



Opening Remarks by Carolle Brabant

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CRTC HEARING

Let's Talk TV: A Conversation with Canadians

Introduction

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, and CRTC staff. My name is Carolle Brabant and I'm the Executive Director of Telefilm Canada. With me today is Dave Forget, Director of Business Affairs and Certification. Dave has been very involved in our program reforms, and in particular, has been leading our initiative to review and update our marketing and distribution program.

The technological developments we are witnessing in our television system impacts the way Telefilm fulfills its mandate to foster the development and help promote the Canadian audiovisual industry. In this regard, we would like to elaborate on the following three areas today:

1) the growth and sustainability of our industry; 2) promotion; and 3) audience measurement tools.

I. The Growth and Sustainability of Canada's Audiovisual Industry

The financing system we have in place today that supports our audiovisual industry has been elaborated over a period of many decades, driven in large part by the Government of Canada's policies and a unique financing model. It is this system that has helped create a sector that generated \$7.6 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) for the Canadian economy in 2012-2013.¹

¹ *Profile 2013: Economic Report on the Screen-based Media Production Industry in Canada*, Canadian Media Producers Association, February, 2014.

The audiovisual industry has now achieved a maturity which is raising the profile of Canada on the world stage. You only have to experience the energy coming from TIFF this week.

Take one recent example, Quebec filmmaker Jean-Marc Vallée. With an Academy Award-winning film, *Dallas Buyers Club* to his credit, his latest film, *Wild*, screened at the 41st Telluride Film Festival and will be presented tonight at the Toronto International Film Festival.

And just last spring, we marked a milestone – three Canadian films – David Cronenberg’s *Maps to the Stars*, Xavier Dolan’s *Mommy* and Atom Egoyan’s *The Captive* screened in competition at the 67th Festival de Cannes. The most for any country at Cannes this year.

Producer Martin Katz and Chair of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television described the last year as “a kind of internationalization of Canadian talent.”²

Our filmmakers were supported and nurtured by what I would venture to describe as one of the largest and most vibrant independent production sectors in the world.

² Screen International, “Spread the Word”, Canada’s World of Talent at Cannes 2014, page 2

Clearly, we're doing something right.

How do we leverage this successful model and be mindful of consumer demand for greater choice or, as Michael Gubbins puts it – keep the “audience in the mind”?

The television screen, which has captivated our attention since the 1950s, can now connect to a universe of apps, networks and devices.

Gone is the nostalgic image of a family gathering to watch one program on one screen. The four-screen phenomenon is now the standard with a variety of platforms – television, tablets, smartphones or computers all used simultaneously.

In this context, the growth of our homegrown industry depends on continued financing from the broadcasting system because basically we are in the research and development business. Every single film is a unique product.

Each one involves the discovery of ideas and knowledge and the creation of new IP. And ultimately its success can't be guaranteed because it's dependent on so many factors.

It's never been more challenging to finance a big-budget television series or feature film, see it through to completion on time and within budget, often in multiple location shoots. Producers have to be creative and agile to manage a project over many years – from the conception of an idea to production, marketing and distribution.

On average it could take a minimum of three years and countless drafts to develop a film, and that's before shooting begins. It is then another year or more before the product makes its way to a screen.

One of our goals in the last couple of years has been to better leverage our public funding by engaging corporate Canada. As the Commission is aware, we established the Talent Fund in 2012.

The Fund's Advisory Committee chair, Hartley T. Richardson, CEO of James Richardson & Sons Limited, recently noted that: “The private sector has long been looking for a direct way to support Canadian film. We're looking to change that and create this joint public-private partnership.”

To date, the Talent Fund has received contributions from the business community including Bell Media and Corus Entertainment to support the production and promotion of Canadian film.

II. Promotion

While our industry is punching above its weight, and being celebrated on the world stage, I believe we are not doing enough to promote it.

Promotion and marketing on all platforms hold the key to increasing the reach of our product at home and abroad and giving maximum exposure to our stories.

