Illinois. So, you use a lot of our paper, and we use your ink.

Mike Blinder:

Exactly. Just across the border, like we were friends. And now, on top of all the challenges we already face—Big Tech, keeping our audiences engaged, eking out advertising revenue—we've got this weighing on us.

We're going to break it all down as E&P Reports goes one-on-one with Paul Deegan of News Media Canada, right after this message.

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Mike Blinder:

Alright, Paul, give it to us straight. What's the pulse up there? How does the Canadian press and the Canadian political class react to all this? What are they saying? What's going on?

Paul Deegan:

Absolutely. First of all, I think on both sides of the border, one thing we need to be careful about is the rhetoric. We have to make sure everyone keeps things in check. We don't want to knock anyone into the boards, to use a hockey analogy. We need to ensure that the rhetoric remains constructive on both sides.

One interesting thing is that Canadian politicians, particularly Ontario Premier Doug Ford, have been very active in speaking to Americans directly. Ford has been appearing frequently on U.S. cable networks. If you turn on Fox News almost any night, you'll see a commercial from the province of Ontario emphasizing the importance of the two-way relationship between our countries.

Ford has been speaking directly to Americans and, in particular, to the base of the former president. He's addressing them in terms they understand. If you're an American worker and suddenly you're paying more for your product, that hurts. The economies of our two countries are so integrated. I'll give you just one example. Every morning when I wake up, I eat this cereal—and I'm showing you the French side of the box.

Mike Blinder:

For those of you listening on Spotify or another audio platform, you'll need to check out the video on our YouTube channel. It's a box of Kashi GoLean cereal. Go ahead, Paul.

Paul Deegan:

On the side of the box, in French, it says "Produit des États-Unis" or "Product of USA." So, we're eating your cereal every morning. If I look around my house, my refrigerator is made in Wisconsin,



my stove is made in Tennessee, and my outdoor gas grill is made in Illinois. Our economies are deeply integrated. We sell products to you, and you sell products to us.

If you take out the energy we sell to the U.S., Canada actually **buys more from America than America buys from Canada**. It's a balanced relationship. The U.S. has much bigger trade problems with China, Mexico, Germany, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and India than it does with Canada.

Mike Blinder:

It's crazy. I live in Tennessee, and you drink our bourbon, right?

Paul Deegan:

I actually don't drink bourbon, which might make me an outsider. I drink single malt Scotch, so my stuff is getting tariffed right now.

Mike Blinder:

It's ridiculous. I just got an email from Dean Ridings of America's Newspapers—likely the same one you saw before we recorded this—pleading with members to start doing advocacy. He included talking points to explain the strain these tariffs are putting on our industry to decision-makers. Are you doing the same thing up there? How are you putting up the bat signal?

Paul Deegan:

Yes, we are. As we head into St. Patrick's Day, we're launching a campaign encouraging Canadians to "Buy Canadian" and, just as importantly, to **advertise locally**. The Canadian digital advertising market is about **\$15 billion**, and most of that money goes to **Google, Meta, and Amazon**. We're telling businesses to advertise directly with their national or local community newspapers.

It's so important to support the home team, especially now that we find ourselves in this trade war. From our perspective, it's a war that is entirely avoidable. We hope we can reach a point where the rhetoric calms down a bit. Canada has a new prime minister being sworn in today, which could be an opportunity for a reset between the prime minister and the U.S. president.

Mike Blinder:



But this “Buy Local” campaign is in direct response to the U.S. tariffs, right? Essentially, it’s a patriotic push to encourage Canadians to buy domestic products instead of American ones.

Paul Deegan:

Absolutely. If you go to a liquor store in Ontario—which is owned by the province—there’s an empty shelf where bourbon should be.

Mike Blinder:

So you have to drink rye instead?

Paul Deegan:

Exactly. And now, people are checking labels at the grocery store, wondering, “Am I buying an apple from Ontario or from Washington state?” This is where we are. But we want to get back to a place of mutual respect between our countries. Sure, there are always going to be trade irritants. We need to address concerns on both sides, whether it’s U.S. complaints about dairy or the American president’s concerns about illegal migration and fentanyl at the border. Our government is working on those issues.

At the end of the day, we need to find solutions because Canada and the U.S. have been close allies for generations. We need to get back to that.

Mike Blinder:

My editorial this month was an open letter to the Murdochs, pleading for an Edward R. Murrow to emerge on the Fox News Channel. The Wall Street Journal is starting to break from the party line. Their morning editorials are now saying, “Let’s get back to reality.” They’re focusing on tariffs rather than the other polarizing social issues.

Down here, senators don’t have cover from the press. If they criticize the president on tariffs, they’ll be torn apart by Hannity that night. Do you get my drift?

Paul Deegan:

I hear you.

Mike Blinder:

You don't have that problem in Canada, right? You don't have a far-right media ecosystem shaping public opinion in the same way. Would you say that Canadian news media provides a more even balance between perspectives? How does your media landscape differ from ours during this highly polarized time?

