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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Redefining Canadian Content

May 30, 2002 – On June 1 and 2, ACTRA's National Councillors convene to review and debate our position on a number of policy issues.

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.

This weekend's meeting marks a renewal of our commitment to advocate for performer-friendly policies as well as an opportunity to refine our policy positions to reflect the new realities that confront performers in Canada.

To that end, I recently travelled to Ottawa with renowned Canadian actor, director writer and activist R.H. Thomson and ACTRA's policy advisor Garry Neil to present ACTRA's submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage that is reviewing the broadcasting system in Canada.

Our message was very blunt: After half a century of government support measures for Canadian television and an even longer period of support for movies, it is virtually impossible for me to find a Canadian story on either the big screen or small.

R.H. Thomson added, "Our decline in production is also linked to the distorting forces of economic globalization... since 1988, Canadian artists have watched the erosion of the flexibility of governments around the world to promote their cultural diversity and chart their cultural futures."

Continued regulation of the broadcasting system is vital, as is a restructured public service broadcaster. Also key is a revitalized independent production sector, with public support going to those who will work with Canadian creators and artists and will have their own money at risk.

We also seek a revised definition of a Canadian program. The current point system encourages the creation of hybrid programs by permitting significant non-Canadian involvement. ACTRA urges that the regulatory systems and public programs be amended gradually to recognize that a Canadian program is one that is created, written, directed, performed and produced entirely by Canadians.

ACTRA believes that the policies and programs we advocate for 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.

Thor Bishopric