



**Telefilm,
for audiovisual content and talent**

Notes for an address by
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Chair of the Board

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Thank you for your kind words and for your invitation.

Good morning, dear industry colleagues, and thank you for providing me with this opportunity to speak to you on the first day of your annual meeting.

After spending 10 wonderful years working in one of our country's most fascinating industries, I will be stepping down, this fall, as Chair of the Board of Telefilm Canada, an institution for which I have the greatest respect.

There are two subjects I'd like to talk to you about this morning. I take delight in the first, while the second leaves me a little...worried. What delights me is the fact that this year marks Telefilm's 50th anniversary. That's a considerable achievement.

What worries me somewhat—and I'm sure you already know what's on my mind—is that various proposals have recently been floated regarding the reorganization of cultural support agencies. Rumour has it that one of these proposals calls for the creation of a “super agency.” In a letter that several of you who are here today signed, and that was made public on April 20th, you stated that such an option “would deal a devastating blow to Canadian cinema.”

But let's talk about the 50-year milestone first.

Five decades.

Five decades for Telefilm to engage in reflection, to reinvent itself, to explore new pathways, and to identify the best strategies for supporting production companies and creative talents.

50 years of hard work, which have turned Telefilm into an essential player in the development and promotion of Canadian audiovisual content. An organization renowned for its expertise, for its programs adapted to the industry's needs, and for its efficiency and effectiveness.

Getting back to your April 20th letter. I don't think I'd be mistaken in saying that your words were an acknowledgement and recognition of Telefilm's commitment to Canadian cinema—and this sentiment was at the heart of the message you sent to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

You wrote—and I quote—“Telefilm has been our one rock-solid and reliable partner in the challenging and uncertain business of financing” Quebec and Canadian feature films.

And further on, you add that, “Telefilm has spawned a long list of extraordinary filmmakers whose work has criss-crossed the planet.”

These words really mean a lot to me.

Because they speak to a vital reality: the unwavering support that the Telefilm team provides to our homegrown talent. Because they also acknowledge that many producers and filmmakers would not have achieved their level of success without Telefilm Canada’s support.

As the *Telefilm Canada Act* states, “The mandate of the Corporation is to foster and promote the development of the audio-visual industry in Canada.”

And those of you who have followed us closely over the last seven years are aware of the work we’ve done, among other things, to change, to evolve, and to “do and think differently”, to paraphrase the theme of your annual meeting this year.

But we haven’t changed simply for the sake of changing. We’ve changed for the better. To improve things.

And it wasn't always easy because the process led to demanding changes. We had to deal with a lot of tough questions, rethink our assumptions. Indeed, we embarked on a path of "daring to change"—to quote the title of one of our annual reports.

We refocused our entire organization on your industry, on your needs. And we did this with you, and with our partners, in the aftermath of many different meetings and consultations.

Promoting audiovisual content and talent became a key priority for us. Promoting talent, showcasing it, supporting its export abroad, and, finally, highlighting the awards and other honours it has won.

We rethought our role as investor, promoter, and administrator so it would better meet the industry's needs and adapt to its changes.

We launched the Talent Fund, which finances a significant number of micro-budget productions mostly for the benefit of emerging talent. We're talking about 50 films that have won more than 75 national and international awards over the last three years.

Speaking of the international scene, Canada today has coproduction agreements with 55 countries. The latest such agreement is with Jordan.

From 2005 to 2014, the total volume of Canadian coproduction stood at close to five billion dollars.

Furthermore, owing to Carolle Brabant's determination and sustained efforts—our Executive Director couldn't be here this morning, but she sends her warmest greetings—Canada is now a member of Eurimages, the European film production and promotion fund comprised of 37 countries.

This is a major recognition for Canada, because we're the first country outside of the European economic space to join Eurimages.

Over the last few years we've also created the Success Index, a tool that helps Telefilm and its clients make more informed business decisions and make more efficient strategic choices.

All of these changes, all of these efforts, have made it possible for a good number of our creative talents—several of whom signed your April 20th letter—to enjoy an international career. They—men and women alike—produce work that connects with millions of people around the world.

And that closes my look at Telefilm’s 50 years.

It’s now possible to “see big.” That’s the theme we’ve chosen to guide our mission over the next few years.

Obviously, we’re going to continue taking action. Our initiatives will ensure that Canadian talent is present at all major audiovisual industry events in Canada and around the world. They’ll also involve organizing or supporting events aimed at highlighting and showcasing our creative talents.

We’re committed to building, by 2020, a feature film portfolio that better reflects the people of Canada. I’m thinking, among other things, of the agreement on gender parity as well as the increased funding allocated to Indigenous talent.

