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Framing Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's Economic Leadership: A Comparative Analysis of CBC News and CTV News

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Abstract

This study investigates how the two Canadian media outlets CBC News and CTV News construct and interpret narratives of economic leadership through the combined lenses of agenda-setting and framing theory. Focusing on the Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, the research employs a qualitative comparative analysis of 164 news articles published between November 2025 and February 2026. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative comparative approach informed by Entman's framing model to examine how CBC News and CTV News construct narratives of economic leadership. Framing is treated as a process through which media selectively emphasize particular aspects of economic reality, while Entman's model serves both as the study's theoretical foundation and as the analytical framework guiding the qualitative interpretation of media discourse. Specifically, the analysis examines how economic challenges, policy commitments, and reported achievements are prioritized and framed within each outlet's coverage.

The findings reveal a clear distinction between convergence in issue salience and divergence in interpretive framing. Both outlets consistently prioritize key economic concerns which include inflation, cost-of-living pressures, and international trade tensions. However, significant differences emerge in how these issues are constructed. Drawing on Entman's four framing functions, the study shows that CBC News adopts a thematic and structurally oriented framing approach that situates economic challenges within broader global and institutional contexts, accompanied by balanced and moderated evaluations of leadership. In contrast, CTV News employs a more episodic and politically driven framing style that emphasizes immediacy, policy contestation, and leadership accountability.

These framing differences produce distinct representations of economic leadership that shape how responsibility, effectiveness, and policy responses are understood. By integrating agenda-setting and framing theory, the study demonstrates that media influence operates not only through the prioritization of economic issues but also through the construction of competing interpretive narratives.

Keywords: agenda-setting, economic leadership, framing, Mark Carney, media framing, trade policy

1. Introduction

Economic governance is central to political leadership, especially during economic challenges. Inflation, cost-of-living concerns, trade disruptions, and volatile global conditions are putting pressure on governments and intensifying media scrutiny. The media shape public understanding by selecting which issues to highlight and how leaders' actions are interpreted.

Since Mark Carney became prime minister, economic reporting has grown in prominence. Carney, noted for crisis management and technical skill, took office in March 2025, making economic competence central to his legitimacy (Prime Minister of Canada, 2025a). Media coverage focuses on economic challenges, government promises, and evaluation of the administration's performance-shaping how Carney's economic leadership is judged. Carney's main economic challenge is strained Canada–U.S. trade after renewed U.S. tariffs (Jaber & Levidze, 2026). Inflation, rising interest rates, domestic industrial policy, and economic resilience are also key concerns.

Carney's response mixes policy with messaging. His government vows to protect consumers, support industries, strengthen sovereignty, and uphold rules-based trade (Prime Minister of Canada, 2025b). The media highlight achievements like retaliation, subsidies, and tools to curb inflation and stabilize sectors (Zimonjic, 2025). These

developments provide context for how the media frames economic leadership as crisis management and proactive governance.

This study uses agenda-setting and framing theories to structure its analysis. Agenda-setting guides the first research question on what economic aspects of Carney's leadership CBC and CTV emphasize most. Framing theory informs how these aspects are interpreted—how responsibility is assigned, leadership is evaluated, and responses are portrayed as credible or contested. Integrating both perspectives enables a systematic comparison of how Canada's main broadcasters construct narratives about Carney's economic leadership.

Institutional differences among media organizations also influence agenda-setting and framing. Studies show these distinctions shape issue emphasis, tone, and responsibility assignment, especially with complex topics like the economy (Cushion, 2019; Soroka, 2014). Despite this, there are few comparative analyses of Canadian media portrayals of prime ministerial economic leadership.

This study fills a gap by examining CBC News and CTV News coverage of Prime Minister Mark Carney's economic leadership, focusing on depictions of challenges, promises, and achievements. Drawing on agenda-setting and framing theory, it analyzes patterns of salience and framing in both outlets during a key period. By comparing coverage, the study clarifies how Canadian media shape perceptions of economic governance.

