

**Written Submission for the
Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2026 Federal Budget**

Submitted by:

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Submitted to:

House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada uphold and strengthen the Online Streaming Act by requiring meaningful Canadian content spending obligations and exhibition requirements on streaming platforms, tied to robust definitions of Canadian content that prioritize Canadian talent.

Recommendation 2: That the government introduce federal legislation establishing a standalone Artificial Intelligence framework to protect performers' audiovisual rights – including the right of every person to provide free and informed consent before their name, image, voice, likeness, or any recorded performance is used to train AI systems or generate AI-derived content – and that guarantees fair and ongoing compensation for any such authorized use.

Recommendation 3: That the government introduce legislation to exempt the first \$15,000 of annual professional artistic income from federal income tax, and implement a four-year income averaging mechanism for professional performers.

Recommendation 4: That the government fully operationalize the Status of the Artist Act by requiring that all producers of Canadian content who receive federal funding adhere to the terms of collective agreements negotiated by ACTRA and other unions and guilds with bargaining rights.

Recommendation 5: That the government direct the Treasury Board to ensure all federal government advertising and filmed productions are produced with unionized workers and signatories to ACTRA collective agreements.

Canada's Screen Industry Under Pressure

[The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists](#) (ACTRA) represents more than 30,000 professional performers working in English-language recorded media across Canada. ACTRA members are actors, recording artists, comedians, stunt coordinators, dancers, narrators, choreographers, models, singers, background performers and more. Since 1943, ACTRA has advocated for the rights, livelihoods and creative futures of Canada's performing artists.

Canada's screen industry is a cornerstone of our economy and our identity. According to the [CMPA's 2025 report](#), Canada's screen industry generated \$10.2 billion in production volume, contributed almost \$12 billion to Canada's GDP and supported over 180,000 jobs. Foreign Language Service Production continues to grow by 9.5% over last year to \$5.3 million in 2024-25.

However, Canada's screen industry is under immense pressure. The prolonged SAG-AFTRA and Writers Guild of America strikes in the United States, combined with declining broadcasting revenues and reduced Canadian broadcaster commissioning, have contributed to a significant slowdown in domestic production. At the same time, as Canada navigates an increasingly unpredictable relationship with the United States, our strongest trading partner, the screen industry finds itself caught in the crossfire. Stakeholders and investors across North America's screen ecosystem are delaying decisions as they wait for greater stability and certainty.

Budget 2026 is an opportunity to respond with measures that create good, fair-paying Canadian jobs, strengthen cultural sovereignty, and support the long-term resilience of a sector that contributes significantly to Canada's economy, identity and global presence. ACTRA is pleased to present the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Uphold and Strengthen the Online Streaming Act

The *Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11) is a landmark achievement, representing the most significant update to Canada's broadcasting policy in three decades, and is an essential tool to strengthen Canada's screen industries.

However, the *Act* has remained a continued target of the United States in advance of upcoming CUSMA negotiations. This places the stability and future of Canada's screen industry at risk.

ACTRA is calling on the government to keep culture off the table, uphold the *Online Streaming Act*, and ensure the *Act* is implemented with real force. This means meaningful Canadian content spending obligations on major streaming platforms. It means exhibition requirements that ensure Canadian content is discoverable and accessible to Canadian audiences. It also means a robust definition of Canadian content that centres Canadian talent, including the performers, writers, directors and crews who make the work, rather than simply satisfying minimum financial thresholds.

The repeal or significant weakening of the *Online Streaming Act* to appease American trade interests would be a betrayal of Canadian performers who live and work in this country. It would also undermine an industry that contributes almost \$12 billion to Canada's GDP.

ACTRA welcomed the significant investments in the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board announced in Budget 2025. We urge the government to build on that foundation by upholding the Online Streaming Act and protecting the sector that brings Canadian stories, including *Heated Rivalry*, *Kim's Convenience*, *Schitt's Creek* and *North of North*, to screens around the world.

Recommendation 2: Protect Performers from Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence systems can now replicate a performer's voice, face and likeness with alarming accuracy. They can digitally replace an actor in a production, recreate a deceased performer without consent, or generate entirely synthetic performances that displace real Canadian artists.

ACTRA members are deeply concerned about these developments. In fact, [94% of ACTRA members](#) are worried about AI-related job displacement, and 25% have already suffered economic harm from AI generated uses of their work without consent, control or compensation. Workers across the country have already seen their likenesses used for degrading, harmful or illegal purposes.

The protections ACTRA is calling for extend well beyond the entertainment industry. An AI framework built on principles of consent and compensation would safeguard all Canadians – politicians, public figures, activists, content creators, and children alike. We call on the Government of Canada to build a framework for every Canadian; one that also gives specific recognition to performers and their work, and ensures they are not left behind as this technology reshapes the creative economy.

