

## **Liberal Response to ACTRA Questionnaire**

### **1. Canadian content regulations in broadcasting and distribution must be strengthened, including reinstating minimum drama content and expenditure requirements on Canada's private broadcasters.**

Canadians are best served by a broadcasting system that offers an ample supply of high-quality, distinctively Canadian content that enlightens, entertains and informs citizens. It is this type of programming that brings us together through common experiences. To achieve this, the Liberal Government has developed a Canadian content strategy that will:

- Put more emphasis on high-quality Canadian content that reaches wide audiences in the Francophone or Anglophone markets, and that tells Canadian stories and reflects Canada in all its diversity;
- Put emphasis on funding Canadian drama, children's programming, cultural programming, and documentaries that reaches wide audiences;
- Provide the CBC with specific funding for the provision of high-impact programming consistent with its public service mandate; and,
- Consider a number of measures to simplify funding in order to provide greater economic efficiencies and improved priority setting.

In order to ensure efficient and effective practices for monitoring Canadian content, the Liberal government will focus the mandate of the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office and task it to conduct Canadian content certification on behalf of federal agencies and programs.

The CRTC is the central body for regulating and overseeing the Canadian broadcasting industry. The Liberal Government remains confident that the CRTC has successfully helped the broadcasting system achieve its objectives. However, in an era of constant change and emerging new challenges, the CRTC should continuously and systematically review its regulatory policies and regulations to determine if they are achieving their stated objectives, and indeed whether those objectives remain valid over time. In this regard, the Liberal Government will ask the CRTC to prepare annual reports concerning the steps it has taken to streamline its rules, regulations and decision making processes. Furthermore, the Liberal Government will explore whether monetary penalties should be added to the CRTC's toolkit for ensuring compliance with broadcasting regulations.

### **2. Existing rules requiring majority Canadian ownership of Canadian telecommunications and broadcasting must be maintained.**

Canada has the right and the duty to protect its cultural identity. Canadian programming interests will not be sold to or controlled by foreign interests. The Liberal government places a heavy emphasis on Canadian content. Culturally, Canadian programs and music give voice to Canadians, to their talent and their shared experiences. Economically, it means jobs for thousands of Canadians – from creation to production and distribution on the airwaves. In light of conflicting reports from two House of Commons committees on

the issue of foreign ownership, the Liberal Government has firmly reiterated that it has no intention to modify foreign limits on broadcasting or general content. The strength of Canada's broadcasting system must not be compromised by any kind of foreign-ownership measures.

Canada's idea to create an international body to protect cultural diversity and cultural sovereignty became reality last October when a majority of UNESCO member countries signed the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression*. A few weeks later, the Liberal government approved the Convention, making Canada the first country to ratify it. We will now work to persuade as many countries as possible to follow Canada's example so that the Convention can come into force as soon as possible.

**3. Enhanced, permanent and stable public financial support for Canada's cultural industries must be provided, particularly support for public broadcasting through the CBC, and television drama financed through the Canadian Television Fund.**

The Liberal Government recognizes the critical role that both the CBC and the CTF play in delivering high quality Canadian programming. The Liberal government is committed to providing them with stable, predictable support to ensure that they can continue to operate at the highest level.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation plays a unique and essential role in highlighting Canadian stories and showcasing Canadian talent on radio and television. In budget 2005, the Liberal Government committed an additional \$60 million in 2005–06 to help ensure that Canada's stories, reflecting the ever-increasing diversity of Canadian society, find their way into Canadian homes in the form of high-quality programming. The Liberal government will also ensure that the CBC Board of Directors delivers a strategic plan for enhancing CBC television services in both French and English.

In recent years, regulatory decisions made by the CRTC have created increased demand for Canadian drama. The Canadian Television Fund is the most appropriate tool to support high-quality, distinctively Canadian television program. The Liberal government has already renewed its funding commitment to the CTF through 2006-07, and will seek to establish long term, predictable funding in upcoming budgets. The Liberal Government will also take the following steps to streamline funds through the CTF:

- The Liberal Government will work with both Telefilm Canada and the CTF Corporation to investigate the efficiency and impact of the Equity Investment Program for television
- An evaluation of the CTF will give particular attention to assessing the efficiency of the Fund. This work will be done in parallel with the continuous efforts of the CTF Corporation and Telefilm Canada to make the Fund more efficient

- The Government expects that the CRTC will review its approach to handling benefits money from television ownership transactions in the future, which has previously resulted in the creation of a multiplicity

The Liberal Government also recognizes that the CBC and the CTF work closely together, and can feed off of each others' success. As such, we will ensure an envelope of funds is set aside for the CBC within the CTF, based on the historical average contributed by the CTF to CBC projects.

The Paul Martin government demonstrated a clear commitment to culture and the arts by making one of the largest long-term financial investments in our history. We provided in the last budget new funding of \$860 million over five years under the *Tomorrow Starts Today* initiative, in addition to the \$740 million already invested since it was created by the Liberal government in 2001. This predictable funding will give stability to the arts and culture sector in Canada. *Tomorrow Starts Today* supports excellence – promoting arts and culture to the general public and creating tools to help cultural industries flourish.

The Liberal government continues to support professional artists and non-profit arts organizations in Canada through the Canada Council for the Arts. On the occasion of the Council's 50th anniversary, a Liberal government will double Council funding to reach \$300 million by 2008.