2. Theoretical Foundation

This study applies agenda-setting and framing theories to compare how CBC News and CTV News construct their narratives about Carney's economic leadership. It reveals differences and similarities in issue salience and interpretive framing. Agenda-setting theory clarifies which economic topics are prioritized, while framing theory explains how these topics are contextualized for audiences.

2.1 Agenda-Setting Theory and Economic Issue Salience

Agenda-setting theory holds that news media shape public perceptions by emphasizing certain issues over others. Rather than dictating what audiences think, media influence what they think about, shaping the public agenda (Cohen, 1963). The theory's roots reach back to Lippmann's (1922) view that citizens rely on mediated "pictures in their heads" to understand realities beyond direct experience.

The empirical foundation of agenda-setting theory was established by McCombs and Shaw's (1972) Chapel Hill study, which found a strong correlation between news coverage prominence and perceived importance during the 1968 U.S. presidential election. The theory has been analyzed to determine how the media shape public understanding of protest activity. Boyle et al. (2012) examined coverage of the 2000 WTO student demonstrations in U.S. and international newspapers, finding that the media often prioritized protest tactics—especially disruption or violence—over political motivations. Coverage was more informative when protests had clear, nonviolent goals. These findings show how the media focus on protest characteristics shapes perceptions of legitimacy, sympathy, and support.

Expanding agenda-setting research, Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2012) found that prominent media coverage of Belgian student protests increased education's political priority, shaping policy debate and reform. The study demonstrated a dynamic interaction between protest visibility and political response, showing that amplified protest activity can create political consequences via media attention. Such research highlights the media's role in connecting student activism to policy outcomes. Further studies confirm that sustained media exposure boosts issue salience, especially in complex domains (McCombs, 20). Comparative research shows that the media construct different protest narratives. For instance, Jaber (2025a) found that The Guardian and USA Today emphasized different aspects of protest, shaping distinct public interpretations.

Later theoretical developments extended agenda-setting beyond issue salience to include attribute salience, also known as second-level agenda-setting. This perspective emphasizes that the media influence not only which issues are considered important but also which attributes of those issues or political actors are emphasized (Ghanem, 1997; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). Economic issues such as inflation, trade policy, and fiscal reform are especially susceptible to agenda-setting effects because audiences often depend heavily on news media to interpret their causes, consequences, and political significance. In the context of economic leadership, this includes highlighting particular traits, strategies, or outcomes associated with a prime minister's economic performance. Such emphasis can shape the evaluative criteria audiences use when assessing leadership competence, responsibility, and credibility.

2.2 Framing Theory and Interpretive Meaning

While agenda-setting addresses issue prominence, framing theory explains how meaning is constructed once issues enter public discourse. The concept of framing originates in the sociological work of Erving Goffman (1974, 1981, 1986), who argued that individuals rely on cognitive frameworks to interpret social reality. Goffman distinguished between natural

frameworks, which explain events through physical causation, and social frameworks, which attribute meaning to events through human intention, agency, and responsibility. These frameworks guide how events are perceived, labeled, and understood.

Building on Goffman's insights, Robert Entman (1991, 1993) conceptualized framing as a communicative process involving selection and salience. According to Entman (1993), framing an issue is selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and making them more prominent in ways that promote particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations. These four framing functions offer a systematic analytical model for examining how news narratives are constructed.

Framing plays a crucial role in economic reporting, where media narratives may portray economic challenges as structural or leadership-driven, present policy promises as feasible or symbolic, and frame achievements as evidence of competence or as politically overstated. Such interpretive choices influence how audiences assign responsibility and evaluate political performance (Iyengar, 1991; Entman, 2004, 2010). Frames are embedded in news texts through recurring keywords, metaphors, sources, and contextual cues, as well as through strategic inclusion and omission of information (Entman, 1991).

