



2020 Annual Public Assembly

**Remarks by Robert Spickler, Christa Dickenson, René Bourdages, E.J. Alon and
Kathleen Beaugé**

**Online
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(Check against delivery)

Robert Spickler, Chair of the Board

Hello everyone.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to members of the film and audiovisual industry and the public attending this Telefilm Canada Annual Meeting.

To all of you, as well as to Telefilm's Board members and staff, who are here online today, I want to wish—despite these unique times we're going through—a Happy New Year 2021.

Please accept my best wishes for your health, your peace of mind... and, above all, for a speedy return to normalcy. May we see, in 2021, the return of hope and the pleasure of seeing each other in person, and may we achieve the cultural projects we hold so dear.

Today, my colleagues from Telefilm Canada's Executive Leadership Team and I:

- Will report on our actions during the 2019-2020 fiscal year.
- We will also tell you how we have helped the film and television industry throughout this unprecedented crisis.
- And, of course, we're going to talk about the future.

As Telefilm's Chair of the Board, I saw how the organization took on this fiscal year with enthusiasm and collaboration. And I witnessed how the year ended in urgency, necessity, and the need for mutual support.

Let me start by thanking the Government of Canada for providing speedy and substantial assistance. Together, we are mobilized to protect the industry and its creators, and we will continue to remain so /// to support you in the future.

2019-2020 was also the year in which Telefilm continued its modernization work.

New people have joined the team.
I would like to highlight their arrival:

- Marie-Eve Mainville, as Director of Human Resources
- Jean Morin, as Director of Information Technology
- Jeremy Spry, as National Director, Canada Media Fund Programs Administrator
- and Amadou Dia, as Head of Project Management

The Board, for its part, welcomed a new member, Ms. Emmanuelle Létourneau, from Montréal.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate Carolle Brabant, Telefilm's Executive Director from 2010 to 2018, who was recently appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada. She received this honour in particular for her support of filmmakers from the diversity community and from the new generation of talent.

During the fiscal year that just ended, the Board approved, among other things, the Corporation's new Strategic Plan, whose primary focus is to make Telefilm—and Canada—a partner of choice in the audiovisual industry at home and around the world.

This focus has, in particular, fostered the emergence of new talent by supporting the creativity of film artisans on both sides of the camera and in every corner of the country. The focus is also reflected in the continued partnership of the Talent Fund, which raised \$2.1 million to support projects under the Talent to Watch program.

Including the funds raised by the Talent Fund, Telefilm invested \$3.8 million last year in the Talent to Watch Program, and as a result, 31 new film teams received financial support to realize their first feature film!

I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of **E.J. Alon**, Director of the Talent Fund, the generous support of **Christine Magee**, Chair of the Fund's Advisory Committee and thank the donors from across the country.

The year that just ended was a year rich in achievement. Telefilm began the important task of modernizing its programs with much excitement and enthusiasm. Although the crisis delayed the process for a time, the management team was able to cope with the situation. Consultations with the industry resumed early this fall, demonstrating Telefilm's determination to see this important project through to completion.

Meanwhile, the Government of Canada also responded quickly to the industry's needs by providing emergency support funds as well as setting up a short-term compensation fund to cover gaps created by the lack of insurance. Telefilm was the designated administrator of these important support measures, and in two months alone, administered over 600 requests for assistance related to COVID-19 and then, an additional 141 requests for the short-term compensation fund.

I know that the pandemic has been a terrible shock for the industry. I am also aware of the immense efforts made by Telefilm's team to minimize these effects.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all of Telefilm's employees for their dedicated and sustained work. I salute the executive and senior management teams for their great skill. And I applaud the leadership of our Executive Director Christa Dickenson, who steered the organization through these uncharted waters while also continuing to move key corporate priorities forward despite challenging circumstances.

These times in which we're living continue to be difficult. They ask that we help each other out. They call on us to be strong so that we can meet the challenges that lie ahead before we can get back to watching and celebrating movies on our screens.

