

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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ferne Downey

The future is yesterday

May 13, 2010 - I am a lucky person. I got to have dinner with rock star Carole Pope last week and I haven't been able to get "High School Confidential" out of my mind ever since. I asked how we enticed her to travel to Ottawa to talk with MPs and Senators about copyright issues for creators, and she said, in her understated eloquence, "Because it's important." She talked to a lot of people with day jobs and excellent public pensions about the precariousness of an artist's life and how many of us live well below the poverty line. She used the poverty line example a lot – it's a reality actors and musicians know all too intimately.



Our federal government is about to take two big steps: introduce new copyright laws and develop a national digital strategy. Both of these are long overdue. Doing nothing is no longer an option. Technology is changing the game so quickly that every day that passes and we're standing still, we actually fall behind.

Other industrialized countries are well under way with plans to ensure they are prepared to seize the new opportunities that the digital world presents. Here in Canada, we're just getting ready to talk about it.

As performers we have a huge stake in ensuring that Canada is ready to embrace the digital economy – we're already working in it. We're creating the content that Canadians want to enjoy on their computer screens, cell phones, iPods and TVs. I find it thrilling that it's now easier than ever for people around the globe to see and enjoy our work.

However, we need to make sure the tools are in place when it comes to producing content. We're asking Ottawa to make certain control of Canadian communications companies remain in Canadian hands, invest in Canadian content creators and suppliers and reserve space and provide incentives for the production of Canadian content in digital media.

The final and critical piece is to find a balance between giving people around the world access to our Canadian content and making sure creators are getting paid. We can do that by modernizing our copyright laws.

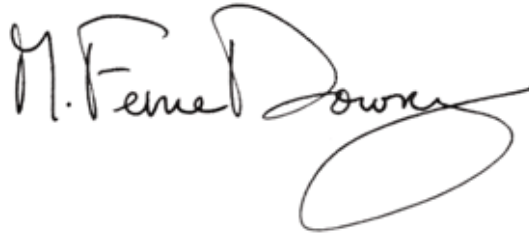
Frankly, it's embarrassing — not to mention economically damaging — that Canada has failed to update our copyright laws in keeping with international norms, especially when we signed the World Intellectual Property Organization Internet (WIPO) treaties 13 years ago.

ACTRA RACS (Recording Artists' Collecting Society) has been working hard to get one word changed in the *Copyright Act* to ensure that the private copying levy includes devices that people actually use today – like iPods. Since 1999 the levy has put over \$180 million in the pockets of 97,000 songwriters, composers, musicians and other rights holders. It's a stream of income that has greatly helped artists trying to make a living making music.

This isn't a 'new' levy – it's adapting to reality. When was the last time you privately copied to a cassette tape? Musicians gathered in Ottawa to make the case that something so helpful that already exists shouldn't vanish. Unfortunately the Conservative government is resistant to making this change; they seem more inclined to protect big business than to stand up for artists.

I'm hopeful they will change their minds. You can help them change their minds. And when we see the new copyright bill it must make sure Canada has a place in this new digital world, a place where artists' have rights. The time has come – a long time ago.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Ferné Downey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Ferne Downey
President, ACTRA National

ARCHIVES OF PRESIDENT'S MESSAGES

- [April, 2010 - CRTC TV Policy: the new score - Cancon: 2; Broadcasters: 3](#)
- [March, 2010 - COURAGE - who has it, who wants it and who needs it](#)
- [February, 2010 - President's Video Message \(video\)](#)
- [December, 2009 - Our TV: The fight of the decade](#)
- [November, 2009 - Our TV](#)
- [October 1, 2009 - President's Video Message \(video\)](#)
- [August 25, 2009 - Blame greed for your cable bill blues](#)
- [August 2009 - Common Cause](#)
- [June 2009 - Fuelled with Optimism and Dreaming Big](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Legal Text](#)