Entman (2004, 2007, 2010) further emphasized the importance of cultural resonance, arguing that frames gain persuasive power when they align with widely shared values and emotional associations. News frames that rely on culturally familiar language and imagery are more likely to shape audience interpretation and evaluation. In economic coverage, culturally resonant frames may invoke notions of national interest, economic security, fiscal responsibility, or consumer impact to enhance their interpretive influence.

2.3 Episodic and Thematic Framing in News and Economic Coverage

An important extension of framing theory is Iyengar's (1990, 1991, 1996) distinction between episodic and thematic frames. Episodic framing focuses on discrete events, individual actors, or short-term outcomes, often encouraging audiences to attribute responsibility to specific leaders. In contrast, thematic framing situates events within broader structural, institutional, or historical contexts, directing attention toward systemic causes and policy solutions. This distinction is particularly relevant to economic reporting, where episodic frames may personalize economic challenges or achievements, while thematic frames emphasize macroeconomic conditions, global pressures, or long-term policy trajectories.

Empirical research suggests that episodic framing tends to individualize responsibility, whereas thematic framing promotes structural interpretations and collective policy responses (Iyengar, 1991). In the context of prime-ministerial economic leadership, the balance between episodic and thematic framing can significantly shape public perceptions of accountability, competence, and policy effectiveness. In fact, framing processes are not limited to journalistic practices but extend to political actors' communication strategies, particularly in digital environments where messages are condensed and strategically constructed (Jaber, 2026; 2025b).

2.4 Integrating Agenda-Setting and Framing

Agenda-setting and framing are analytically distinct yet conceptually complementary. Agenda-setting explains how economic issues rise in prominence within news coverage, while framing explains how those issues are interpreted and evaluated. Second-level agenda-setting further bridges the two approaches by emphasizing the salience of attributes that link issue prominence to interpretive emphasis (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007).

The integration of agenda-setting theory and Entman's framing model in this study assumes that the media actively construct social reality through selection, salience, and interpretation. Agenda-setting theory is used to examine how economic issues, particularly inflation, cost-of-living pressures, and trade tensions, are prioritized within media discourse. However, because agenda-setting primarily explains issue salience rather than interpretive meaning, Entman's framing model is employed to analyze how media construct those issues through specific narrative emphases.

In this study, Entman's model serves as both a theoretical and methodological framework. Theoretically, it conceptualizes framing as a process through which media shape meaning by emphasizing particular interpretations of events and issues. Methodologically, the model provides the analytical structure for examining how CBC News and CTV News define economic problems, attribute responsibility, evaluate leadership, and present policy responses. Together, agenda-setting and framing theory allow the study to examine not only which economic issues become prominent but also how those issues are interpretively constructed across different media environments.

3. Method

Building on the theoretical framework indicated in the preceding section, this section outlines the methodological aspects of the study. Specifically, the following subsections detail research design, research questions, data collection process and corpus construction, and analytical framework and interpretive strategy.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design to examine how CBC News and CTV News construct narratives surrounding Prime Minister Mark Carney's economic leadership. The analysis is guided by agenda-setting theory and framing theory, which together provide a conceptual foundation for examining both issue salience and interpretive framing in news discourse. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this research because it enables close, contextualized analysis of how economic challenges, policy promises, and reported achievements are discursively produced, evaluated, and legitimized in news texts. The comparative focus on CBC News and CTV News allows for a systematic examination of how institutional context shapes and frames economic news narratives.

3.2 Research Questions

The methodological design is structured around the following research questions and sub-questions, which guide the analysis:

RQ1: How do CBC News and CTV News prioritize economic aspects of Prime Minister Mark Carney's leadership in their news coverage?

RQ1a: How are economic challenges facing Canada under Prime Minister Mark Carney emphasized and contextualized in the coverage of each outlet?

RQ1b: How do CBC News and CTV News portray Prime Minister Mark Carney's economic promises and reported achievements?

RQ2: How do CBC News and CTV News frame Prime Minister Mark Carney's economic leadership in terms of problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and proposed solutions?

These research questions and sub-questions ensure conceptual alignment between agenda-setting concerns related to issue emphasis and framing concerns related to interpretive construction.

