
2022 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION
TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

6 August 2021

ACTRA

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The federal government take the following steps to generate additional revenues to support film, television and digital media production:

- Ensure all online programming services, as well as Internet Service Providers and Wireless Service Providers, contribute an appropriate percentage of their gross Canadian revenue from broadcasting-related activities to the creation of Canadian audiovisual and music programming through a public fund; and
- Allocate a portion of the proceeds of all spectrum auctions to the production and distribution of Canadian content, including audiovisual and music programming.

Recommendation 2

The federal government continue to provide sustainable long-term funding for the film, television and digital media industry including CBC/Radio-Canada, Telefilm Canada, Canada Media Fund, National Film Board and Indigenous Screen Office. Continued investments are needed to help our industry recover from the pandemic and to achieve diversity. Additionally, increased investments are also required to these funding bodies to ensure adequate regional representation.

Recommendation 3

The federal government support professional artists through the following measures:

- Introduce a four-year income-averaging system to ensure tax fairness;
- Make the first \$5,000 of professional artistic income tax-free;
- Strengthen copyright laws for all artists; and
- Extend copyright protection to performers in audiovisual works.

Recommendation 4

The federal government maintain investment of \$149 million per year in the Short-Term Compensation Fund and extend the Fund by an additional 12 months to enable screen producers to continue production activity across the country:

- Maintain existing guidelines under the Fund;
- Add compensation guidelines for cast and crew who may be subject to a temporary suspension of work or be laid off due to COVID-19.

Recommendation 5

The federal government change the Employment Insurance program to permit self-employed artists to receive regular benefits if they i) have paid into the system; ii) are laid-off from their employment; and iii) have no current artistic income.

Recommendation 6

The federal budget should require all public and public-private funding programs for the film, television and digital media industry make funding to producers contingent on the achievement of appropriate targets and quotas to ensure women as well as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) have equal opportunities for work on-screen, in other creative categories, and as technicians, crew and support personnel.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BRING TO THIS DISCUSSION

This is the submission of ACTRA (Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists) regarding the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance 2022 Pre-Budget consultation. ACTRA brings to this process the perspective of over 27,000 professional performers working in English-language recorded media in Canada. For over 75 years, ACTRA has represented performers living and working in every corner of the country who are pivotal to bringing Canadian stories and music to life in film, television, radio, sound recording and digital media.

In recent years, ACTRA has made federal budget recommendations to strengthen and promote the film and television industry in which our members work and to improve the working lives of professional artists. In this submission, we will review outstanding issues as well as offer recommendations to support our industry and Canada's economic revival as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.

IMPORTANCE OF FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL MEDIA INDUSTRY TO CANADA'S ECONOMY

Canada's film, television and digital media industry continues to create green, high-end jobs crucial to our economic growth and sustainability. Between April 2019 and March 2020, the Canadian screen-based media production sector reported \$9.3 billion in total production volume, a decrease of 1.1 per cent from 2018/19.¹ The mix of foreign and domestic production across Canada created an estimated 244,500 full-time equivalent jobs. Total direct GDP from this production was estimated at \$12.2 billion in 2019/20.

ACTRA members are among those professionals who work in the screen-based industries. Our passion is to tell Canadian stories and to make programs that provide audiences with a Canadian perspective on our country, our world, and our place in it. While foreign production increased by eight per cent to \$5.25 billion in 2019/20, we are seeing a downward trend in the production of Canadian content made by Canadian writers, directors and performers.

Production of Canadian content in 2019/20, comprising 757 television series and 112 theatrical feature films and digital works, decreased by 12.2 per cent to \$2.92 billion of total production volume. Canadian broadcaster in-house productions decreased by seven per cent to \$1.15 billion.

¹ *Profile 2020, Economic Report on the Screen-Based Media Production Industry in Canada.* Canadian Media Producers Association;

Recommendation 1

The federal government take the following steps to generate additional revenues to support film, television and digital media production:

- Ensure all online programming services, as well as Internet Service Providers and Wireless Service Providers, contribute an appropriate percentage of their gross Canadian revenue from broadcasting-related activities to the creation of Canadian audiovisual and music programming through a public fund; and
- Allocate a portion of the proceeds of all spectrum auctions to the production and distribution of Canadian content, including audiovisual and music programming.

Recommendation 2

The federal government continue to provide sustainable long-term funding for the film, television and digital media industry, including CBC/Radio-Canada, Telefilm Canada, Canada Media Fund, National Film Board and Indigenous Screen Office. Continued investments are needed to help our industry recover from the pandemic and to achieve diversity. Additionally, increased investments are also required to these funding bodies to ensure adequate regional representation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTISTS AND RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUE WAY THEY WORK

Most artists, including ACTRA members, do not work a traditional workweek. Performers are the original “gig” workers: self-employed, independent contractors who make a living from a variety of sources. Many work multiple jobs, either within the sector or outside, to survive economically. While individual engagements in ACTRA’s jurisdiction are well-paid, performers are constantly searching and competing for available work. In 2019, the median income of actors, singers, dancers, comedians, musicians and other performers was roughly \$24,300. This was approximately 44 per cent lower than the median income of all workers. For actors, the median income was even lower: \$18,600 for men and \$18,400 for women.²

Additionally, each performer uses their unique creativity to bring a scripted character to life. Canada’s copyright laws, which are designed to protect the creative aspect of an artist’s work, urgently need to be updated and amended.

