

**FINAL English version**

Opening Remarks

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Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Review of the Feature Film Industry

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## **Introduction**

Good afternoon Mr. Gordon Brown, and members of the Committee. Thank you very much for the invitation to take part in the Committee's examination of the Canadian feature film industry.

My comments will focus on the following three areas: 1) a brief overview on Telefilm Canada's role and support to the Canadian feature film industry; 2) our successes and our challenges; and 3) our recommendations on how to strengthen the industry.

## **An Overview of Telefilm Canada**

Telefilm Canada is a federal cultural agency with a mandate to foster and promote the development of the audiovisual industry in Canada. We play a leadership role through financial support and initiatives that contribute to the industry's cultural, industrial and commercial success.

Last year, we supported the production and marketing of some 90 feature films and the development of more than 300 projects, while also helping to promote Canadian talent in Canada and international festivals, for a total investment of \$92.2 million.

Telefilm also administers funding programs for the Canada Media Fund, which totalled \$354.5 million in 2013-2014. Finally, we make recommendations regarding the certification of audiovisual treaty coproductions to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

In 2011, Telefilm embarked on a “dare to change” plan. We recognized that it was time to address the next big challenge in the evolution of the industry... to stimulate demand.

Since then, we have redesigned our programs; introduced a new Success Index that provides a broader and more accurate measurement of success beyond the box office; increased marketing efforts to showcase talent and our successes in Canada and around the world; strengthened stakeholder relationships; and partnered with the private sector on the promotion of Canadian talent. We believe these changes position the industry well for the future.

### **Our Successes and Challenges**

Committee members will have received our new 2015-2018 strategic plan, *Inspired by Talent. Viewed Everywhere.*, which builds on our successes and also addresses how we will face the challenges ahead.

Let me begin with our successes. Building on almost 50 years of investment, Telefilm, together with its partners, has helped shape a landscape conducive to creativity in movie storytelling. The story of Canada's feature film industry is one that has focused on building production capacity. We have now reached a maturity that enables us to produce and export works of excellent quality.

As CMPA research indicates, Canadian and foreign film production in 2013-2014 reached 1.4 billion dollars and accounted for over 26,000 full-time jobs.

Whether it's TIFF, Sundance, Berlin, Cannes, Venice, or at our own Canadian Screen Awards and Jutras, the profile of our talent has never been higher than it is today. More and more, we're being seen as a country that produces talent. A number of Canadian directors are increasingly in demand outside Canada.

The *New York Times* noted our industry's success in an article, saying that "Canada is on a hot streak, its movies regularly winning prizes."

So what of our challenges?

They include the following: independent films occupy less screen time and fewer screens in mainstream cinemas; most viewers watch feature films at home and not in theatres; and the distinctions between platforms, territories and launch windows for content have changed.

While the market's appetite for content is strong, the marketplace is increasingly crowded. Our greatest challenge is the discoverability of our films. In a world of overabundance of content, how do we attract Canadian consumers with our compelling and engaging films on multiple platforms?

### **The Future and Strengthening the Canadian Feature Film Industry**

How do we address these challenges?

First, we need to promote the excellence of Canadian content by conducting effective promotion of the industry and its successes directly to consumers.

Second, we need to foster more ground-breaking marketing practices by connecting with a larger number of viewers. We encourage the industry to find new ways of getting viewers to be more engaged with homegrown stories, by for example, trying out new marketing strategies adapted to viewers' new expectations.

Take *Corner Gas: The Movie*, which was launched during a three-week period last December and which drew more than seven million viewers on multiple platforms—all driven by a large and loyal fan base.

Third, we need to make decisions supported by meaningful metrics. It's vital that we make informed decisions based on value-added research.

Fourth, we need to help the industry diversify its sources of funding by attracting new funding partners, which is the main objective of the Talent Fund.

As the Committee is aware, Canada virtually invented official treaty coproduction.

With agreements with over 50 countries, coproduction continues to be a crucial leveraging tool for our industry. Telefilm is in discussions with Eurimages, the cultural support fund of the Council of Europe, on the possibility of becoming a member. This opportunity could provide the industry with another excellent vehicle to access international funding and to better export our cinema.

Telefilm's vision for the future is clear: we want Canadian creative content to be accessible and to be viewed everywhere.

As we noted in our intervention to the CRTC in its Review of Television, to succeed, we need to have all our support mechanisms working together to fund the initiatives that are needed. This means taking creative risks, experimenting with marketing and promotion strategies, as well as leveraging strategic partnerships and industry-wide resolve.

If there is one thing that we could recommend to the Committee in terms of programs and policies that support the feature film industry, it's that we need to have access to standardized viewership data.

Canadians are naturally drawn to their stories, and what more powerful way to experience them than through film? I, today am inspired by the success of our cinema and its future, now more than ever.

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

As André Melançon said to young filmmakers during his remarks at the Jutra gala, “[...] Amaze us, challenge us, shake things up [...] Make us dream, that’s what matters most.”

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