3.3 Data Collection and Corpus Construction

News articles were retrieved directly from the official websites of CBC News and CTV News to preserve the original publication context, including headline structure, narrative organization, and contextual framing cues relevant to agenda-setting and framing analysis. This approach strengthens analytical credibility by examining the texts as they were presented to audiences. CBC News operates within a legislated public-service framework established under the Broadcasting Act and guided by a mandate centered on informing and engaging the public in the national interest (Government of Canada, 1991, 2025a). By contrast, CTV News functions within the commercial media environment of Bell Media, where audience engagement and market-oriented news production play a more prominent institutional role (Government of Canada, 2025b; Bell Media, 2025).

The study employs a qualitative comparative design to examine how both outlets construct narratives surrounding Prime Minister Mark Carney's economic leadership. Rather than applying qualitative comparative analysis in its formal configurational form, the study adopts an interpretive comparative approach that facilitates systematic cross-case analysis while maintaining contextual depth. Entman's framing model provides the analytical framework through its four framing functions: problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. These functions serve as the primary interpretive categories guiding the comparative analysis of media discourse.

The individual news article constitutes the unit of analysis. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure direct relevance to the study's research questions and theoretical framework. Articles were included only if they focused substantially on economic issues related to Mark Carney's leadership, including inflation, affordability concerns, trade relations, tariffs, fiscal policy, economic initiatives, or broader economic performance. In addition, all selected articles were published between November 1, 2025, and February 28, 2026. This multi-month timeframe was chosen to capture sustained economic reporting across a calendar-year transition and to enable the identification of recurring interpretive patterns rather than isolated moments of coverage.

Articles were excluded when economic issues appeared only incidentally or when the primary focus concerned unrelated political or social matters. The final dataset consisted of 164 news articles, including 69 from CBC News and 95 from CTV News. To facilitate analysis, the articles were organized into three broad thematic categories: economic challenges, economic promises and policy initiatives, and economic achievements and governmental responses. These categories supported the identification of recurring agenda-setting priorities and framing patterns across both media outlets.*3.4 Analytical Framework and Interpretive Strategy*

The analysis integrates agenda-setting logic with qualitative framing analysis. Agenda-setting theory informs the examination of which economic aspects of Carney's leadership are foregrounded and sustained in news coverage, while framing theory provides the tools to analyze how meaning is constructed around those aspects. Rather than quantifying

coverage, the qualitative agenda-setting approach focuses on patterns of prominence, narrative emphasis, and thematic persistence across the dataset. Framing analysis is guided by Entman's four framing functions, which structure the interpretive process by focusing on how problems are defined, responsibility is attributed, moral evaluations are articulated, and solutions are proposed. Using this established framework enhances credibility by ensuring conceptual clarity and analytical consistency.

4. Results

4.1 Agenda-Setting: Economic Salience and Narrative Structuring

Across CBC News and CTV News, economic issues consistently dominate the media agenda, reflecting a shared prioritization of inflation, cost-of-living pressures, and trade relations. This convergence suggests that both outlets help shape a national economic agenda, reinforcing the centrality of economic governance in public discourse. However, while the two outlets align on the issues they emphasize, they diverge significantly in how those issues are structured and contextualized within broader narratives.

In CBC News coverage, economic salience is constructed through thematic continuity and structural linkage, whereby individual issues are consistently embedded within broader systemic contexts. Inflation, for example, is not treated as an isolated phenomenon but is repeatedly connected to global supply chain disruptions, post-pandemic recovery patterns, and international economic volatility (Zimonjic, 2026). This pattern of coverage reflects a thematic agenda-setting approach, in which issues are interconnected and presented as components of a larger economic system. As a result, audiences are encouraged to interpret economic developments as part of an ongoing structural process rather than as discrete or episodic events.

