

Stars meet with Heritage Minister

Some of Canada's biggest stars had the undivided attention of Heritage Minister **Liza Frulla** at a highly successful three-hour meeting over dinner. The relaxed and free-flowing meeting in Ottawa focused on the performers' concerns about the critical challenges facing the country's film and TV industry.

The group of performers attending the November dinner included **Shirley Douglas, Gary Farmer, Peter Keleghan, Rick Mercer, Leah Pinsent, Fiona Reid, Sonja Smits, Julie Stewart**, ACTRA's National President **Thor Bishopric**, Ottawa National Councillor **Barry Blake**, ACTRA Toronto President **Richard Hardacre**, and ACTRA Toronto Vice-President External Affairs and National Councillor **Christie MacFadyen**.

On top of the list of performers' concerns was the continuing crisis in Canadian drama. The minister was very receptive to the performers who each added personal anecdotes to help her understand the impact the CRTC's 1999 Television Policy has had on indigenous Canadian production.

Performers also offered their views on the CRTC's drama decision, which had been released earlier that day. They told the minister that the plan to offer broadcasters incentives to encourage them to air more drama would not solve the current crisis. The 1999 policy has made it clear that broadcasters will support Canadian dramas without strict regulation. The performers 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.

A big thank you to all of the performers who took time out of their schedules to participate in this significant meeting and make it such a success.



Julie Stewart, Shirley Douglas and ACTRA Toronto Performers President Richard Hardacre.



Peter Keleghan, Leah Pinsent and Rick Mercer.



ACTRA President Thor Bishopric, Minister of Canadian Heritage Liza Frulla, and Fiona Reid.



Sonja Smits and Gary Farmer.

Equal Opportunities Committee Update

I am pleased to announce that **Gillian Ferrabee** (ACTRA Montreal) and **Alvin Sanders** (UBCP) have been appointed to sit on the ACTRA National Equal Opportunities Committee. We are still seeking representatives from our other branches. The committee looks forward to presenting a united front towards promoting diversity onscreen.

If you have any suggestions or comments for this committee, please forward them to prao@actratontoronto.com.



Priya Rao, Chair, National Equal Opportunities Committee

Encore!

H2O is a reflection, I think, of **Paul Gross's** recent experiences as a combatant in the culture war about Canadian television. It's very easy to let a country's culture slip away. Some people might think that Canadian TV dramas are a frivolity and Gross, along with his fellow actors, writers and directors, has faced the indifference of politicians and bureaucrats. But he knows, as thinking people do, that the telling of our stories is as important to the health of a country as the provision of clean air and water.

— John Doyle, *Globe and Mail*, October 29, 2004

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