

# Buffalo•Toronto Public Media



## MEDIA NEWS

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### **BTPM's Sylvia Bennett Retiring After Nearly Four Decades of Leadership in Public Media**

Buffalo Toronto Public Media (BTPM) today announced that Senior Vice President and Chief Development Officer **Sylvia Bennett** will retire at the end of 2026, concluding an extraordinary career spanning nearly four decades in public media fundraising, production, audience engagement, events management, and nonprofit leadership.

Bennett has led BTPM's development efforts since 2007, with the exception of a brief return to her alma mater, where she served as Director of Development for the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) before rejoining the organization. During her career, she has become widely respected throughout the public broadcasting system as one of its foremost fundraising strategists, helping stations strengthen membership programs, utilize program content, evolve on-air fundraising, and navigate periods of significant change.

Her retirement marks the culmination of a career dedicated to ensuring public media remains strong, sustainable, and accessible for generations to come.

"Sylvia has devoted her professional life to strengthening public media," said Tom Calderone, President and CEO of Buffalo Toronto Public Media. "Her impact extends far beyond Buffalo. She has shaped fundraising strategies, mentored development professionals across the country, and helped public television and radio stations succeed through some of the industry's most challenging moments. At BTPM, she has been a trusted advisor, an innovative leader, and a champion for our mission. We are deeply grateful for everything she has done for our organization and for public media."

Throughout her career, Bennett has consistently combined strategic vision with operational excellence. Before joining BTPM, she served as Senior Director of

Fundraising Programming at PBS Corporate Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where she worked with national and international producers to create programs for use by stations nationwide. Prior to PBS, she spent a decade at WETA in Washington, D.C., serving as Executive Director of On-Air Fundraising and Special Projects while also producing nationally recognized fundraising programs and events. She began her public broadcasting career at San Francisco's KQED, where she helped grow one of the nation's strongest membership organizations. In every position, Bennett worked closely with each organization's board of directors, and served as on-air talent during fundraising weeks.

At Buffalo Toronto Public Media, Bennett transformed nearly every aspect of the organization's development operation. Under her leadership, BTPM expanded its major gifts program, strengthened foundation relationships, modernized membership fundraising, evolved its on-air fundraising strategy, created innovative events, and helped evolve individual giving for an increasingly digital media landscape.

In recent years, as the public media system adapted to significant changes in national fundraising production, Bennett once again became a resource for stations across the country. Drawing on decades of pledge production experience, she stepped in to help produce pledge programming when needed, ensuring stations could continue serving viewers and sustaining local service during periods of transition.

Former BTPM President and CEO **Don Boswell**, who recruited Bennett to the organization twice during his career, reflected on her legacy.

"Her hard work, commitment, dedication, and grace are worthy of admiration. But I am reminded of her remarkable ability to draw out the very best in people. Again and again, I have seen her inject thoughtfulness into a Board or staff discussion, ushering in a dynamic that was both constructive and compassionate. I have also witnessed her passion for equity, and for making the invisible visible."

Beyond Buffalo Toronto Public Media, Bennett has been an active leader throughout the nonprofit and arts communities on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border. She currently serves on the boards of the Shaw Festival U.S. Foundation, Shaw Festival Board of Directors in Canada, Collaborative Center for Social Innovation, and AAA of Western and Central New York. Bennett previously served on the boards of the Roycroft Campus Corporation, YWCA, Buffalo Opera Unlimited, and the Erie County Arts & Cultural Advisory Board. She was also an instructor for the Institute for Nonprofit Practice. In 2024, *Buffalo Business First* recognized Bennett as one of Western New York's Women of Influence, honoring her professional accomplishments and community leadership.

Although she will retire from her full-time role at the end of 2026, Bennett will continue supporting Buffalo Toronto Public Media as a part-time consultant through

the latter part of fiscal year 2027, helping guide the organization through leadership transition and continuing to lend her expertise in membership fundraising, pledge production, and strategic development.

“Public media has been Sylvia's life's work,” Calderone said. “She has challenged us to think differently, encouraged us to innovate, and reminded us that we should never accept 'the way it's always been done' if there's a better path forward. Her legacy isn't measured only in the millions of dollars she has helped raise, but in the stronger organization, stronger public media system, and stronger communities she leaves behind.”

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#### **About Buffalo Toronto Public Media**

Buffalo Toronto Public Media engages with our communities through exploration and entertainment – everywhere. Our member-supported services include BTPM PBS, BTPM NPR (88.7 in Buffalo, 91.3 in Olean, 88.1 in Jamestown), BTPM Classical (94.5 in Buffalo, 89.7 WNJA in Jamestown), BTPM The Bridge (88.7 HD2 and 94.5 HD2 in Buffalo), BTPM Create, PBS KIDS, and the BTPM YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/BuffaloTorontoPublicMedia>). Additional information about Buffalo Toronto Public Media can be found at [btpm.org](http://btpm.org).