By contrast, CTV News organizes economic salience through a politically inflected hierarchy, where issue importance is frequently tied to public opinion and partisan competition. Economic concerns are often ranked using polling data or framed in terms of electoral implications, as illustrated by coverage noting that economic issues remain among the top concerns for Canadian voters (Ha, 2026). This approach not only elevates economic topics but also situates them within a strategic political landscape, where their significance is linked to leadership performance and voter perception. Consequently, CTV's agenda-setting function extends beyond issue prioritization to include the construction of political relevance, reinforcing the connection between economic conditions and governance.

4.2 Framing Analysis: CBC News

4.2.1 Problem Definition: Economic Challenges as Structural and Globally Embedded

CBC News defines economic challenges as complex and structurally embedded phenomena, emphasizing their roots in global and systemic processes. Rather than foregrounding immediate disruptions, coverage consistently situates economic issues within broader international dynamics. For instance, inflation is framed as a consequence of global supply constraints and post-pandemic demand fluctuations (Burke, 2025) to situate it within a multi-causal, transnational context.

This approach reflects a thematic framing orientation, in which problems are constructed through depth rather than immediacy. Trade tensions are similarly framed as manifestations of long-term geopolitical shifts, particularly in relation to evolving U.S. trade policy and its implications for Canada's export-dependent economy. By embedding economic challenges within enduring structural conditions, CBC News constructs a problem definition that emphasizes complexity, persistence, and limited controllability.

This framing is reinforced through neutral and explanatory language. Terms associated with gradual processes, such as "pressures," "adjustments," and "constraints," dominate coverage and contribute to a narrative tone that prioritizes understanding over urgency. This discursive strategy encourages audiences to interpret economic issues as systemic challenges requiring long-term solutions rather than immediate crises.

4.2.2 Causal Attribution: Diffused Responsibility Across Institutional Actors

CBC News employs a multi-layered model of causal attribution, in which responsibility is distributed across a range of institutional and global actors. Economic challenges are rarely attributed to a single source; instead, they are framed as the outcome of interconnected processes involving international markets, policy institutions, and macroeconomic trends (Robertson, 2026).

This diffusion of responsibility is further reinforced by the inclusion of expert voices and institutional perspectives, such as those of central banks and economic analysts. These sources contribute to a technocratic framing environment, where explanations are grounded in expertise rather than political contestation. As a result, causal narratives emphasize systemic constraints rather than individual decision-making.

Specifically, while government policies are discussed, they are not positioned as the primary drivers of economic outcomes. Instead, they are presented as responses to external pressures that situate political actors within a broader

network of influence. This framing reduces the emphasis on blame and shifts attention to structural interdependence, which aligns with CBC's broader emphasis on contextualization.

4.2.3 Moral Evaluation: Balanced and Moderated Assessment of Leadership

CBC News constructs moral evaluations of Mark Carney's economic leadership through a balanced and moderated discursive approach. Coverage incorporates both supportive and critical perspectives, often within the same article, to avoid polarized judgments.

For example, reporting on fiscal policy highlights the strategic ambitions of government initiatives while simultaneously acknowledging concerns regarding their effectiveness (Wherry, 2025). This dual presentation creates a measured evaluative environment in which leadership is assessed through a combination of achievement and limitation.

The use of neutral language and indirect evaluation further contributes to this moderation. Rather than employing overly judgmental terms, CBC News relies on expert commentary and comparative analysis to guide interpretation. This approach positions evaluation as an analytical process that encourages readers to engage critically with the information presented.

4.2.4 Treatment Recommendation: Policy Responses as Institutional and Technocratic Processes

CBC News frames policy responses as institutional processes grounded in expertise and deliberation. Economic measures are presented within the context of policy frameworks that emphasize their design, implementation, and intended outcomes.

For instance, coverage of fiscal strategies highlights the role of government planning and expert consultation in addressing economic challenges (Hwang, 2025). This framing reinforces the perception of governance as a methodical, evidence-based process rather than a reactive or politically driven endeavor.

