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Victory! Prime Minister Keeps Promise to ACTRA



On May 13, 2003 several of ACTRA's best known members including Paul Gross, Nicholas Campbell, Christie MacFadyen, Peter Keleghan, Gordon Pinsent, Leah Pinsent, Richard Hardacre, Julie Stewart, Tyrone Benskin, R.H. Thomson, Fiona Reid and I had a face-to-face meeting with then leadership candidate Paul Martin. In that meeting Mr. Martin looked us in the eyes and promised he would restore the Canadian Television Fund. Yesterday he did.

In the dark days of 2003 when the government slashed funding to the CTF, ACTRA members rose to the challenge and told the Chrétien government that the cuts could not stand, that they would have a devastating impact on our culture, our national identity and our jobs. We picketed then Finance Minister John Manley; we convinced then Minister of Heritage Sheila Copps that she had to give the CTF a temporary advance of funds to get us through the year. And in our much-publicized Lobby Days on Parliament Hill, ACTRA members went twice to Ottawa to passionately assert that restoring the CTF was essential support for Canadian culture, our domestic television industry and the working lives of Canadian performers. In our fall lobby effort, Wendy Crewson, Rick Mercer and Sonja Smits joined some of the members from our May lobby group for more meetings with politicians and a direct appeal to the Finance Committee. Finally, at the eleventh hour, more than 500 members participated in a mass-letter writing campaign to the new Minister of Finance demanding that the CTF be restored.

Thanks to every one of you who took the time to speak out. We especially want to thank ACTRA Toronto for taking a leading role and financially supporting all of these initiatives. A \$100-million CTF holds the promise of more green-lit productions, more Canadian stories being told and more Canadian actors acting. This victory is the direct result of all of the hard work and contributions from our members and proves that when we combine our creative energies and speak with one collective voice, we can make a difference. The Prime Minister proved to us that he was listening.

Thor Bishopric

ACTRA National President

Thor Bishopric
ACTRA President