Every time a Canadian film or television program is shown at the box office, broadcast on the many television platforms available, or made available on digital platforms, we have incredible opportunities to promote Canadian talent not only to Canadians but to the world.

Telefilm has been working with partners to spark the Canadian public's interest in Canadian film: the Canada Media Fund, CMPA, provincial agencies, distributors and many other industry players.

Some examples of these partnerships include Eye on Canada, MIPCOM Country of Honour Initiatives and red carpet screening events across the country;

the Movie Night in Ottawa series, now championed by the Honorable Shelly Glover, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, was named by *Maclean's* as one of the five events that matter most to Ottawa's power brokers; and our *Off the Wall* social media content series features Canadian personalities from different regions of Canada and diverse professional fields sharing their personal memories about Canadian films.

Mindful of the popularity of short films in this age of the Internet and portable devices, Telefilm, the NFB and SODEC launched *The Shortest Day Short Film Celebration* last year.

This one-day event, involving 60 participating venues across the country gives Canadians, particularly the young ones who connect with this format of content, free access at movie theatres, cultural centres, associations, festivals and libraries. We're currently working with our partners on the second edition.

And just this past weekend, we organized a new promotional event on TIFF's Festival Street – our first-ever live game show hosted by ETALK's Ben Mulroney. Canadian talent, the TIFF Rising Stars, faced off with veteran actors on various games on Canadian cinema.

As you can see, the industry is not short on ideas or creativity when it comes to promotion. At Telefilm, we believe that this works better when we work with partners.

One of our other priorities in the last few years has been to conduct consumer research on Canadians' habits, preferences and awareness of Canadian films.

We have discovered that despite the fact that Canadians are avid consumers of movies on television, there is a strong lack of awareness about Canadian films.

French-language films appear to fare better in terms of awareness and image but it is clear that the success of both would benefit from stronger marketing.

Our experience to date leads us to also ask the question – would the industry benefit from a more coordinated effort, leveraging resources and expertise? What incentives exist that could make this approach deliver results for all involved? Surely, if the wine and cheese industries have seen successes, we can too.

We recognize that significant resources are required to build an infrastructure for promotion as robust as we have for production.

A study by Needham Insights on “The Future of TV” notes that marketing and advertising costs for the discovery of films and television can add 40% to the costs incurred to produce content.³

Canadian storytelling is unique and it’s our job as funders, broadcasters, distributors, exhibitors, producers and policy-makers to ensure that the most creative, innovative, diverse and high-quality content makes its way to screens so that audiences can share in it.

³ Needham Insights, “The Future of TV”, July 11, 2013

III. Audience Measurement

Our final point relates to audience measurement.

Telefilm agrees with the Commission on the need for the Canadian television industry to have access to appropriate tools to effectively respond to changes in the industry and to the needs and interests of viewers, and that data from set-top-boxes (“STBs”) could be such a tool.

There are many different ways that companies can contribute to Canadian success: by reaching out to audiences in movie theatres and on digital platforms; by winning awards; by increasing their sales;

and by building partnerships at home and abroad – through coproduction, among other ways.

As a funder, access to accurate data measuring, for example, viewership levels, is critical in providing us with an indication if our resources are being effectively used. For producers and distributors, data could serve to increase revenues.

Conclusion

In summary, the Commission's "Let's Talk TV" consultations are timely.

Television continues to be the medium to reach the most Canadians with our stories.

Our industry is experiencing great successes as our stories resonate with domestic and international audiences. The talent, creativity and skills of our industry are world class.

Yes, it will always be a challenge to finance television and films because of the risky nature of the business and because we are a small market.

But there is much much more we could do.

I believe that innovation, in terms of accessibility and engaging consumers is key to having Canadian content truly connect with audiences. We have many examples that demonstrate that when our talent is given a springboard to gain exposure, there is demand.

It's vital for our industry to partner together to successfully promote homegrown talent.

I thank you once again for inviting us to appear here today; Dave and I now welcome your questions.