As we continue to face difficult times, I'd like to call on everyone to help one another. We have a unique industry, imbued with the diversity that characterizes our great country. It is marked by the values that bring us together. By the creativity that distinguishes who we are. Our industry has a bright future ahead of it, and we are all determined to shape it.

Thank you for your attention. I will now turn the floor over to our Executive Director, Christa Dickenson.

Christa Dickenson, Executive Director

Thank you Chair Spickler.
Partners,
Television and film industry creators,
Colleagues,

January is always a particularly busy month. So, let me first start off by thanking you for carving out the time in your busy schedules to be here with us today. A year ago, we were holding our Annual Public Assembly in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre. Fast forward 13 months, and here we all are connecting via a virtual feed.

With all that is going on around us, it feels a bit trivial to wish everyone a Happy New Year. So instead I'd like to say that I hope you were able to rest and relax over the holidays with your loved ones – of course within your safety bubbles... and that I hope as well that all of you are managing to stay safe and healthy throughout these unprecedented times.

In light of these extremely serious events, some may find it out-of-place to review the achievements of the 2019-2020 fiscal year. On the contrary, I think we need to do it.

The pandemic has been such a brutal shock, and has been continuing on for such a long time, that we need to reconnect with our core—with this artform that brings us together.

For the creators and artisans who made a splash before the crisis overwhelmed us all;

For the wonderful feelings we get when our peers achieve success.

And to start imagining the future again, I would like to take a few moments to recall the highlights of 2019-2020.

I want us to remember, especially today:

- the amazing Canada-Norway co-production, *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, by Kathleen Hepburn and Elle-Màijà Tailfeathers
- Monia Chokri, winner of the Coup-de-coeur Jury Prize at Cannes for her feature *La femme de mon frère* [*A Brother's Love*].

And let's not forget Philippe Falardeau, recipient of a Crystal Bear, who opened the 70th Berlin International Film Festival with *My Salinger Year*.

The year, which we must not overlook, also gave us:

- *Antigone*, by Sophie Deraspe, Best Canadian Feature Film at TIFF
- and, in a **completely** different vein, Jeff Barnaby's *Blood Quantum*, which was sold around the world...

The list is a long one:

- *Menteur*, by Émile Gaudreault, has passed the \$6-million mark at the national box office
- *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, by Tasha Hubbard, won several awards on the festival circuit
- *Firecrackers*, by Jasmin Mozaffari, and *Murmur*, by Heather Young, both of which emerged from the Talent to Watch program, continued their remarkable careers

All this, and much more, happened before the pandemic. It seemed absolutely vital to me that we remember these successes today.

Do you, like me, get a little sentimental when you remember what a joy it was to watch most of these films in a movie theatre?

We'll experience the wonder of the big screen again—an experience that does true justice to all the effort, all the talent, and all the financial investment behind these productions.

In 2019-2020, Telefilm Canada invested \$102.2 million in our industry:

- \$78.3 million to finance the production of 89 feature films and to support the development of 261 projects

- And we devoted \$23.9 million to promoting our industry, which has enabled us to:
 - Support 75 Canadian film festivals
 - Take part in 39 international festivals and events, and
 - Market 139 Canadian feature films in 19 countries

Indeed, 2019-2020 was shaping up to be an exceptional year for Canadian cinema and for Telefilm's partnership with the industry. Our cinema had momentum, with our films set to be screened at home and around the world.

That's why protecting the industry so it retains its ability to bounce back quickly became Telefilm's mission. Within the very first few weeks of the pandemic, Telefilm adjusted its programs to ease the situation.

Subsequently, the government's assistance took the form of two essential contributions:

- Phase 1 Emergency Relief Funding consisted of \$88.8 million to the Canada Media Fund and \$27 million to Telefilm's clients.
- Phase 2 involved an additional \$27.8 million in assistance for businesses and organizations that were not eligible for Phase 1 allocations.