² *Demographic Diversity of Artists in Canada in 2016*, Hill Strategies Research Inc, January 2020;

Recommendation 3

The federal government support professional artists through the following measures:

- Introduce a four-year income averaging system to ensure tax fairness;
- Make the first \$5,000 of professional artistic income tax-free;
- Strengthen copyright laws for all artists; and
- Extend copyright protection to performers in audiovisual works.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC, CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND ARTISTS

Since the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, various stay-at-home orders and lockdowns have been imposed on billions of people worldwide. In Canada, work on film, television and digital media programs has continued in various capacities across the country with productions continually adapting to ever-changing public health restrictions.

ACTRA congratulates the government for acknowledging gig workers in the rules for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and subsequent Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB). Close to two million Canadians still rely on the CRB, especially those working in arts or entertainment industries who were temporarily or permanently laid off due to the pandemic and would face even further financial hardship if it were not for the support benefits provided by our federal government.

As various studies have shown, artists who are self-employed for their art but who work other jobs, cannot collect Employment Insurance (EI) if they are laid-off from the other job, even if they do not have a current gig. This is despite having paid EI premiums on the income from the other job.³ With the CRB set to expire on September 25, we hope the federal government will consider exercising the legislative amendments outlined in Budget 2021, which would provide our elected officials authority to extend the CRB as well as sickness and caregiving benefits to November 20, 2021. Additionally, we hope the federal government will reconsider the changes to the CRB's amounts and eligibility period limits outlined in Budget 2021.

Despite pandemic lockdowns and restrictions, many jurisdictions in Canada have experienced record film, television and digital media production levels over the past year. Our industry is labour-intensive and flexible, and with continued support, we could quickly return to or surpass 2018/19 production levels. ACTRA has continued to work diligently with industry partners to adapt or maintain safety protocols to ensure sets and locations are safe.

One of the significant reasons our industry has been able to stay open is because of the federal government's launch of the \$50 million Short-Term Compensation Fund (STCF) for Audiovisual Productions in September 2020, which has since increased to \$149 million and been extended

³ See for example: *Employment Insurance Special Benefits for Self-Employed People: The Impact on Artists and Cultural Workers*, Garry Neil, Cultural Human Resources Council, Ottawa, April 2010;

through to March 2022. To date, the Fund has covered 422 projects⁴ that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unless a permanent alternative solution is implemented before the Fund's expiration to cover filming interruptions or the abandonment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope the federal government will continue to support the Fund for as long as necessary.

Recommendation 4

The federal government maintain investment of \$149 million per year in the Short-Term Compensation Fund and extend the Fund by an additional 12 months to enable screen producers to continue production activity across the country:

- Maintain existing guidelines under the Fund;
- Add compensation guidelines for cast and crew who may be subject to a temporary suspension of work or be laid off due to COVID-19.

Recommendation 5

The federal government change the Employment Insurance program to permit self-employed artists to receive regular benefits if they i) have paid into the system; ii) are laid-off from their employment; and iii) have no current artistic income.

DIVERSITY IN FILM, TELEVISION, RADIO, SOUND RECORDING AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Over the past year, Canada has continued to address a long overdue reckoning with systemic racism as well as a history of injustices against Canada's Indigenous Peoples. These issues are only compounded by our ongoing response to instances of sexual harassment and gender inequality across the country.

While Canada's film, television and digital media industry continues to take steps to address issues of sexual harassment, and gender and racial discrimination, more needs to be done both in overall equality of employment opportunities and on-screen gender portrayal.

The federal government's announcement in Budget 2021 of over \$205 million in funding for cultural organizations to support Indigenous and equity-seeking groups⁵ was welcome news and a good start but there is still a long way to go in our quest for equality. While the median income for artists is \$24,300, it is 25 per cent (\$18,200) lower if you are a racialized artist and 32 per cent (\$16,600) lower if you are an Indigenous artist. And for women artists, the median income is 18 per cent (\$22,300) lower than that of men artists (\$27,100).⁶

⁴ [Short-Term Compensation Fund for Canadian Audiovisual Productions \(STCF\)](#), Telefilm Canada;

⁵ Budget 2021, [Investing in Telefilm Canada](#), [Diversity of Voices in Canadian TV and Film](#), [Indigenous Screen Office](#);

⁶ [Demographic Diversity of Artists in Canada in 2016](#), Hill Strategies Research Inc, January 2020.

Recommendation 6

The federal budget should require all public and public-private funding programs for the film, television and digital industry make funding to producers contingent on the achievement of appropriate targets and quotas to ensure women as well as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) have equal opportunities for work on-screen, in other creative categories, and as technicians, crew and support personnel.

ACTRA acknowledges our analysis is brief to comply with submission requirements and would be pleased to provide additional details upon request.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing ACTRA to participate in this public consultation.