

ACTRA

**Written Submission for the Government of Canada's Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of Budget 2025**

**By: Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists
(ACTRA)**

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** That the Government of Canada reinforce growth in our Canadian film & tv sector via targeted investment, ensuring increased support and visibility of Canadian stories for Canadian audiences through:
 - Increase funding to the Canada Media Fund, National Film Board, CBC/Radio-Canada, and Telefilm, consistent with the 2025 Liberal Election Platform.
 - Supporting the creation of a Star System to showcase Canadian performers as central to Canadian content, requiring basic performer-promotion deliverables with government funding.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the Government of Canada ensure that the Department of Canadian Heritage require that, as a condition of funding, every producer of Canadian content adhere to the terms and conditions of the appropriate collective agreements negotiated by ACTRA and other unions and guilds with bargaining rights in law.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the Government of Canada amend the *Copyright Act* to provide audiovisual performers with moral rights equivalent to those already accorded to all other creative professionals.
- **Recommendation 4:** That the Government of Canada amend the Treasury Board Secretariat Directive on Management of Communications ensuring 100% of Government of Canada audiovisual work, including commercials, adheres to all relevant collective agreements. All future advertising agencies selected as the federal government's "Agency of Record," or engaged otherwise, should be a signatory to ACTRA's National Commercial Agreement.

Introduction

The Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) represents the interests of more than 30,000 professional performers working in English-language recorded media. For 82 years, ACTRA has advocated for performers living and working in every corner of the country. Our members are pivotal to Canada's cultural and economic standing, bringing Canadian stories and music to life in film, television, radio, and digital media.

Canada's film and tv sector is strong. Despite the fallout from the prolonged WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes in the United States, [the most recent report from the Canadian Media Producers Association](#) for 2023/24 shows the production volume of Canada's screen industry totaled \$9.58 billion, contributing \$11.04 billion to Canada's GDP and generating 179,130 jobs in the sector. Further, levels of Foreign location and service (FLS) and Canadian content productions are still trending upwards since 2014/15, by 80% and 20%, respectively.

ACTRA is proud to submit its pre-budget submission with a renewed focus on the need to bolster our domestic film & tv sector and cultural sovereignty. ACTRA supports a targeted focus on the Prime Minister's [mandate letter priorities](#), and we hope to underscore how our film and tv sector is central to fulfilling them.

With American trade tensions, the below measures are imperative but must be supported by the commitment of the [Prime Minister to keep culture off the negotiating table](#). The [capitulation on the Digital Services Tax \(DST\) set a worrying precedent](#) for the sovereignty of our laws and policies, which ACTRA condemns in the strongest possible terms. As such we also urge the Government of Canada not to repeal the DST and to reinforce our digital and cultural sovereignty going forward.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada reinforce growth in our Canadian film & tv sector via the targeted investment, ensuring increased support and visibility of Canadian stories for Canadian audiences through:

- a. Increase funding to the Canada Media Fund, National Film Board, CBC/Radio-Canada, and Telefilm, consistent with the 2025 Liberal Election Platform.**
- b. Supporting the creation of a Star System to showcase Canadian performers as central to Canadian content, requiring basic performer-promotion deliverables with government funding.**

Building the strongest economy in the G7

The film & tv industry is a cornerstone of Canada's cultural identity and economic output, ranking as the [fourth-largest subdomain in Canada's \\$63 billion cultural GDP, and accounting for 7% of that total](#). Fulfillment of the Government's 2025 platform pledge into the Canada Media Fund (CMF), Telefilm, National Film Board (NFB), and CBC/Radio-Canada will unlock further growth, stimulating additional private investment and licensing. Case in point: in a recent report cited by the Directors Guild of Canada, [every broadcaster dollar invested yields a sixfold return in production value](#).

This kind of investment is key to powering growth in regional economies. While Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal anchor Canada's thriving film and tv sector, with [\\$8.5 billion in](#)

[production value across the three provinces in 2023/24](#), and Quebec responsible for 30% of Canada's total production volume, regional industries are expanding rapidly. The CMF has reported significant growth [across the Prairie provinces](#), and Alberta's Minister of Arts and Culture has called the sector "crucial to Alberta's [economic momentum](#)." With predictable and sustainable funding, this upward trend can continue across all regions. Further, new investments should target improvements in regional representation, consistent with objectives of building a single strong Canadian economy.

Protecting Canadian Sovereignty

A [CRTC study](#) found that more than half of Canadians can identify Canadian programming thanks to the actors they see on screen. Protecting our sovereignty means promoting Canadian voices telling Canadian stories in our broadcasting system. The implementation of C-11 may support this by considering expenditures on marketing materials, trailers, and other promotional materials as contributions to Canadian content. However, to operationalize a Canadian Star System, government funding via CMF and Telefilm should require basic performer-promotion deliverables, ensuring discoverability of Canadian casts alongside title marketing.

Quebec has long recognized the value of a Star System, [boosting recognition and support for Quebecois performers within French Canada](#) and building cultural touch points via mediums like *Tout le monde en parle*. We believe the English-language market must invest in similar infrastructure. A promotional system has also seen success in Canadian sports, with [policies](#) guiding marketing agreements between National Sports Organizations and star Canadian athletes, a process financially facilitated by Sports Canada.