A Short-Term Compensation Fund of \$50 million was also created to make up for the lack of insurance coverage of interrupted or cancelled shoots. Altogether, the 141 projects received and processed, as previously mentioned by M. Spickler, represent more than \$97.1 million of coverage. We are also pleased to see that the distribution in English and French is balanced and that we currently cover productions in eight provinces and territories.

This aid allowed us to adopt a three-pronged approach:

- Protect the creators of the industry;
- Protect production companies, movie theatres, studios and their assets; and
- Help resume production shoots.

Notwithstanding this emergency support, the industry has been hit hard, as we are all aware. However, by intervening in the way we did, we believe we have taken prompt and necessary steps to preserve the integrity of the industry and its expertise.

A survey of individuals who applied for the Emergency Fund showed that the Phase 1 emergency funds have lived up to expectations:

- 98% were satisfied with the timeliness of the response; and
- 81% were satisfied with the amount of aid received.

Together with the pandemic, another crisis swept across the world – a wave of denunciations, struggles against systemic racism, and calls for equity and inclusion. This movement that took shape in the United States also emerged in Canada.

We were encouraged to accelerate the efforts undertaken four years ago to promote parity and diversity throughout Telefilm. And the work is beginning to bear fruit.

- We are seeing an overall increase in the number of projects in which women hold key positions as directors, producers and screenwriters.
- We are also witnessing a rise in the number of applications to our Indigenous component, with increased access as well to our main funding programs.
- Most recently, we also put into place an Equity and Representation Action Plan focused on elevating experienced and emerging filmmakers that are Black, People of Colour, Persons with Diverse Abilities, as well as LGBTQ2+ and gender diverse creators.

Telefilm's evolution towards parity and diversity is at the very core of the mandate entrusted to me. And I deeply believe in it.

We are still evolving as an organization, especially improving our client service. Recent events, including the employee investigation, have heightened our awareness of the inequities that exist in our industry. We are working harder to improve client experience, and to strengthen the culture of trust, respect, and dignity. For example, an updated mandatory anti-harassment training is being rolled out for all staff beginning at the end of January, and a training session on anti-Black racism will take place in the following weeks. Educating our employees is something we take seriously as we continue the path of inclusivity.

Telefilm's evolutionary path is necessary today, and it must unite us in a common cause: the greatness of our audiovisual industry, and the promotion of our culture.

Above all, it's essential that everyone find their place: the leaders who built the industry, the young, emerging filmmakers who look up to them with admiration. And all the others who are well on their way, who help our film industry, in all its various aspects, to flourish.

The future of our industry won't be built on "business as usual" but on innovation, sharing and transparency.

We've lived through—we're still living through—a severe and unprecedented crisis. We will come out of it, shaken, shattered, like the other sectors of the economy and culture. We'll have a craving for projects and for achievements.

For the creators that you are, this crisis also provides raw material. A source of stories to tell. A source of emotions to process. And I'd also like for it to foster a new way of working. More collaborative. More collegial.

That's the direction I feel like moving toward with you in the coming months.

I would like to thank the entire team at Telefilm Canada, which has worked hard to help the industry and its artisans make it through.

I am proud of this organization, its professionalism, its values.
I would also like to thank our partners and stakeholders who participated in consultations as part of our modernization effort.

Thank you all.

I would now like to turn the floor over to René Bourdages, Senior Director, Cultural Portfolio Management.

René Bourdages, Senior Director, Cultural Portfolio Management

Thank you, Christa.

Hello, and thank you for being here with us today for our Annual Public Assembly.

Last year at this time, we announced that Telefilm had firmly resolved to modernize its Success Index. After 10 years of existence, our Index no longer necessarily reflected the new realities of our industry—which, as you know, has seen much change over the past decade.

It's essential that we listen to the ecosystem in all its diversity, and that we review our project funding processes in order to adequately meet the need for a more equitable and representative feature film industry.

In order to modernize our Index, we had planned to conduct open and transparent cross-Canada consultations this past spring, and then... the pandemic hit us!

Faced with this emergency, we decided to put the project on hold in order to respond to the urgent needs of our industry. With film productions coming to a grinding stop and the theatres and festivals screenings being shut down, our stakeholders were fragilized.

