



ACTRA

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Two things to do, while we're at it.

October 2, 2008 - The world we inhabit has currently dealt us a couple weighty matters that not only deserve our attention, but require our action.

In our immediate neighbourhood we have the National Commercial Agreement (NCA), the second biggest contract for ACTRA performers, under which our members appear in television, new media and radio commercials for advertisers in and outside Canada. There are some things to tell you about that.



And meanwhile in the macro viewfinder aimed at Canada we are in mid-throes of a federal election. And we have an opinion about that as well.

So first, the NCA. If you have worked that contract in recent years you should have received an important mailing with a ballot inside. (If you didn't get one, and feel you should have, contact your local office immediately.) Please read it, mark the ballot 'YES' and mail it back now. This is a vote to give your Negotiating Committee of experienced members from across Canada, performers who all have worked in commercials, the most important support that our membership can muster. It is a strike mandate.

The Committee is comprised entirely of working performers who are no different from you. They have utility and food bills to cover, rents and mortgages, transit costs or car payments to make and, often as not, families to raise, to clothe and feed. Like you, they are typical people. They have been pragmatic, working creatively with patience and good morale, trying to craft a renewed contract that takes into account our goal of increased work, with fair and proper pay increases for all stripes of performers within the contract. They have done their level best to meet the goals of the associations of advertisers who also want to create more advertising and sell more of their products and services. Sounds like we should have found some agreement after seventeen months of this exercise, doesn't it? But, even though we've come very close to terms of agreement, we have reached an impasse with the producers and advertisers on the other side of the table. As a group they have become obstinately unwilling to conclude a fair deal with us. It makes no sense.

None of the Committee or our skilful staff working closely with us is looking to provoke a strike. We know that our membership understands the reality of that ultimate action full well. And I assure you that none of us are looking to abuse the trust of the wide membership. In ACTRA's long history this is only the fourth time that a strike mandate has been sought. Now we need a solid strike mandate from you. We need to close this deal, we need to close it fairly and we need the other side to wake up to understand that our membership is fully supportive of our deliberations. Please vote YES and send your ballot in now.

That said there is another matter over which we all need to be quite clear. And another YES vote is essential.

In this federal election the economic value of culture, the worth of creative artists, and the countless value of cultural identity to the overall worth of the Canadian "community" has not only come into question, it has come under attack. For reasons fathomable perhaps only to him, Stephen Harper, followed up on \$60 million in petty-minded cuts that his government made just prior to calling this expensive election. The cuts were to training programs for artists and new filmmakers, to the promotion of our creative artists abroad and to encouraging new media production. Mr. Harper then felt it necessary to respond to the outcry of artists across the country by saying that they were grant-seeking whiners who were known to "ordinary" Canadians only by being seen on television at red-carpet "galas" at which they celebrate themselves. How untrue; and how alarming that someone seeking to be a Prime Minister would make such a statement.

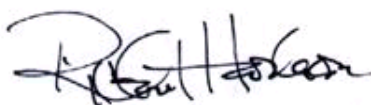
Is it not obvious to those seeking our votes that, throughout the world, Canada is known for its unique and creative output, for its citizens who never aim to fit the common denominator of our neighbours to the south and for a culture that has earned us the right to say that our goals - whether patriotic, economic, scientific, sporting, militaristic or artistic - are our own? That our stories and our future achievements belong to us. And that we will share all that with all our global neighbours.

Besides all that value, it is shocking that someone in high public office does not account for the gigantic economic contribution that the cultural industries provide to Canada's Gross National Product. According to the Conference Board of Canada these industries account for over 1.1 million jobs and economic activity exceeding \$86 billion annually. In Ontario alone this sector contributes more to the national economy than does the behemoth of retail sales.

So when it comes to deciding on your vote on October 14, find out which of your candidates is the strongest supporter of culture, which of your candidates will act to reverse the cuts to cultural programs, which of your candidates will stand up for Canada's creative and economic well-being. Do that simple research: ask them and listen to the leaders of their parties. Make an informed choice.

Above all vote YES for culture. Vote for Canada's unique place in the world, for our heritage and for the stories and resources of which our children and their children will be proud to say, "Yes, the elders who came before built and cared for all these marvellous riches that are now ours to nurture, to share and to pass on." Vote YES for our future generations.

In solidarity,



Richard Hardacre
ACTRA National President

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