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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Culture: A Necessary Investment



#### Dear Member:

October 18, 2005 – ACTRA is one of the foremost advocates for the preservation and growth of Canadian culture and the creativity of our artists. I'm quite proud of our well-earned responsibility. Recently we had the opportunity to raise our voice again in Ottawa at the Finance Committee Pre-budget Hearings. While they may not bear the catchiest title, I can tell you that these hearings are an important opportunity to put our issues on the table and pitch the government on what we as artists identify as spending priorities in the budget.

I was joined at the hearings by Barry Blake, the National Councillor for Ottawa and a well-known performer whose work in both official languages is regularly seen on our screens. Together we made a pitch for increased, permanent funding for the Canadian Television Fund (CTF), Telefilm and the CBC in the next budget.

Significantly, we asked the government to make a permanent commitment to the CTF in the next budget and to enhance that contribution with set increases of 10% each year over the next five years. Stable, long-term funding of Telefilm and the CTF triggers all other investment in productions. As well, it will help ensure continued private investment in the infrastructure – the studios and other facilities – that is essential for this industry to grow as a strong contributor to the Canadian economy. Moreover, Canadian drama is produced on location throughout Canada and contributes significantly to local economies across the country through job creation and spending.

Most recently, we have seen the effects of a national public broadcaster eroded by years of chronic underfunding. Hundreds of millions of dollars cut from the CBC allocation in the '90s has never been restored. While budget cuts and funding uncertainty were key factors in the CBC's recent labour turmoil, they do not excuse the callous lockout of more than 5,500 workers by a shortsighted management. We believe that, though the immediate situation has been resolved, without sufficient, multi-year funding the stability of our national public broadcaster will continue to erode. We would like to see CBC meet its obligation to reflect and promote Canada's national identity with new Canadian drama and comedy by having the resources to do so. The CBC must be healthy if it is to be part of our great national 'conversation'.

Supporting culture to see stories told by our creative artists is not only a valid use of public funds, it is a good investment for Canada's economy. We need to be relentless in getting this message heard not only by our legislators, but adopted by them. Increased and permanent support for our culture should remain on the front burner of our nation's consciousness.

**Richard Hardacre**  
ACTRA National President