In a very short period of time, we set up various internal and external working groups to find concrete solutions to a crisis that hit us with full force. We reorganized our workforce to quickly deploy the federal government's Emergency Support Fund for the audiovisual sector... Some assistance programs are still ongoing today.

You should know that, like Christa, I was—and continue to be—very impressed by the agility and flexibility shown by every team member at Telefilm as well as our employees administrating the CMF Programs, and by the support of our partners—all of which allowed us to act swiftly.

That said, in the fall we restarted the project to modernize the Success Index. To achieve this, we held inclusive and transparent cross-Canada consultations in both Official Languages, in several stages. We discussed, at length, the Success Index, the Development Program and the Talent to Watch program.

As a first step, we sent surveys to our partners, members of various associations and the industry as a whole on these three topics.

Afterward, we organized open virtual forums, and then we held working sessions with our partners and working groups. We then had exploratory talks with the various partner associations, and in the coming weeks we will make formal proposals, which will be shared on our website in February, and will invite the community to submit written comments.

We are very encouraged by these consultations. They gave rise to frank and honest exchanges, in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, even if, at times, different points of view were expressed.

In addition, the fact that these meetings took place virtually allowed people who don't always have access to Telefilm to actively participate, which is an accomplishment in itself, allowing the industry as a whole to express itself.

I can also point out that because these consultations were delayed by the pandemic, we were able to open a dialogue on a reality that has caught up with us: the systemic racism and lack of representation of racialized communities within our companies. The truths expressed benefited not only the Telefilm team but other stakeholders as well. We all come out of this better informed and more aware of the important work that remains to be done.

We must applaud the courage and efforts of all those who shared their personal and professional experiences with us. We worked hard to create a safe space for people to share their experiences with us. And, in turn, we'll have the courage to modernize our approach, with greater transparency and efficiency. The consultation process has put Telefilm in a place of listening in order to adapt. We are using the experiences shared as a lesson in modernizing our client services

throughout our programs, and also our decision making, in order to suit our clients' needs.

The ability for Canadian cinema to engage with Canadian audiences, big and small, will remain a priority. As Canada continues to transform, its cinematic language evolves and benefits from a wide array of voices (from screenwriters to directors, to actors) having a chance to bring great stories to life. And despite fragmented audiences, there are always opportunities for unifying experiences like cinema to open a window on a new perspective.

Making room at the table for Black filmmakers, and filmmakers of colour, for Indigenous filmmakers, for filmmakers of all sexualities: men and women, cisgender and transgender – will only strengthen our shared culture and we can achieve it while we grow audiences for Canadian cinema.

These are not opposing objectives. To the country it is actually the best way forward for the sustainable success of Canadian feature films, both here and abroad.

Cinema is an art form. And that art form fuels an industry. That artistic expression helps reflect who we are as a nation and it should widen our perspective, it helps us understand each other better through drama comedy, animation or documentary.

Storytelling is a powerful tool to shape our collective identity.

It is essential that Telefilm modernizes itself, and we are confident that these consultations will give us the necessary tools we need to build the Telefilm of tomorrow.

We will be submitting our recommendations very soon, and we hope to live up to expectations. But one thing is certain, in light of all the discussions we've had: the status quo is not an option and the timing for these changes is now!

Thank you very much.

Now I would like to turn the floor over to E.J. Alon and Kathleen Beaugé, in charge of the Equity and Representation Action Committee.

E.J. Alon and Kathleen Beaugé, Co-Leads of the Equity and Representation Action Committee

Merci, René.

Hello everybody. Thank you for joining us online today.

My name is E.J. Alon, Director of the Talent Fund, and joining me is Kathleen Beaugé, Legal Counsel, Legal Team Leader with the CMF Program Administrator at Telefilm Canada. Together we are the Co-Leads of the Equity and Representation Action Committee, overseeing Telefilm's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiatives.

