



Canadian Content in a Digital World

Submission to Canadian Heritage

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ACTRA
TORONTO



ACTRA Toronto is the largest branch of ACTRA (the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists), the union representing performers in film, radio, television and new media industries. It is the largest organization of cultural workers in Canada. ACTRA Toronto's jurisdiction includes all of Ontario outside the National Capital Region, and represents over 15,000 of ACTRA's 23,000 members.

Cover, L to R: Safiya Ricketts, Adam Nicholson, Leah Pinsent, Heather Allin, Richard Young, Freya Ravensbergen with Aria. In front: Lisa Michelle Cornelius.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage on behalf of the Canadian Government is conducting a consultation on Canadian Content in a Digital World.

The Government is challenging creators, citizens and others to participate in an important conversation about “how we support the creation, discovery and export of Canadian content in the digital world.”

ACTRA Toronto members have a lot to say about this important issue. As the largest organization of cultural workers in Canada, our jurisdiction includes all of Ontario outside the National Capital Region, and represents over 15,000 of ACTRA’s 23,000 members. Canada’s cultural industries account for more than 600,000 jobs and generate 3 per cent of Canada’s GDP, or \$47.7-billion a year.

As Canadian Heritage likes to point out, that is double the size of Canada’s agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors combined. Ontario is the centre of English-language production in this country, with the industry generating \$1.5 billion in direct spending in 2015, and employing over 32,000 Ontarians.

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Production of creative content is our livelihood, our passion, our art and our business.

Production of creative content is our livelihood, our passion, our art and our business. We invest our time and talent not only in our performance, but also in supporting our industry. ACTRA Toronto performers are on the frontlines of dramatic change in our industry, and we are intimately familiar with the impact this is having. We know that if our country gets this right, there will be more and better opportunities for everyone. If not, we worry that our industry and our art will falter.

That's why ACTRA Toronto performers were quick to act when the CRTC announced they were lowering the CanCon 'point' requirements for a production to access the Certified Independent Production Funds. This decision will result in fewer work opportunities for Canadian creative talent as Producers turn to foreign actors to play leading roles in Canadian productions that are benefiting from Canadian funds. This weakens our domestic industry precisely when we need to invest in our creative talent so we can thrive next to the U.S. market.

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We convened several discussion groups to generate some feedback for the Government, and here's what ACTRA Toronto performers had to say in response to the Government's questions.



Angela Asher and David Macniven



Yannick Bisson

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What does a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice look like?

- a) First, it would *Do No Harm* by ensuring that we maintain our strong Canadian content regulatory system. Hardworking and talented Canadian creators, supported by balanced regulation, have created a world-class industry. We must build on what has proven to be successful, rather than tearing down and starting over, and risking the future of an industry in Ontario.
- b) It would respect the input and vision of content creators—performers, writers, directors—in decision-making. We are on the frontline. We know what our industry needs and what consumers want. Creators must be at the decision-making tables.
- c) *Do No Harm* also requires understanding the unique and successful ecosystem that has been built by Ontario’s screen-based industries, working closely with government, including through federal tax credits and production funds. It is essential that the careful balance of elements in the ecosystem be maintained—from the variety of

productions, to the supports for young people and for people with diverse backgrounds, to the innovation happening in front of and behind the camera. This also means understanding the need to support the ‘service industry’ that exists here. Foreign investment has helped our domestic suppliers to invest and grow, supporting—in turn—our



Grace Lynn Kung

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domestic industry. The Government should look to the example of FilmOntario—representing both industry and unions—which works closely with government to modernize and streamline the system of supports that have helped foster a globally competitive industry in Ontario.

- d) Along with strong regulation, a strong cultural system would be anchored by fair and sustainable funding models that support the ongoing creation of great content. Watering down qualifications for Canadian production funds, and making it easier for productions accessing these funds to import U.S. talent, weakens our industry at home.



