

Notes for an Address by Michel Roy
Chair, Telefilm Canada

Annual Meeting of the Association des producteurs de films
et de télévision du Québec (APFTQ)

Gatineau, Tuesday, May 5, 2009

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Thank you for welcoming me to your 2009 annual meeting.

It's been more than a year since I became Chair of Telefilm Canada's Board. I am very proud to represent this corporation, which, in my opinion, is not as well known to the general public as it should be but that is very much appreciated by all its partners and clients across the country.

Telefilm is the Canadian Government's principal instrument for supporting producers, directors, screenwriters, actors, distributors and all other members of Canada's audiovisual industry. We administer programs for three funds worth a total of more than \$400 million. These funds are:

- the Canada Feature Film Fund
- the Canadian Television Fund
- the Canada New Media Fund.

The scope of our responsibilities requires that we demonstrate exemplary governance. These are public and private funds that we manage according to principles founded on integrity and probity. I might add that we are especially proud of the project-selection process we've put in place, which meets the highest standards of fairness, transparency and accountability.

It would be fair to say that the first year of my tenure was one of organization. To begin with, five new Board members were appointed—the Board can accommodate up to seven members—five new, highly qualified and committed members who have radically altered the look of our Board of Directors. Representing all regions of Canada, they take the development and good governance of Telefilm very much to heart and are putting their vast experience and complementary expertise in the service of Telefilm with enthusiasm and generosity.

We also undertook a major administrative reorganization whose goal was to bring senior management closer to operations and, consequently, closer to our clientele. In this way, the industry's needs—your needs—will be identified, communicated, understood and, when applicable, satisfied much more effectively, more rapidly and more directly.

We now want to engage in an open, frank and stimulating dialogue with you, a dialogue that will help us together to take on the challenges that lie ahead.

I'm thinking in particular of three challenges, three mutually linked and, I would add, decisive challenges that will have an impact on the future of the audiovisual industry.

First, we have to aim to increase the market share of Canadian films at home. On the English side, in good years as well as bad, Canadian productions account for a mere one to two percent of the market. And, despite the competitive advantage they have due to language and a well-established star system, which television has helped to nurture over the last 30 years, French-language Canadian productions have a hard time gaining more than 20% of the Francophone market. The French versions of American productions continue to hold more than 70% of this market. It's clear that our southern neighbour's film industry is invasive, as indeed it is everywhere else around the world. However, in terms of quality, our films can stand up with the best of what other countries have to offer. While maintaining a healthy balance between a work's quality and its ability to draw large audiences, we have to continue finding new ways of promoting and highlighting the value of Canadian productions and, as such, attract a larger number of movie-lovers.

Our second challenge has to do with production funding. It is essential that we develop new partnerships with our foreign

counterparts. On this point, it's worth noting that about one quarter of Canada Feature Film Fund resources are already being used to support co-productions. This is an asset upon which we can build. But co-production is only one component of international development, and we'll have to refine our overall strategy to strengthen our presence on the international scene. This has now become the most important of our Board's priorities.

And moving from words to action, we have made room, in our new administrative organizational plan, for a new position, that of Director of National and International Business Development, reporting directly to the Executive Director. We have already hired someone to fill this position, a person whose competence and expertise when it comes to international development is widely recognized within the industry, both here and abroad. I'm speaking of Sheila de la Varenne. Among other things, Sheila will help us to conclude several co-production agreements currently being negotiated with other organizations—including SODEQ—and foreign countries. We hope to announce these agreements to you very shortly.

It's also worth mentioning, in passing, that no fewer than 66 companies took part in the Canada Pavilion at MIPTV between March 30 and April 3. And despite the economic downturn, we

were very pleased to see that things were as busy this year as they have been in the past.

Finally, we are working closely with the Department of Canadian Heritage to put in place a policy framework aimed at updating the various international agreements in effect so that Canada can once again take its rightful place on the international scene.

Even now it would take too long to list all the producers and directors who have distinguished themselves abroad and made us proud. Closer to home, in only a few days, the works of six of these film artists will be presented at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival.

Our third challenge is the unbridled technological change we are currently living through. Our industry is evolving toward what is being called the multiplatform universe, that is to say, a world where one type of content can be broadcast in multiple ways. Technically, the move toward a variety of digital broadcasting methods poses a major challenge for several members of our industry, and funding support programs will have to take account of this new reality.

This is the reason that Telefilm favourably greeted the announcement by Minister Moore regarding the implementation, next April, of the Canada Media Fund, created through the merger of the Canadian Television Fund and the Canada New Media Fund. As you know, Telefilm already administers these two funds under agreements with, respectively, the Canadian Television Fund and the Department of Canadian Heritage. It goes without saying that we eagerly await the start of negotiations with the new Board, which we hope will happen as soon as the Board is appointed. We at Telefilm already have all the resources, the experience and the expertise needed to administer the new fund's guidelines. We are confident that Telefilm's outstanding track record as an administrator will convince the directors of the new Canada Media Fund to give us this mandate.

Yesterday, Wayne Clarkson, our Executive Director, and I appeared before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which has launched a study of the future of Canadian television. We stated that, despite some of the difficulties broadcasters are currently facing, such as a less-than-favourable economic climate and the move toward digital broadcasting, it is imperative that Canadian television programming continue to offer a significant amount of Canadian content because of the considerable cultural impact that television has on Canadians everywhere.

In closing, I'd like to say that it is important, in our current economic context, that we explore all the paths open to us so that we can get the most out of the financial and human resources available to the audiovisual industry and so that the industry can successfully meet the challenges it faces. Doing so will allow us to say, in the words of Jean Cocteau: "We didn't know it was an impossible thing to do, so we did it."

Thank you for your attention, and I hope all your discussions will be very productive.