



Annual Public Assembly 2023-2024

Speech by

Sylvain Lafrance

Chair of the Board

Telefilm Canada

Broadcasted on November 28, 2024.

Introduction

Hello, everyone.

My name is Sylvain Lafrance, and it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Public Meeting in my new role as Chair of the Board at Telefilm Canada.

It is a true honour to be here.

For the benefit of those who cannot see me, I will describe myself.

I am a middle-aged man with short curly hair, sitting in a movie theatre in Montreal. I also have a big smile on my face to show how happy I am to be back in the Canadian audiovisual sector through Telefilm.

I want to take this moment to acknowledge that Telefilm's headquarters here in Montreal are on unceded Indigenous lands, historically known as a gathering place for many First Nation peoples.

I'd also like to recognize all the Indigenous creators who are contributing more and more to the success of our cinema, telling their stories and their ambitions, and enriching our Canadian and international audiovisual landscape.

I begin my term as Chair of the Board with a great sense of purpose.

Our industry faces challenges.

To address them, Telefilm's leadership is implementing a comprehensive three-year Strategic Plan that aims for a global approach to support the audiovisual industry through direct investment in our cinema.

As I take up this position, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my predecessor, Robert Spickler, for his work over his five-year term at Telefilm. Overseeing the challenging pandemic years – and its recovery.

I'm delighted to be working alongside Julie Roy, Executive Director and CEO of Telefilm. Her passionate leadership in her first year in this role has been inspirational. I'm delighted to be teaming up with her.

Telefilm has an essential mission for the Canadian audiovisual industry.

Especially now, as we are in a time that demands our full attention.

There are challenges.

Disruption.

Our landscape is evolving.

And at the same time, the role that our organization plays has never been more important.

At Telefilm, we believe in the power of cinema as a crucial economic and cultural force.

Cinema creates opportunities for discussion – exchanges of ideas.

It is part of the fabric of a healthy society, especially at a time when polarizing forces can pull us apart.

As the largest investor in Canadian and Indigenous cinema, Telefilm is dedicated to supporting thousands of creators across this country.

- Collaborating with partners at every point in the life cycle of a film.
- Developing unique, diverse voices that reflect our identity.
- Fueling our dynamic cultural economy.
- And driving demand for Canadian screen content.

Now, I'd like to talk about the importance of a new strategic vision.

As part of that vision, this last fiscal year was a time of strategic re-direction.

Julie and the management committee consulted at length with industry stakeholders to develop a detailed plan that will have a lasting impact.

The new strategic direction is supported by a transparent and robust governance structure.

Julie will speak more on the changes within the organization.

But, why these changes?

It's simple.

- To modernize.
- To adapt to changes.
- To focus on partnerships.
- And to position Telefilm as a unifying force in the industry.

We're all aware of the issues facing our sector in the last year–

- The slowdown of economic growth.
- High interest rates.
- Persistent inflation that is only now easing.
- Rising unemployment.
- And strikes in the American film industry that had an impact on our sector.

But the highlights of the year also reveal some good news.

Uplifting news.

A welcome momentum is underway.

The Canadian government clearly recognizes the crucial importance of the audiovisual sector as a creator of jobs, revenue, pride, cultural identity and more than that... to share an inclusive humanity.

I want to thank the Government of Canada and Canadian Heritage for the additional 50 million dollars per year for the next two years.

It's a great vote of confidence.

A vote of trust that cannot be overstated.

As we look ahead, this additional 50 million dollars must become a permanent contribution – to ensure predictability and stability in our industry.

When I say there's momentum, I think we can all feel it –

And, of course, we see it in the numbers.

Last year, revenue from total box office sales was up 33 per cent!

Box office revenue for Canadian films was up 17 million dollars from last year.

And Canadian films had a stellar year of theatrical releases,

Telefilm played a significant role in that success.

Because the public sector is a force behind the scenes.

When you're sitting in a theatre, enjoying a film, learning and laughing – and at times, moved to tears – it is often with the help of Telefilm that it is brought to the screen.

Last year, seven Telefilm-supported films enjoyed box office success exceeding one million dollars.

Here are just a few –

- Louise Archambault's *Le Temps d'un été* was number one in ticket sales
- The success of Matt Johnson's *Blackberry*
- And the success of Charles Olivier-Michaud's *Ru*

Congratulations to all our creators for your excellent work.

We're deeply proud to be your partners.

In closing, I would like to reinforce my support for Julie Roy and her management team for the thoughtful shift of our organization.

This will position us for even greater success!

Thanks to all Telefilm employees who bring their expertise and passion to their work.

It is all a team effort.

I would also like to take this time to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their enthusiasm and for welcoming me as Chair.

In turn, I welcome two new Board Members – Claude Doucet and Deborah MacPherson.

We look forward to continuing our work together.

And I want to thank outgoing Board Members, Angèle Beausoleil and Karen Horcher for their years of service.

At the end of the day, our work is all about common good.

It's about the Canadians and Indigenous Peoples whose stories move and engage audiences around the world.

Stories that illuminate subjects close to our hearts.

And showcase our identity as a country made up of many perspectives and realities.

I have immense respect for this mission and for the crucial role of public service in our cultural landscape.

And so, I strongly believe in Telefilm's important commitment to partnerships and supporting our creators.

Now, I would like to introduce, Julie Roy, Executive Director and CEO of Telefilm Canada, to speak.

Thank you!