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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

An Action-Packed Week



December 7, 2004 - Last week was jam-packed with meetings and events. We caught the attention of our members, our politicians and the Canadian public. We also celebrated performing excellence with the presentation of an ACTRA Award.

CAB Convention

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters held its national convention in Ottawa last week, absurdly themed "Private broadcasting: Putting Canada First." While we were forced to postpone our rally at the convention and our afternoon reception on Parliament Hill due to the heightened security surrounding President Bush's visit, ACTRA still had a visible presence at the conference.

ACTRA Ottawa National Councillor Barry Blake was generous with his time and attended the conference in my stead, as I had work obligations. He joined National Executive Director Stephen Waddell and Ken Thompson, National Director of Policy & Communications. Joanne Deer, Public Relations Officer attended on a media pass, giving us direct access to the media attending the convention.

On Monday, we issued a press release and a bold full-page ad in the Hill Times, the parliamentary newspaper. Both were themed "Private broadcasters are NOT putting Canada first" and included hard-hitting numbers that countered the broadcasters' claims. That afternoon, the CRTC released its report on drama and Chair Charles Dalfen addressed the CAB convention. Stephen Waddell, Fiona Reid and Sonja Smits were on-site and provided the press with an immediate response. They effectively articulated ACTRA's belief that incentives are not enough: regulations are needed to save Canadian drama.

Dinner with the Minister of Heritage

On Monday evening, a group of ACTRA's high profile members had the undivided attention of Heritage Minister Liza Frulla at a highly successful three-hour meeting over dinner. The relaxed and free-flowing meeting focused on our concerns about the critical challenges facing our industry. The performers attending included Shirley Douglas, Gary Farmer, Peter Keleghan, Sonja Smits, Rick Mercer, Leah Pinsent, Barry Blake, Fiona Reid, Julie Stewart, Richard Hardacre, Christie MacFadyen and myself.

Our focus was the crisis in Canadian drama and the minister was very receptive to our cause. Everyone in attendance added personal anecdotes to help her understand the problem created by the 1999 television policy that lies at the root of the drama crisis. We told the minister that Monday's CRTC decision will not work for the same reason that the current policy is not working – because private broadcasters will not pay for and air Canadian dramas without strict regulation.

When shown copies of the CTV and Global primetime schedules that are bereft of Canadian drama programs the minister said she wanted to help make changes. We pressed the minister to encourage her cabinet colleagues to issue an Order in Council to the CRTC to impose obligations on broadcasters to produce and air more Canadian drama.

Performers also brought a number of other important issues to the minister's attention including the development of diversity programming, the need to establish a star system in English Canada, the importance of government funding for film and television production and the CBC's chronic under-funding.

I want to thank all of our members who took time out to attend the meeting and make it such a success.

LA Event: Membership Meeting and ACTRA Award of Excellence

On Thursday, ACTRA hosted two events in Los Angeles at the residence of Alain Dudoit, the Consul General of Canada.

First was a meeting of our L.A.-based members to hear their issues and bring them up to date on ACTRA's

initiatives. Speaking to the more than 30 who attended, Richard Hardacre, Stephen Waddell and I reported on ACTRA's activities – including the new National Commercial Agreement and our digital media bargaining initiatives. The members were also interested in knowing more about the production climate in Canada and the political action ACTRA is undertaking to expand work opportunities for performers. We also spoke of the recent Film Ontario report that debunks the claims of the so-called 'runaway production' issue. The meeting was a lively affair with lots of participation from the members who asked questions and offered opinions and recommendations.

Following the meeting, we all moved out to the garden to join more than 50 industry colleagues who came to honour Lloyd Bochner as he received an ACTRA Award of Excellence. Consul General Dudoit provided opening remarks about the presence of Canadian performers in California and the contribution many have made to Canadian culture. I spoke about Mr. Bochner's career and his contributions as a Canadian and ACTRA member for over 60 years. After receiving the award Mr. Bochner gave a moving speech that drew rousing applause. The event was topped off with high tea and an opportunity for everyone to mingle. Judging by the positive response, there will certainly be a similar event planned for 2005.

Thanks to all our hard-working staff and members who helped to make last week so successful for the ACTRA cause.



**Thor Bishopric
ACTRA President**