

<b>HOME</b>
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

### COURAGE - who has it, who wants it and who needs it

March 5, 2010: Who goes for the Gold? Shirley Douglas does. In celebration of International Women's Day, ACTRA applauds Shirley Douglas - she is a very courageous woman - frank, bold, passionate and articulate about fighting for issues near and dear to her heart. I wish her natural courageousness would rub off on our federal leaders. I wanted Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Canadian Heritage Minister James Moore to find their federal courage in this 2010 Throne Speech and Budget. I wanted them to acknowledge that arts and culture have significance for Canadians, that the work we do has an important place in the Canadian psyche. I wanted them to make a commitment to our industry - to at least acknowledge that it is one of the most robust job creators a federal government could ask for!! We are poised to help with the economic recovery plan!!



But that's not exactly what we got. The devil will be in the budget details, of course, and there was precious little detail about how exactly the government will build their so-called "jobs and industries of the future." For example, they failed to capitalize on our industry which generates \$5 billion to the Canadian economy and creates over 130,000 good jobs. Nor were there details on the Tories' promised national digital economy strategy. All we know is that it looks like it will be spearheaded by Industry Minister Tony Clement. Long term coherent national strategies are vitally important in planning for our future, especially as Canadians have been international laggards in this area. We are thrilled to see the government recognize the need for copyright reform and increased intellectual property protection. In fact we've been telling the government for quite some time that Canada needs to develop a national digital economy strategy.

However, the government's proposal to open up foreign ownership rules in the satellite and telecommunications arena gives me serious pause. As ACTRA's NED Stephen Waddell said to Playback's Etan Vlesing, "increasing industry consolidation and convergence where telecoms buy and hold broadcast networks and stations makes it inevitable that changes to the Telecommunications Act will impact legislation for elsewhere in the media sector. I don't think you can silo telecommunications away from broadcasting. It will be a real challenge if the Conservatives do go down this road." Beautiful understatement. The threat of consolidation into fewer and ever more powerful hands doesn't leave me thinking that greater foreign ownership would directly benefit Canadian culture!!!! Thus far it is a proposal - any legislation would have to get through a minority Parliament, but it will move to the front burner for ACTRA - immediately.

One small sliver of hope from this government was the passage of Bill C-56 just before Christmas. The "Fairness for the Self-Employed Act" went into effect February 1 and provides an opportunity to participate in the EI special benefits program. Special benefits are defined as maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care benefits. I encourage everyone - especially younger members with families - to look into this new program ASAP. If you decide to opt in before April 1, you would be eligible to collect benefits by January of 2011. More information is available at

EI Measure for Self-Employed People:

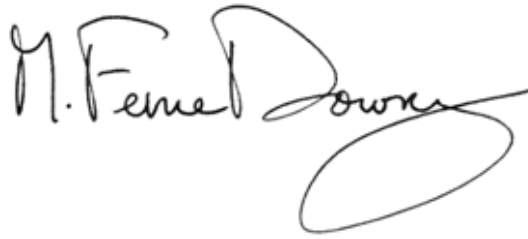
[http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/self\\_employed\\_workers.shtm](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/self_employed_workers.shtm)

Service Canada answers frequently asked questions about Bill C-56:

[http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/faq\\_self\\_employed\\_workers.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/faq_self_employed_workers.shtml)

I wonder what the cultural legacy of the Harper Government will be? Or will the story be - what opportunities did the Harper Government squander? The story isn't written yet. Personally, I wish Mr. Harper, Mr. Moore and Mr. Clement - courage.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Ferne 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

- [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](#)