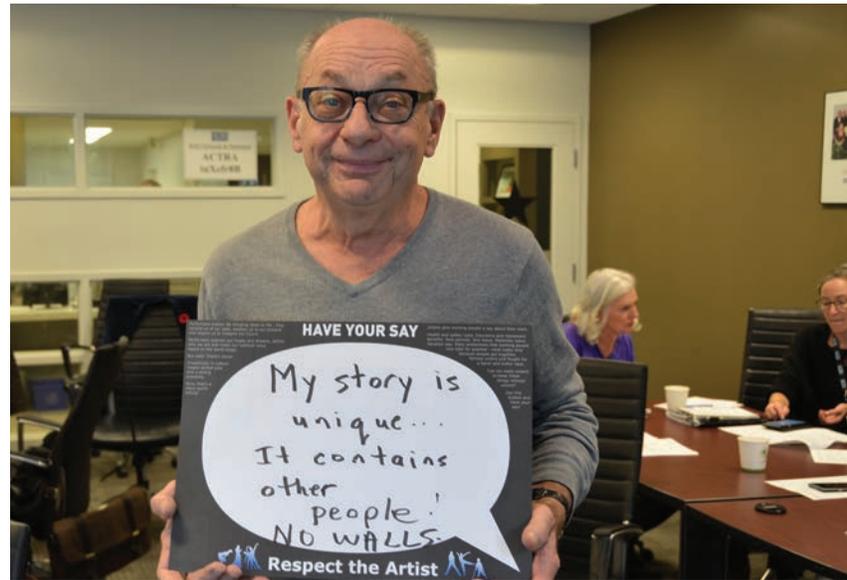
Rebecca Applebaum

- e) It would ensure broadcasters and Internet service providers are all contributing to funding our amazing Canadian content—equitably. With more and more Canadians watching programs online, an exemption for foreign Internet broadcasters puts both jobs and Canadian culture at risk, threatening investment in Canadian production. The Federal Government must ensure stable reliable funding for production

funds to finance Canadian film and television—either by ensuring Internet broadcasters make a contribution to the system, or by finding another stable, predictable and long-term revenue source.

The Federal Government must ensure stable reliable funding for production funds to finance Canadian film and television.

- f) It would recognize and support copyright protection and intellectual property rights, including extending the same rights currently granted to audio artists to audiovisual performers.
- g) Finally, it would support the development of Canadian stories that reflect our true diversity, protecting and preserving those identities by nurturing originality, supporting risk-taking and ensuring inclusivity.



Jack Newman



Angela Asher

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How can we meet the challenge of promoting Canada's creativity in a digital world, and how can we use Canadian content to promote a strong democracy?

- a) We need to see more great Canadian stories on every kind of screen. At ACTRA Toronto, we know that 'Diversity is our Strength'.

It is an asset not only in telling our stories but value-added for co-productions and co-ventures. Canada's stories need to reflect our political, geographic and cultural identities. Creating content that reflects our diversity begins by creating training and mentorship opportunities for women, racialized and indigenous creators and persons living with disabilities. It includes truly fair hiring practices, greater diversity and gender parity, from the corporate board table to the writers' room. And it includes more job opportunities for diverse creators.



Amanda Brugel

Above all we must nurture our unique Canadian voices, letting Canadians lead the charge in creation of our own content.

- b) We need to ensure that our content is truly accessible to all Canadians by pushing for more online distribution and promotion



Julian Richings

of Canadian content. That means strong regulation and innovation. ACTRA Toronto encourages our federal government to look to examples of what has already worked, such as the Ontario Media Development Corporation's Export Fund, which supports companies engaging in international development activities and their Marketing and Promotion funds. With support like this, Ontario film and television programs have been distributed all over the world, building our strong national reputation. The OMDC's efforts could be replicated federally to promote more Canadian content internationally.

We cannot export what we don't create. A strong and growing domestic industry is essential.

- c) Finally, we urge the government to consider that the choice between 'promote' and 'protect' is a false dichotomy. While we agree that promotion and marketing are key to the success of our screen-based industries, we cannot risk having nothing to promote. Focusing on 'discoverability' at the expense of production and

development steers us away from the important focus on what it is that makes us unique: our Canadian talent and creativity. Countries—like Britain—that are successful exporters of cultural content are those that have invested in their domestic industry. Put simply: we cannot export what we don't create. A strong and growing domestic industry is essential.



Lisa Michelle Cornelius

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How do we support Canada’s artists, content creators and cultural entrepreneurs in order to create a cultural ecosystem in which they thrive and that will benefit the growth of our middle class at home, and help them reach beyond our borders?

We are the creative engine of our industry, an industry that drives the Canadian economy. But we need to put bread on the table and roofs over our heads, just like every other Canadian. The Government can support Canada’s artists by:

1. Protecting performers’ intellectual property rights.
2. Nurturing new and emerging voices through more training and job opportunities for young and diverse workers in the screen-based industries.
3. Introducing income averaging for artists and establishing an inclusive provincial and national Status of the Artist Act.



Pam Hyatt

4. Establishing and promoting a Canadian star system that can be leveraged to promote audience growth and anchor marketing initiatives.
5. Contributing to marketing and distribution of great Canadian content.
6. Supporting and building a strong national broadcaster and other Canadian-owned media institutions.

ACTRA Toronto performers know our industry is changing. To keep up, our government must tread carefully, ensuring stability, while at the same time showing bold initiative by harnessing new opportunities, supporting emerging talent and diversity and providing creators with the support and protection they need to let their creativity soar.

Great Canadian content and a thriving industry start with telling our stories, our way. We thank the government for the opportunity to share our perspective about the industry we love.



L to R: John Nelles, Rebecca Applebaum, David Macniven, Joel Keller, Angela Asher, Emily Stranges, Grace Lynn Kung



Deb McGrath and Sheila McCarthy

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625 Church Street, Toronto ON M4Y 2G1
416.928.2278 • 1.877.913.2278
info@actratoronto.com

actratoronto.com