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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Standing up for Canadian Culture

August 6, 2002 - After a two-day National Policy Conference in early June, ACTRA's National Council emerged unanimous in its commitment to two policy objectives: strengthening Canadian content and income security for performers. The goal of the two-day conference was to develop an action plan for our union's advocacy work for the next year.

Jamie Bradley's article on our policy conference appears in the upcoming issue of InterACTRA. He relates the views of well-known Canadian performers Sean McCann, Gordon Pinsent, Shirley Douglas, Fiona Reid, Chuck Shamata and Nick Mancuso who opened the policy conference. They recalled the pride and opportunity of building careers based on Canadian drama – an opportunity that is significantly diminished today. They also mourned the loss of dignity in retirement for many performers who work entire careers, and retire destitute.

Immediately following our policy conference, ACTRA took action – we filed our submission with the Department of Canadian Heritage that is reviewing the definition of Canadian content. The current point system for Canadian content encourages the creation of generic (read: pseudo-Hollywood) programs by permitting significant non-Canadian involvement. ACTRA wants regulatory systems and public programs to be amended to recognize that a Canadian program is one that is created, written, directed, performed and produced entirely by Canadians. I wrote about our submission earlier in my [President's Message of May 30](#).

Since its earliest days, we at ACTRA have been active in the public policy process, working for the adoption of legislation and programs that support professional artists and the industries in which we work. Canada has the artists and the resources to create exciting programs that will attract Canadian viewers and provide a real choice for global audiences. ACTRA believes that the changes to public policies and programs that we advocate are in the broader public interest. A strong domestic production, distribution and exhibition system is absolutely vital to Canadian culture and our sovereignty as a nation.

Hard on the heels of our National Policy Conference, ACTRA brought our concerns about the substantial decline in Canadian drama production to the Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps while attending the Banff Television Festival in early June. In July, Canadian star Paul Gross joined Brian Topp and me for a meeting at CRTC headquarters in Ottawa where we began to search for solutions to the declining drama crisis. CRTC Chair Charles Dalfen was fascinated with Paul's views on this issue and asked that ACTRA prepare a written submission and follow-up with future meetings.

Building on our momentum on the policy front, ACTRA is organizing local meetings with our Members of Parliament this summer and early fall. We have achieved our goal of involving many of our high-profile performers as spokespeople for ACTRA. Now it's up to the rest of our members to get involved and stand up for Canadian culture. You can help today by joining our [national letter-writing campaign](#). You should also contact your ACTRA branch and find out what you can do on a local level to help preserve our jobs, our culture and our country.

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