Finally, we've accelerated the shift to digital through the dissemination of Canadian work on various platforms, such as iTunes, as well as on entertainment systems such as the NFB's emerging talents online channel and VIA Rail's on-train entertainment offering.

As an administrator, I'm particularly proud that strict control of our expenditures has enabled us, year after year, to reallocate several million dollars in administrative expenses to feature film production and feature film and television promotion.

As you know, Telefilm has been able to keep its management fees well under 6% year after year. What is rising, however, is customer satisfaction—which keeps going up every year. Our customer satisfaction rate now stands at 87%.

No stranger to this satisfaction indicator is our online funding application tool Dialogue. Dialogue was designed in partnership with the Canada Media Fund. This new platform, which is more modern and better adapted to client needs, offers a one-stop service solution. Dialogue replaces the eTelefilm platform, which Telefilm launched in 2001, thereby becoming the first organization to offer online services.

Finally, I'd like to offer praise for our senior management team's outstanding work and Executive Director Carolle Brabant's outstanding leadership. I also want to salute Telefilm's employees, those who work in feature film and those in television, for whom I have the highest regard.

Let me speak briefly about the second of the two topics I wanted to address today, which I said at the beginning of my speech was a source of concern for me.

As you know, the Minister of Canadian Heritage conducted wide-reaching consultations a few months ago on the export and discovery of Canadian content in today's digital world.

We fully share in the Minister's concerns. Our achievements of the past few years testify to this, as do the broad policy directions we've set for 2020.

We are committed to developing, exporting and showcasing homegrown creative talents and their works on all platforms, here in Canada and abroad.

In your letter, you asked the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage to support Telefilm's existence as a standalone funding agency by questioning the relevance of creating a super agency through the merger of Telefilm, the Canada Media Fund and other governmental institutions.

As someone who has been talking about "daring to change" for a long time, I'm not generally in favour of the status quo. I really do like change. But this time, however, we have to recognize that the current system works rather well.

As you know, Telefilm administers the programs of the Canada Media Fund by virtue of a contractual agreement. As such, the Fund can count on exemplary corporate governance—governance noted, as the Auditor General's reports confirm year after year, for its rigor and competence.

But above and beyond this link, the two organizations are autonomous.

Telefilm has its own board of directors.

The Canada Media Fund has its own board of directors.

Each agency defines its own policy directions, goals, programs.

Each develops its own expertise, in film, in television, in digital media.

Each benefits from the essential independence it needs to achieve its specific objectives.

In short, everyone's happy!

In Telefilm's case, it's obvious that we want to hold on to the indispensable role we play in developing and promoting Canadian talent to ensure it shines both in Canada and abroad.

Developing talent means making budgetary choices and taking concrete action in favour of, for example, gender parity.

And in favour of the participation of Indigenous talent.

Promoting talent involves developing promotional activities targeted at specific audiences.

It means supporting and guiding our creative talents at Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Sundance, at MIPTV and MIPCOM.

It's about supporting our nominees at the Oscars, the Césars and the Golden Globes.

And at home, it means meeting particular needs in a land where the regions are almost countries unto themselves.

So why change a formula that works pretty well? Why change a formula that our clients say they're quite satisfied with?

Are we saying there's no room for any kind of change? Are we saying that nothing needs to be improved?

Absolutely not.

But this idea of a super agency doesn't hold out the promise that we'll see any significant efficiency or effectiveness gains in terms of increasing exports of cultural products in our digital world. Not to mention that the challenges involved in setting up an organization of this kind would be far from minor.

Let's have the patience to think properly about the steps to take and let's make sure that any change we implement will allow us to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. Let's ensure that the only motive justifying this major change is the benefits it ultimately brings

to the film and television industries. We're eager to discuss all this with Minister Joly and put our experience and expertise at her disposal.

My time with you this morning is almost up, and my term as Telefilm's Chair will also be up in five months.

Since 2014, I live in a small village along the Lower Saint Lawrence, in a house where a few scenes from the film *Ordinary Tenderness* [*Tendresse ordinaire*] were shot in 1973. *Ordinary Tenderness* was an NFB film directed by Jacques Leduc.

I'm sure you'll appreciate that I will always have tender feelings for our homegrown cinema—feelings that are anything but ordinary.

Turning to you, I would like to invite you all, as members of the AQPM, to continue the work you do to support the creative talents, the artists and craftspeople in the audiovisual community.

We need you, we need your cinematography, your stories, to entertain us, to make us think and to help us better understand the world in which we live.

Creating is an act of freedom, of openness and discovery. For me, the act of creation is as essential as the air we breathe.

Thank you for your attention, have a good day and a great meeting.