



ACTRA

CHOOSE
A ROLE



MEMBER



INDUSTRY



PUBLIC

JUMP TO

YOU ARE IN: ACTRA NATIONAL

ACTRA TOOLS



home



site map



glossary



industry links



contact

HOME

WHAT IS ACTRA

WORKING WITH ACTRA

MEMBERSHIP IN ACTRA

NEWS & INFORMATION

DOCUMENT LIBRARY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT'S HAPPENING

FACE TO FACE ONLINE

ACTRA BRANCHES

ACTRA PLAN

ACTRA PRS

BACK

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Ferne Downey

Fuelled with Optimism and Dreaming Big

I am thrilled to be the newly elected National President of ACTRA. And I am proud to be the second woman to lead this union in our 66-year history. I whole-heartedly and humbly embrace my new role and look forward to taking a bold, holistic, long-term view in terms of furthering the collective dreams we hold close to our hearts.

So who is your new fearless leader? I'm a performer in my bones and was born in Charlottetown P.E.I., raised in NB and educated in Nova Scotia. Halifax was a wildly important incubator for me – as young artists, we flourished in the ferment of so much energy in live theatre and music. The cross-pollination has informed all of my artistic life. Much of my passion as a performer comes from developing and telling Canadian stories, sparked by decades of active collaboration with playwright Paul Ledoux. In 1979, I first worked in 'recorded media' as a voice actor in numerous dramas for the CBC Radio Drama Department in Halifax. For a few years I lived in Vancouver, but mostly worked at regional theatres in other provinces and was part of the acting ensemble at the Banff Playwrights Colony. My ACTRA membership number is actually a Winnipeg one, as I joined ACTRA in 1984 when producers wanted to televise a new Canadian play at MTC, *Clearances*, by Alf Silver. After that, Paul and I drove our VW camper van to Toronto and immediately began working in television and film. I've guested on most TV shows (especially when we had a bunch) and regularly work on Canadian and American TV commercials.

My second passion is serving the members of our union, something I have done for the past 18 years on the Toronto and National Councils. I served as President of ACTRA Toronto, and more recently, have been your National Treasurer and representative on the AFBS Board.

But this experience, serving 21,000 members from coast-to-coast as your President, feels thrillingly new.

I fully respect branch autonomy, but more than that, I understand it in my DNA because I was there with Barry Flatman and David Ferry at the beginning of restructuring in the early nineties. I believe it was an inspired design that has helped us grow into the vigorous, membership-run union that we are today. Members gained a strong direct relationship with their home branch in this intentionally decentralized world. Going forward, we need to better understand who we are as performers and where we'll be five and 10 years from now.

Who are we now? Who do we aspire to be? Who are the young actors who join ACTRA? Where will we be when the boomer bulge is all silver-haired? Who are the actors who don't see a culturally inclusive landing place for themselves in our union? This is challenging work and I don't pretend to have the answers – but I promise to walk with my eyes wide open.

What fuels my enthusiasm for this work is my gut certainty that I can help keep us all pulling in the same direction. And, I believe that the trust I have earned at the national table can allow us to achieve the next level of solidarity as a union. With the pressures of globalization & mergers leading to the concentration of media in fewer & ever more powerful hands, the need for seamless solidarity has never been greater.

As President I will keep my vision trained on the long-term view and the Big Picture. Relationships with our sister unions, at home and internationally, will continue to be groomed and hopefully deepened. Our eyes and ears will stay attuned to collaborative opportunities with our strategic and coalition partners.



In the short-term we have the prospect of labour peace on our big contracts with brand new Commercial and Independent Production Agreements. This is truly a gift that allows us to direct our energy toward enforcing those terms and being strategic advocates for public policy. I will find every way possible to fuel our fight for Canadian culture to increase Canadian dramatic content on our screens of *all* sizes and increase work opportunities that reflect the full diversity of our membership.

When we talk about our union being strong we do not mean our strength resides only in our collective agreements. We are strong because we are not alone. We have each other. We are 21,000 strong.

ARCHIVES OF PRESIDENT'S MESSAGES

- [October 2008 - Two things to do, while we're at it.](#)
- [January 2008](#)
- [February 2007](#)
- [January 15, 2007](#)
- [December, 2006 - Wanted! Good Dialogue and a Fair Deal...](#)
- [September 14, 2006 - We are cut from strong cloth](#)
- [May 1, 2006 - Striving for the Respect We Deserve](#)
- [March 23, 2006 - The Members of this Union are Second to None](#)
- [January 9, 2006 - The strength of a unified voice](#)
- [October 18, 2005 - Culture: A Necessary Investment](#)
- [August 22, 2005 - Media workers at CBC locked out; our support is important now](#)
- [June, 2005 - Building On Our Success](#)
- [April 14, 2005 - ACTRA and Steel - Stronger together](#)
- [January 10, 2005 - Celebrating Spirit and Determination](#)
- [December 2004 - An Action-Packed Week](#)
- [November 2004 - ACTRA Presents at the Finance Committee Pre-budget Hearings](#)
- [October 2004 - Stepping up our efforts](#)
- [September 1, 2004 - Protecting Our Cultural Diversity](#)
- [June 29, 2004 - The Vote is in...](#)
- [May 13, 2004 - Victory! Prime Minister Keeps Promise to ACTRA](#)
- [February 5, 2004 - New Council Rolls up its Sleeves...](#)
- [June, 2003 - Fighting for our future](#)
- [April 2, 2003 - Happy Birthday ACTRA!](#)
- [Dec. 5, 2002 - What safety net? The insecurity of performer income](#)
- [August 6, 2002 - Standing up for Canadian Culture](#)
- [July 9, 2002 - Child performers deserve union protection](#)
- [May 30, 2002 - Redefining Canadian Content](#)
- [May 15, 2002 - Global Rule One - Business as Usual](#)
- [Spring 2002 InterACTRA - President's Message](#)