Moreover, policy solutions are rarely presented as definitive or immediate fixes. Instead, these policy solutions are framed as part of an ongoing process of adjustment and refinement to reflect the complexity of economic management. This approach aligns with CBC's broader emphasis on stability, continuity, and institutional legitimacy.

4.3 Framing Analysis: CTV News

4.3.1 Problem Definition: Economic Challenges as Immediate and High-Impact Crises

CTV News constructs economic challenges as urgent and highly consequential issues to emphasize their direct impact on everyday life. Inflation and cost-of-living pressures are framed as immediate hardships, illustrated by rising prices and the financial strain households experience (Cheng, 2026).

This framing is characterized by episodic intensity, in which complex economic processes are condensed into tangible, relatable experiences. Linguistic choices such as "soaring," "surging," and "record-high" amplify the perceived severity of economic conditions, contributing to a narrative of crisis.

Trade tensions are similarly framed as escalating conflicts, with references to severe tariff measures to highlight the potential for economic disruption (Wilson, 2026). This portrayal elevates trade issues from technical policy matters to high-stakes confrontations, reinforcing their urgency and significance.

4.3.2 Causal Attribution: Emphasis on Policy Performance and Leadership Accountability

CTV News attributes economic challenges through a dual framework that combines structural acknowledgment with a stronger emphasis on political accountability. While global factors are recognized, greater attention is given to the government's effectiveness and to Mark Carney's responses.

Expert commentary is frequently used to evaluate policy measures and to highlight their limitations (Freeman, 2026). This evaluative focus implicitly links economic outcomes to leadership decisions, reinforcing a narrative of accountability.

Additionally, causal attribution is shaped by the inclusion of competing perspectives from political actors and stakeholders. This multiplicity of voices creates a contested attribution environment, where responsibility is actively debated rather than neutrally described.

4.3.3 Moral Evaluation: Contrastive and Multi-Vocal Judgments of Leadership

CTV News presents moral evaluations of Mark Carney through a contrastive, dynamic framework that allows positive and negative assessments to coexist. Leadership is frequently evaluated through juxtaposition, as seen in coverage that highlights Carney's international recognition alongside domestic economic challenges (Cheng, 2026).

This approach produces a tension-driven evaluative landscape that encourages audiences to consider competing interpretations. The inclusion of strong critical perspectives further intensifies this dynamic, contributing to a more openly

contested narrative. Unlike CBC's moderated tone, CTV's evaluative framing is more explicit and varied, which reflects a broader emphasis on debate, critique, and political scrutiny.

4.3.4 Treatment Recommendation: Policy Responses as Uncertain Solutions

CTV News frames policy responses as inherently contested and uncertain, which emphasizes debate over effectiveness and outcomes. Government initiatives are presented alongside critiques to highlight their limitations and potential risks (Freeman, 2026).

Coverage frequently incorporates alternative proposals from opposition figures and stakeholders to create a pluralistic policy discourse. This multiplicity of perspectives supports the idea that economic governance is subject to ongoing negotiation.

Furthermore, policy outcomes are framed as uncertain, with attention given to potential unintended consequences. This emphasis on uncertainty contributes to a portrayal of economic policy as provisional and evolving, rather than definitive or stable.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that media representations of economic leadership are shaped through a layered interaction between issue salience and interpretive framing. While CBC News and CTV News converge in prioritizing the central economic concerns surrounding Mark Carney's leadership, they diverge substantially in how these concerns are constructed, explained, and evaluated. This distinction highlights the analytical value of integrating agenda-setting and framing theory, revealing that agreement on what matters does not entail agreement on what it means.

5.1 Shared Economic Agenda as a Discursive Foundation

At the agenda-setting level, both outlets consistently foreground inflation, cost-of-living pressures, and international trade tensions. This convergence reflects a shared national media agenda, rooted in both structural economic conditions and widespread public concern. Through repeated emphasis, these issues are elevated as defining elements of Canada's economic landscape to reinforce their salience within public discourse.