The framework must deliver two baseline protections. First, no performer's name, image, voice, likeness, or recorded performance may be used to train AI systems or generate AI-derived content without their free and informed consent – a standard consistent with the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's own recommendations on the impact of [Artificial Intelligence on the Creative Industries](#). Second, any authorized use must come with fair and ongoing compensation – a principle reinforced by what performers told government directly through the [AI Sprint](#) consultations held across the country.

AI that exploits performers – without their knowledge, without their consent, and without compensation – is unacceptable. A principled standalone framework would position Canada as a global leader in AI governance for the creative sector. We call on the Government of Canada to go further – to step up on the world stage, accede to the WIPO Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances, and lead the way in establishing the international standards that performers everywhere need and deserve. Canada has the opportunity to set the example. We should take it.

Recommendation 3: Deliver Tax Fairness for Artists

Performing is a profession, but it is not a conventional one. Most ACTRA members work contract to contract, with income that can fluctuate dramatically from year to year, with [one performer earning \\$25,000 in one year and \\$125,000 the next](#). A performer who lands a significant role one year and faces a lean year the next is taxed on that high-income year at a punishing marginal rate – even if their multi-year average income is modest.

This is fundamentally unfair, and it discourages talented artists from building careers in Canada.

To support affordability and help performers get ahead, ACTRA is calling for two common-sense reforms.

First, the first \$15,000 of annual professional artistic income should be exempt from federal income tax. This would support emerging performers at the most precarious stage of their careers, help experienced artists sustain their work in Canada, and recognize the unique economic reality of artistic employment.

Second, the government should introduce a four-year income averaging mechanism that allows professional performers to average their earnings across four years for tax purposes. This would help smooth the peaks and valleys that define a career in the performing arts.

These measures would directly support thousands of working artists in Canada's screen industry from coast to coast to coast. They would also send a clear signal that Canada values its cultural workers and is committed to building a world-class screen industry.

Critically, these tax reforms should apply to all professional artistic income earned by Canadian performers – wherever in the world that income originates. Canadian performances are consumed globally. A Canadian actor who earns residual income from a streaming platform serving audiences in the United Kingdom, Japan, or Brazil is still a Canadian artist doing Canadian work. Tax policy must reflect that reality. We cannot claim to support Canadian performers at home while ignoring the global market in which they actually earn their living.

Recommendation 4: Operationalize the Status of the Artist Act

As a member of the [Film & Television Alliance for Industry Responsibility \(FAIR\) Coalition](#) composed of Canada's eight largest unions and guilds representing over 87,000 artists across Canada, ACTRA urges the Government of Canada to operationalise the Status of the Artist Act.

Currently, when federal funding flows to producers of Canadian content, there is no systematic requirement that those producers adhere to the collective agreements negotiated by ACTRA and other unions and guilds with bargaining rights. A recent report indicates that **27% of productions with budgets over \$5 million and 63% of those under \$1 million are not signing collective agreements**, leaving film and TV professionals working in Canada unprotected.

This must change.

Implementing this recommendation would bring federal funding agencies, including Telefilm Canada, the Canada Media Fund and the National Film Board, into alignment. It would also ensure that Canadian taxpayer dollars support fair working conditions, fair compensation and stronger labour standards across the industry.

Recommendation 5: Government Productions Support Unionized Procurement Policies

The federal government produces a significant volume of advertising, public information campaigns and other filmed content every year. However, when government agencies do not adhere to collective agreements, they implicitly endorse unfair and exploitative labour practices.

ACTRA strongly recommends that the Treasury Board Secretariat introduce requirements directing Public Services and Procurement Canada and all other relevant departments and agencies to work exclusively with agencies and production partners that hire unionized performers and respect applicable ACTRA collective agreements.

The government speaks regularly about its commitment to workers' rights, fair wages and the creative economy. Ensuring that its own productions live up to those values is the least it can do. This measure would immediately direct federal spending toward professional Canadian performers working under fair collective agreements. It would also set an important example for the broader industry.

Conclusion

Canada's cultural sovereignty does not sustain itself. It is created and maintained every day by the working performers, storytellers and artists who choose to build their careers here.

Budget 2026 is an opportunity to take concrete action. The Government of Canada can strengthen the Online Streaming Act, protect Canadian performers from the unchecked exploitation of Artificial Intelligence, promote tax fairness for artists, ensure federal productions model the labour standards Canada expects of others, and step up as a global leader by acceding to the WIPO Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances.

ACTRA's members tell Canadian stories. They are Canadian culture. The recommendations in this submission are reasonable, practical and long overdue.

ACTRA would be pleased to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance to discuss these recommendations further.

In Solidarity,

Eleanor Noble
National President, ACTRA