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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### by Ferne Downey

*Common Cause*

August 7, 2009 - At the 62nd AFTRA Convention in Chicago, I was moved watching President Obama's video-taped message to delegates. He spoke of the "admirable nature of the work of AFTRA members" and said, "Our country is a better place because of what you are doing." I admit to a pang of 'Presidential envy'. I wish I could say our own Prime Minister has articulated such clear appreciation of ACTRA members and our contributions to Canadian society.



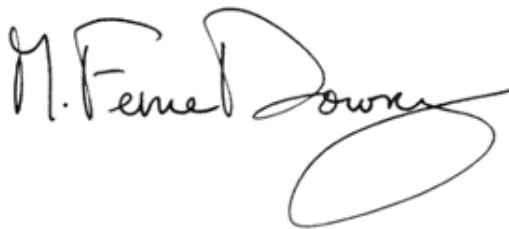
As I listen to our American brothers and sisters, I am reminded of the ties that bind us together. As performer-unions we face similar challenges regardless of borders. The focus of AFTRA's convention is on organizing and going back to the foundation of what a union does: creating more opportunities for members to work and protecting them when they do. This is grassroots work that relies on each and every member confidently reaching out to help ensure traditional production is done under the union tent and to bring in all new and emerging forms of production. We've been having the exact same conversations at ACTRA and will be rolling out a co-ordinated national organizing campaign later this fall. We will learn from one another and work together every chance we get.

Right now our sisters and brothers in Australia are on strike against producers of off-shore commercials. We stand in solidarity with them – what hurts one actor, hurts us all, especially in this shrinking globe where we are increasingly working for the same employers.

Your union needs you to stand with us this fall as the future of Canadian television takes centre stage at our federal regulator's public hearings. We need to ramp up our campaign to get more Canadian English-language drama on TV, and to make sure that we don't have a repeat of the CRTC's disastrous 1999 Television Policy review. Every one of us can get involved by turning our talents to making a video and sharing it with [ACTRA's TakeltPublic campaign](#). I am confident that when our many voices speak as one – and we find others to speak with us in common cause – our message will be heard.

It's been said many times before a union is only as strong as its internal unity. We need each other and we need to know we can rely on each other. Finally, if the traffic on Twitter, Facebook and on-line blogs is any indication of our eagerness to chat about copyright, our federal government picked a great time to hold country-wide public consultations. Canadian copyright must balance the interests of consumers and ensure creators have control and are compensated for our work! This fantastic trend of fervent dialogue amongst our creative community is building momentum and ACTRA looks forward to appearing at the government's roundtables. For more on this, please read [my Op Ed in The Toronto Star](#) and add your voice to the [government's online consultations](#).

In solidarity,



Ferne Downey  
President, ACTRA National

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