Paul Deegan:

There is still some polarization in Canada, but by and large, our news media focuses on telling stories that are fact-based and fact-checked. If you look at the Wall Street Journal editorials, they've been saying day after day that this is the dumbest trade war in history. Ordinary Canadians who wouldn't normally read the Journal are paying attention to those stories and headlines right now. What the Wall Street Journal is doing is actually providing a tremendous service to both countries in their editorial coverage of this issue.

Mike Blinder:

Alright, so Buy Local is how you guys are handling the response. We're here just trying to get some sanity back. Meanwhile, I'm getting tons of emails from publishers saying they can't afford to print. A **140-year-old** newspaper in New York State just shut down in Cortland. Are you seeing the same problems there? You're still getting your ink from us, but will it be easier for you guys to print, or are you facing the same challenges?

Paul Deegan:

Right now, printing and distribution are challenges for publishers on both sides of the border. In Canada, we have some unique challenges, particularly with distribution. Some newspapers rely on **Canada Post**, which is similar to the U.S. Postal Service.

Mike Blinder:

Right.



Paul Deegan:

In Canada, households can put up a “No Junk Mail” sign, which stops Canada Post from delivering flyers and unsolicited mail. Community newspapers were always exempt from that rule, meaning they could still be delivered. However, about a year ago, Canada Post **changed its policy**. Now, if a newspaper includes an insert—say, a flyer from a retailer like Canadian Tire (which is similar to Ace Hardware in the U.S.)—that newspaper is **no longer exempt**. It’s now considered junk mail.

This has made it impractical for community newspapers that rely on ad inserts for revenue. We just had a newspaper in Alberta shut down after **114 years** in business. That single policy change from our post office cost them **\$24,000**—which was the difference between staying open and closing their doors. It’s really sad.

And, as you know, newsprint is both scarce and expensive. A couple of years ago, publishers in Ukraine were asking us for help sourcing newsprint, and it was **almost impossible** to find.

Mike Blinder:

There’s another phenomenon happening up there, isn’t there? Thanks to the U.S., Canada is more united than it has been in decades. Am I right?

Paul Deegan:

Yeah, President Trump has done more for Canadian unity than anyone else in a generation. This has really brought Canadians together—not just with a sense of pride, but also with a sense of purpose. While we want to repair our relationship with the United States, we are also looking to **diversify our trading relationships** with Europe and Asia.

The unfortunate reality is that we **no longer see the U.S. as a reliable trading partner**. We signed the **KUSMA** trade agreement—the updated NAFTA—with President Trump, and yet, from Canada’s perspective, that deal is effectively **dead**.

We need to get back to a place where we trust each other. And for U.S. publishers, there’s an opportunity to tell those local stories—about the **ink plant in Tennessee** that supplies Canadian newspapers, for example.

There was a report on Canadian news the other night about a man named **Mike Hill**, who owns a Chevron station in Blaine, Washington. Most of his customers were Canadians crossing the border to fill up their tanks, but now, they’re no longer coming—even though his gas is **20 cents a liter cheaper** than what’s available just across the border in British Columbia.



Most Canadians live **within 100 kilometers** of the U.S.-Canada border. Cities like Buffalo and Detroit, as well as many northern U.S. towns, benefit from this **cross-border relationship**. Unfortunately, that's all at risk now.

Mike Blinder:

I was at the Burrell Conference in Phoenix recently, and I had lunch with the vice president of **Buffalo Toronto Public Media**. This man was hurting. He serves a dual audience that was once a **single media market**, and now, it's fractured.

Paul Deegan:

Absolutely. And for his donor base, that's a big issue. Buffalo's PBS station serves many Canadian viewers, and a **significant** number of its donors are Canadian. PBS provides great content, but now, that cross-border support is in jeopardy.

Mike Blinder:

Alright, let's wrap this up. Attention spans in the U.S. are short. Burrell's podcast experts confirmed it—twenty minutes is about as much as people will listen. So, here's your final megaphone. Go ahead and say what Ontario Premier Doug Ford has been saying. You love Americans. Now, give us your final pitch to thousands of news publishing executives in the U.S.

Paul Deegan:

We have been best friends forever, and we need to get back to that relationship. The rhetoric needs to be dialed down.

For publishers and editors in the U.S., my message is this: **cover these stories**. Report on how both countries benefit from trade. The goal should be to **grow the pie**, not shrink it.

If the U.S. puts massive tariffs on the rest of the world and builds an economic wall around itself, **everyone loses**. The U.S. will be poorer for it. Canada will be poorer for it. We won't be able to buy as many American goods.

Let's figure out a way to work through this with **common sense policies**. Let's keep **jobs** in North America so we can all be stronger and prosper together.



Mike Blinder:

Paul Deegan, president and CEO of News Media Canada, a personal friend, a friend of *Editor & Publisher Magazine*, and a **friend to the entire American news publishing industry**.

Am I allowed to say that? I know I'm editorializing, but I don't feel like I'm at war with you, sir.

Paul Deegan:

Absolutely.

Mike Blinder:

We'll continue some form of a relationship across this so-called trade war border. And I promise I'll find a way to sneak a bottle of Tennessee bourbon up to you. How does that sound?

Paul Deegan:

I'm sure my kids would drink it before I get the chance.

Mike Blinder:

Thanks, Paul.

Paul Deegan:

Thanks so much, Mike. Have a great day.