However, the findings indicate that this convergence operates primarily as a baseline of issue alignment rather than a marker of interpretive similarity. Once these issues are established as salient, each outlet organizes them within distinct narrative frameworks. In this sense, agenda-setting functions as a first-order process that structures attention, while framing operates at a second level, shaping interpretation. The analysis, therefore, demonstrates that media influence cannot be adequately understood without accounting for both dimensions simultaneously.

5.2 Divergent Framing Logics and Interpretive Outcomes

The most significant differences between the two outlets emerge through their framing practices. CBC News adopts a thematic and structurally oriented approach, consistently situating economic developments within broader global, institutional, and systemic contexts. Economic challenges are framed as multi-layered phenomena shaped by interconnected forces, including international markets, supply chains, and long-term policy dynamics. This orientation encourages an interpretation that emphasizes complexity, continuity, and constraint, positioning economic outcomes as only partially attributable to domestic political action.

In contrast, CTV News frames economic issues through a more episodic, politically inflected lens that foregrounds immediacy, impact, and contestation. Economic developments are frequently linked to electoral dynamics, leadership performance, and public dissatisfaction, thereby transforming them into politically consequential events. This framing logic prioritizes urgency and accountability, encouraging audiences to interpret economic conditions as direct reflections of governance. These contrasting logics are particularly evident in the framing of inflation. While CBC News contextualizes inflation within global economic processes, CTV News presents it as an immediate domestic pressure with tangible consequences for households and political legitimacy.

Table 1. A Simplified Model of Agenda-Setting and Framing Effects in CBC News and CTV News Coverage of Economic Leadership

Stage of Media Influence	CBC News	CTV News	Interpretive Outcome
Agenda-Setting (Issue Salience)	Interconnected structural issues	Politically salient and contested issues	Shared issue importance
Problem Definition	Systemic and globally driven	Urgent and crisis-driven	Perceived severity differs
Causal Attribution	Diffused responsibility	Leadership-linked responsibility	Different accountability perceptions
Moral Evaluation	Balanced and moderated	Contested and contrastive	Divergent leadership judgments
Treatment Recommendations	Technocratic and procedural	Debated and uncertain	Different policy expectations
Framing Orientation	Structural / Thematic	Episodic / Conflict-oriented	Distinct interpretive lenses

As shown in Table 1, while both CBC News and CTV News converge in prioritizing key economic issues, they diverge significantly in how they frame these issues. Table 1 shows that agenda-setting establishes a shared foundation of issue salience, but framing processes generate distinct interpretive narratives that shape public understanding of economic leadership. Table 1 serves as a synthesized overview of the study's principal comparative findings rather than as the sole presentation of the results. The table condenses the dominant agenda-setting and framing patterns identified in CBC News and CTV News coverage of Prime Minister Mark Carney's economic leadership, particularly in relation to issue salience, problem construction, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and policy responses.

Nevertheless, the study's core findings are developed throughout the qualitative analysis. The detailed examination of news texts, contextual interpretation, and illustrative examples drawn from the analyzed articles provides the primary analytical depth of the research. Accordingly, Table 1 serves as an integrative conceptual summary that complements rather than replaces the broader narrative analysis presented throughout the findings and discussion sections.

5.3 Reframing Economic Leadership: Constraint versus Accountability

The divergence in framing is most pronounced in the construction of economic leadership. CBC News portrays leadership as embedded within structural constraints that emphasize the limitations imposed by global economic systems and external pressures. Within this narrative, leadership is framed in terms of navigation and adaptation rather than control, leading to a diffuse attribution of responsibility. Economic outcomes are therefore understood as contingent upon broader systemic conditions, which moderate direct evaluation of leadership performance.

By contrast, CTV News frames leadership as actively accountable and continuously scrutinized, placing greater emphasis on policy decisions, performance outcomes, and public response. Leadership is constructed as a site of ongoing political evaluation, where achievements are frequently juxtaposed with shortcomings. This economic leadership, as framed by CTV News, produces a more dynamic and contrastive representation, in which economic conditions serve as indicators of leadership effectiveness.