Helping Canadians get ahead

The instability in the U.S. industry—including the recent [threats of film tariffs](#), the [SAG-AFTRA strike](#), and the [broader safety and immigrations risks](#)—has exposed a vulnerability for Canadian performers: we need to build more domestic production to sustain Canadian talent working at home. ACTRA performers want to work in Canada, and yet for too many there is no way to earn a living without having to look south. We need Canada's domestic audiovisual sector to stand on its own. While foreign location and service productions create jobs, they also retain IP and creative control abroad. To protect Canadian livelihoods and intellectual property, we must ensure that Canadian stories are created, told, and owned here.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that the Department of Canadian Heritage require that, as a condition of funding, every producer of Canadian content adhere to the terms and conditions of the appropriate collective agreements negotiated by ACTRA and other unions and guilds with bargaining rights in law.

Helping Canadians get ahead

Alongside Canada's major unions and guilds, [ACTRA has joined the FAIR Coalition](#) (Film & Television Alliance for Industry Responsibility), representing over 87,000 workers in the film and TV sector. A [recent report from the coalition](#) highlights 27% of productions with budgets over \$5 million and 63% of those under \$1 million are not signing collective agreements. This leaves many film and TV professionals, even those working on larger productions, unprotected—despite taxpayer funding. Requiring public funders adhere to the appropriate collective

agreements will incentivize effective use of Canadian taxpayer dollars while creating more Canadian jobs. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage itself called on the government to “ensure producers who receive government funding guarantee minimum working condition” [in their study](#) of the *Status of the Artist Act*. An independent legal review confirms that public funders such as Telefilm can apply such conditions by contract today, consistent with requirements and policies it already enforces in other areas.

Implementing this recommendation will directly address the cost-of-living crisis and ensure fair compensation for performers. Film and TV performers are the original gig workers, working contract to contract with limited protection. Many Canadian actors face a volatile industry, with [95.8% of those in the motion picture industry working part-time in 2023](#). Income disparities are significant, with even established performers earning as little as [\\$25,000 in one year and up to \\$125,000 the next](#). With collective agreements-compliant funding, the government can provide stability and help build a robust economy to the benefit of Canadian workers.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada amend the *Copyright Act* to provide audiovisual performers with moral rights equivalent to those already accorded to all other creative professionals.

Helping Canadians get ahead

It is an ongoing injustice that Canadian actors are denied the moral rights to control how and where their name, image, and likeness are used. Unlike sound recording artists, audiovisual performers currently have no legal recourse to object to distortions or misrepresentations of their work and performances. This distinction is not only unjust but illogical and must be corrected via amendments to the *Copyright Act*.

Moral rights are fundamentally worker rights. They are essential for protecting the name, image, likeness, and reputation of performers—rights that are fundamental to their livelihood. For actors, reputation is everything; it directly impacts future job opportunities and earnings and due to the nature of the work of performers, we are especially vulnerable. The absence of moral rights for audiovisual performers negatively affects their wages and overall job security. With the next statutory review of *Copyright Act* slated for this fall, [the Government of Canada has not made any significant effort in amending the Act since the last review](#). Continued inaction will undermine the Government's broader mandate of affordability for working Canadians, especially in the current cost-of-living crisis.

The lack of moral rights is unthinkable in the age of AI. A recent [ACTRA survey](#) revealed that 94% of members are worried about AI displacement, and 25% have already suffered economic harm from AI-generated uses of their work without their consent, control, or compensation. [Canadian performers have already seen their likenesses exploited for degrading, harmful, and even illegal purposes](#). Further, few industries - if any - work alongside minors more than ours. This demands the greatest of care— yet they are being denied basic moral rights. For young performers, this isn't just unfair; it's exploitative, immoral and dangerous. By failing to act, the Government of Canada is abandoning the nation's youngest workers, sabotaging their futures before they've even begun.

Inaction on copyright and AI is not only an affront to all Canadian performers, but risks continued harm to their safety and future opportunities for successful employment in Canada. It is crucial that the government act swiftly in upcoming budgets to grant performers the protections they deserve under the *Copyright Act* and prevent global technology companies from exploiting Canadian creators without accountability.

Additionally:

Canada's current framework does not guarantee that performers are remunerated when their recorded performances are consumed on on-demand digital streaming platforms (DSPs). We recommend amending the Copyright Act to establish a direct, non-waivable equitable remuneration right for streaming, administered through certified collectives such as ACTRA RACS (Recording Artists' Collecting Society). This would align Canada with peer jurisdictions and translate streaming consumption into real income for recording artists and session musicians.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada amend the Treasury Board Secretariat Directive on Management of Communications ensuring 100% of Government of Canada audiovisual work, including commercials, adheres to all relevant collective agreements. All future advertising agencies selected as the federal government's "Agency of Record," or engaged otherwise, should be a signatory to ACTRA's National Commercial Agreement.

Helping Canadians get ahead

When the Government of Canada engages with agencies that do not adhere to collective agreements, it implicitly endorses unfair and exploitative labor practices. This undermines the efforts of Canadian unions and guilds, directly impacting the financial stability, working conditions, and employment precarity of performers. The government can help level the playing field and set a positive example for the industry, ensuring 100% of government work is awarded to unionized producers.

We strongly recommend that the Treasury Board Secretariat amend the [Directive on Management of Communications](#), directing Public Services and Procurement Canada and all other relevant ministries to engage exclusively with agencies hiring unionized staff. Government commercials and films should always be produced under union contracts, exemplifying the high standards of work and pay that Canadian workers deserve.

We would be pleased to meet with officials at the Department of Finance Canada to discuss these recommendations

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