

Mike Zajko

PhD Candidate

Department of Sociology, University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB

5-21 HM Tory Building

T6G 2H4

My response to the Canadian Content consultation follows:

I'm pleased to see that the Government of Canada recognizes that "[The way forward is not attempting to regulate content on the Internet](#)". These consultations seem focused on how to support the production of Canadian culture in a "digital world", with the real questions being who will benefit from this support, and how we are going to fund it.

Here are what I think needs to be supported: **Indigenous culture**

Here is what I would very much like to see supported: **News, education, documentary programming**

Other kinds of public support for culture I consider to be discretionary, and often not the best place to put public funding.

What I don't want is for internet access to become the revenue stream that will keep the old CanCon system alive.

While I'm not opposed to broad public funding for culture, I also don't see it as a requirement in many cases. I value broadcasters like the CBC for helping me understand Canadian society, primarily through current events rather than dramatic or comedy series. I value the NFB for its critical documentaries.

The nightmare scenario for me is not about losing out to other cultural markets, fewer jobs in Canada's cultural industries, or artists no longer being able to sustain careers as they once were. Culture is dynamic, and the most exciting forms come from below rather than top-down. Cultural protectionism makes the most sense if we think of culture as expensive mass media, individuals as consumers of culture, and U.S. cultural industries as a threat to Canada's cultural sovereignty. But artists will make art everywhere, some of these artists will be Canadian, and we may or may not end up with some sense of Canadian identity as a result.

I am more worried about the possibility that living in an information-rich world will also mean being ignorant about local events, and no one being rewarded for answering the sorts of questions that powerful interests in this country would rather not hear asked. Perhaps a public broadcaster can be well-resourced and independent enough to play this role, but in an ideal world this wouldn't just be the CBC's responsibility. I rely on journalism and related media that tell me what is happening in the world in order to actively participate in democracy. I rely on it to do my job (which often involves classroom

discussions of Canadian society). I can do without other kinds of CanCon.

I'm also in support of public funding for indigenous cultural programs. For most of Canada's history the state has tried to eradicate indigenous culture, systematically resocializing children in residential schools, banning ceremonies, leaving behind broken communities and cultural dead-ends. The damage done by this cultural policy is hard to calculate but still ongoing. Its victims include young indigenous people who are unable to situate themselves in Canadian society because it does not speak to them, but also lack a cultural understanding of their own because it has been extinguished in previous generations. Some of this damage is irreversible, but in many cases knowledge, practices, culture can be recovered, preserved, and kept alive. The least a Canadian cultural policy could do is to try to address some of these wrongs and support efforts within First Nations communities to meet these cultural needs.