These differences reflect distinct configurations of Entman's framing functions. CBC's emphasis on structural causality reduces the centrality of individual agency, whereas CTV's focus on accountability intensifies evaluative judgment. As a result, the same economic developments are interpreted either as systemic challenges to be managed or as performance benchmarks to be assessed.

5.4 Competing Conceptions of Policy and Governance

The two Canadian media outlets also diverge in how they construct policy responses. CBC News frames economic policies as institutional and technocratic processes that emphasize deliberation, expertise, and procedural continuity. Policy interventions are presented as components of a broader governance framework to reinforce the perception of economic management as a specialized and system-driven activity.

In contrast, CTV News frames policy responses as contested and politically negotiated to highlight disagreement among political actors, stakeholders, and experts. Coverage frequently underscores uncertainty, limitations, and competing alternatives, thereby framing policy as an open, debated process rather than a settled solution. This framing encourages audiences to engage critically with policy decisions and their implications.

These differences shape not only perceptions of policy effectiveness but also broader understandings of governance. CBC's framing promotes confidence in institutional processes, whereas CTV's framing foregrounds debate, scrutiny, and political consequence.

5.5 Theoretical Contributions: Integrating Salience and Interpretation

This study advances the integration of agenda-setting and framing theory by demonstrating their interdependent roles in shaping media narratives. Agenda-setting establishes the hierarchy of issues within public discourse, but framing determines how those issues are interpreted, evaluated, and linked to responsibility. The findings of the current study support the argument that second-level agenda-setting overlaps with framing, particularly in the emphasis placed on specific attributes and perspectives.

Moreover, the analysis highlights the influence of media institutional context on framing practices. The differences observed between CBC News and CTV News suggest that organizational orientation shapes not only what is reported but also how it is constructed. Public-service media appear more inclined toward contextualization and systemic explanation, whereas commercial media environments tend to emphasize immediacy, evaluation, and audience engagement.

6. Concluding Remarks

This study demonstrates that media coverage of economic leadership extends beyond the selection of salient issues to the construction of interpretive narratives. By comparing coverage from CBC News and CTV News, the findings show that

similar economic issues can be framed in different ways, which lead to distinct understandings of leadership, responsibility, and policy effectiveness.

The findings underscore the significance of media systems in shaping public discourse. While CBC News promotes a contextualized and system-oriented perspective, CTV News emphasizes political evaluation and contestation. These differences suggest that audiences exposed to different media environments may develop divergent interpretations of the same economic conditions.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study is confined to a specific timeframe (November 2025 to February 2026), which, while analytically valuable for capturing a concentrated period of economic discourse, may not fully reflect longer-term media patterns or shifts in coverage over time. Second, the analysis focuses exclusively on two national news outlets, CBC News and CTV News. Although these outlets are influential within the Canadian media landscape, the exclusion of other media sources, such as print newspapers, digital platforms, or alternative broadcasters, limits the generalizability of the findings. Third, the qualitative nature of the study, while providing depth and interpretive richness, does not allow for statistical generalization or measurement of audience effects.

Future research should extend this analysis by incorporating cross-platform media and audience reception studies, as well as comparative analyses across national contexts. Such work would further illuminate the relationship between media framing and public understanding of economic governance.

Beyond its empirical contributions, this study underscores the importance of adopting multi-theoretical approaches in media analysis. By integrating agenda-setting and framing theory, this current study demonstrates that media influence operates simultaneously at the levels of issue prioritization and meaning construction. Future research may build on this approach by incorporating audience reception analysis, which would provide insight into how these media frames are interpreted and internalized by the public. Additionally, comparative studies across different national media systems could further illuminate the role of institutional structures in shaping economic discourse.

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Author contributions

Dr. Fadi Jaber and Dr. Samira Dishari were responsible for study design and data collection. Dr. Jaber drafted the manuscript and Dr. Dishari revised it. Dr. Dishari conducted proofreading and reformatted the manuscript as per submission guidelines. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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