

ACTRA Questionnaire

Response from the New Democratic Party of Canada

1. Will your party commit to reversing the recent cuts to cultural programs?

ISSUE: The federal government recently slashed over \$50 million in arts funding putting our culture and thousands of well-paying jobs at risk.

YES.

Canada's New Democrats would restore arts funding arbitrarily cut by the Harper Conservatives.

The federal NDP condemns these recent Conservative funding cuts to arts and culture programs vital to Canadian artists. These draconian cuts are a deliberate attack on the independence of the Canadian arts industry and completely bypass the appropriate process of consultation and public review.

The Harper cuts also damage the economic viability of this cultural industry that creates thousands of well-paying jobs. These programs are instrumental to making the arts industry an international force and helping our artists to market and promote their work at home and abroad.

2. Will your party direct the CRTC to impose both content and spending requirements on Canada's private broadcasters?

ISSUE: Canadian content rules for TV broadcasting were reduced in 1999. Now broadcasters are doubling their profits by feeding Canadians a steady diet of cheap U.S. content while Canadian drama disappears from our screens.

YES.

Canada's New Democrats would fundamentally reform the CRTC so that it does its job - ensuring that prime time television is written, directed, stars, and is about Canadians - and not somebody else's stories, and somebody else's values from a different country.

3. Will your party commit to increased, stable support for the Canadian Television Fund and Telefilm?

ISSUE: The film and television industry needs Telefilm and CTF funding to get shows green-lit, yet it's still considered a temporary arrangement.

YES.

The NDP will provide sustained funding for the Canadian Television Fund and Telefilm Canada. The NDP recognizes that in order for creators and producers to plan, and create quality, original programming, they must have a reliable source of funding.

The CTF and Telefilm have suffered under years of precarious funding and uncertainty begun by the Liberals and continued by the Conservatives. This instability threatens a crucial sector of our economy, thousands of direct jobs in the cultural industries and the spin-off jobs that are created as result.

The NDP will also enhance federal film incentives to encourage film and television production and establish targets and a strategy to expand screening and distribution of domestic films in Canada.

4. Will your party keep the current limits to foreign ownership of our airwaves to ensure that Canadians control our broadcasting industry?

ISSUE: Foreign companies can already own 47% of Canadian airwaves but they want more. If we don't own our airwaves, we don't own our culture.

YES.

The NDP wants to maintain current restrictions to foreign ownership in this sector and will oppose any attempts to sell-off control of our airwaves to foreign interests. It is essential that we keep Canadian control of one of our most important cultural industries and through it foster the development of Canadian identities that are distinctly recognizable to ourselves and to others.

We want a Canada written about by Canadians, portrayed in productions by Canadians, encouraging Canadian artists, presenting Canadian news – made possible by a vast array of Canadian workers and technicians.

5. Will your party institute a system of income averaging over a 5-year period, as a method of providing fair and equitable tax treatment for artists?

ISSUE: Self-employed artists endure a tax disadvantage because they end up paying tax at a higher rate in a good year, even though the good year was preceded and followed by years of reduced income. Tax averaging artists' income over a 5-year period would rectify this unfairness.

YES.

Modeled directly on long-standing practice in the province of Quebec, the NDP will introduce income-averaging for artists, and provide an annual federal tax exemption of \$20,000 for income earned from copyright and residuals income.

New Democrats understand that our arts and culture form the bedrock of our identity. Cultural creators of all sorts help us build on that and explore new directions. We value their work. We also understand that artists often have fluctuating incomes, and as a result, we need to ensure that these hardworking Canadians are taxed fairly,

6. Will your party oppose giving government arbitrary powers to censor film and TV productions in Canada?

ISSUE: Bill C-10 would have given the government power to deny funding to productions it deemed 'contrary to public policy'. In addition to threatening our basic right to free speech, this censorship would have created widespread financial instability in an already struggling industry.

YES.

NDP MPs were the first to champion the fight to protect Canadians artists from this government's and previous Liberal governments determined attempts to force their tastes on the arts community and Canadians.

New Democrats believe that there is no appropriate role for the Minister of Canadian Heritage or the government in making subjective judgments about what is appropriate film or video content. In a country as diverse as Canada we must rigorously protect artistic freedom. Enshrining guidelines that seek to define what is "offensive", "odious" or "objectionable" are inappropriate. Controversy is often crucial to the creative process.

7. Will your party introduce and support copyright legislation to ensure performers and other artists are fairly paid for their work and that they have rights to protect the integrity of their work and their image?

ISSUE: Compensating artists for their work supports our economy. Arts and culture account for 740,000 jobs in Canada, and \$40 billion of our GDP. Culture is more than big business – it gives us our identity and sense of place in Canada and adds to the richness of our lives. Strong copyright laws are important protections for artists, tools for guarding the integrity of artists' work and ensuring that they are fairly compensated for it.

YES.

The NDP is committed to ensuring that any new copyright reform legislation must fairly address compensation for artists and must include proper consultations with stakeholders, including artists and arts groups, educators, software innovators, consumer groups, etc.

8. Will your party commit to increased, stable funding for the CBC?

ISSUE: Our national public broadcaster plays a vital role in promoting Canada's culture at home and abroad and has been faced with successive cuts and overall decline in recent years.

YES.

The NDP will strengthen public broadcasting and provide stable long-term funding for the CBC, Radio Canada and other public broadcasters. We will strengthen the ability of CBC and Radio Canada to deliver superior regional programming and new internet-based media services.

The NDP believes CBC/Radio Canada is key to the social, economic, cultural, and political life of Canada. We feel strongly that this role must continue and be strengthened, and that it must remain fully public." We believe that the CBC plays a crucial role to building our identity as a nation, and that a strong public broadcaster is essential in connecting a large and diverse country, and maintaining our distinct identity.

New Democrats also want to see improvement in CBC/Radio Canada's regional and minority language services, by bringing local radio to 15 more communities across the country and to 8 million more Canadians as recommended by House of Commons' Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in its' report "CBC/Radio Canada: Defining distinctiveness in the changing media landscape".

9. Will your party ensure that Canadians who currently receive over-the-air TV continue to receive free TV after the switch to digital and provide funding for this purpose?

ISSUE: In 2011, thousands of smaller communities stand to be cut off from access to over-the-air (free) TV service during the switch to digital TV. That's because broadcasters have said they plan to put up digital transmitters only in the major markets, if at all. Tens of thousands of small-town and rural Canadians will then be forced to pay for cable or satellite service to get any TV at all.

YES.

At least 10% of Canadians rely on free-over-the-air television. Canadian airwaves are public – all Canadians should have some access to television signals without having to pay a local cable company or satellite provider. The transition from analog to digital signals will involve major costs and small communities may be adversely affected. The NDP will work to ensure that all Canadians have access to some form of –over the air' television and rural Canadians in particular, are not at a disadvantage.