In recent years, there has been an increased call for greater representation and more equitable access for creators from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

The unveiling of our Action Plan – building on the imperative and ongoing conversations with filmmakers and creators to better improve Telefilm, our practices and support a changing industry – is the first step of this journey to change, we know that there is much work to be done.

This past year we have been in conversation with many stakeholders across the country. These discussions are vital.

They have also been emotional, impactful and long overdue. For those of you watching, thank you for inviting us to your “table”. It means a great deal to us, to hear your perspective.

At Telefilm, we pledge to create a more representative film community, inclusive of Black, Indigenous, People of Colour creators as well as LGBTQ2+ storytellers and filmmakers with diverse abilities.

As an organization, we are looking inwards and addressing the systemic racism that exists within, and within our industry.

While we have made strides regarding gender parity as well as supporting Indigenous creators, we know we need to do better by filmmakers from Racialized identities and underrepresented communities.

Today, we would like to give you an overview of some of the first actions that we have implemented since last July.

[Kathleen Beaugé]

Hello everyone. It is a pleasure to be with you today.

The most comprehensive work can be found in the Equity and Representation Action Plan that Telefilm launched last summer. The Action Plan is based on the foundation of four key pillars:

- Reviewing our policies
- Improving our hiring, staffing and training practices (both in terms of new hires and retention and promotion of current employees)
- Funding through our various programs
- Engaging in continuous dialogue with filmmakers and industry members

Telefilm is firmly committed to demonstratable action. We will create greater access to our funding portfolios for current and future clients who have historically been disadvantaged. We know that there is much work to be done within Telefilm and within the entire industry.

The work in the Action Plan is carried out by the Equity and Representation Action Committee, led by E.J. and I. This Action Committee works together with Telefilm's internal employee committee and leadership team, as well as external stakeholders such as the Diversity and Inclusion working group, and we continue to hold important discussions with our communities.

Many of the action items set out in the Plan are well underway or completed:

This includes the hiring of four new positions dedicated to Telefilm's equity and representation initiatives, which were announced in December 2020.

Beyond these new roles, we have also committed to a minimum of fifty per cent representation within new hires across Telefilm and thirty per cent representation of new management hires of underrepresented identities by 2023.

We also launched Telefilm's Development Stream dedicated to Racialized Persons, which closed its inaugural application period in the fall. In its first year, we were able to support all eligible projects by Black and People of Colour creators under this stream.

We are pursuing enhancements to data collection in order to better identify needs, which will allow us to provide more directed funding and customize our existing and future initiatives.

[E.J. Alon]

We are proud to annually support the Indigenous Screen Office, and equally, to also annually invest in the newly created Black Screen Office that launched late last year.

These commitments, among recent partnerships in support of programs and initiatives like Being Black in Canada, the Attagurl Film Lab, and Access ReelWorld, among others, demonstrate our drive to action.

In collaboration with our working groups, some of our next steps include:

- As Kathleen mentioned, data collection enhancements will allow us to provide more directed funding and customized initiatives, tailored to support clients that may not have received any financing from Telefilm Canada, or those who may not have received adequate support to date.
- Our continued work in career development initiatives will further reduce barriers and bridge gaps in access. We will expand outreach initiatives with existing and new partner organizations to broaden the reach for emerging and established talent.

[Kathleen Beaugé]

Beyond this, Telefilm will continue to carry out its commitments to ensure a more representative work force. Our ongoing dialogue and consultations with our partners and experts while adding new voices along the way is imperative to this work.

We will expand our Equity and Representation Action Plan to foster a sustainable industry for creators from all communities and backgrounds.

Telefilm Canada is committed to supporting an industry that reflects a culture of mutual respect, dignity, and inclusivity. These are the first of many important steps and permanent changes. Along the way, and through our ongoing dialogue with our stakeholders, there may be moments where we will need to pause, evaluate, and reassess. But one thing is for certain, Telefilm is in this for the long haul.

Creating a system of long-term, effective change, is at the core of our work to build a more inclusive industry today – to ensure a better future for tomorrow.

Thank you. Merci.