



Tuesday, 12th November

Julie Roy
Executive Director & CEO
Telefilm Canada
360 St. Jacques Street, Suite 500
Montréal, Québec, H2Y 1P5

Dear Ms. Roy,

Re: your correspondence of October 30th, 2024

As organizations representing over 87,000 screenwriters, directors, performers, artists, and crew in Canadian film & television, we were deeply disappointed to receive the most recent correspondence from Telefilm Canada's Senior Vice President, Program Strategy and Industry Development, regarding our call for Telefilm to stop investing in productions that refuse to sign collective agreements and require that productions funded by Telefilm remain in good standing with industry unions and guilds.

Unlike the Canada Media Fund (CMF) who has already taken a step forward, Telefilm refuses to adopt language requiring companies to be "in good standing with all applicable talent and industry associations and guilds."

Moreover, Telefilm continues to invest in productions that flat out refuse to sign collective agreements, or that failed to uphold those agreements, while having no equivalent protections or standards of its own for production workers. These lax investment policies even include high-budget productions where signing on to existing

industry agreements has long been the norm. These problematic practices undermine the entire production ecosystem in Canada, leaving creative industry professionals unrepresented and unprotected.

Telefilm has the power to move today to adopt simple measures both to protect workers in Canadian film & television and protect the investments taxpayers make in these projects. This policy allows flexibility for dealing with productions of various scales. It involves no new costs to the agency. And yet, still, Telefilm has failed to act.

Even more disconcerting in your reply of October 30th is the reasoning offered to move forward with Telefilm's new Production Program Guidelines without such a requirement:

"[A]s a federal Crown corporation and given the considerable variations in employment practices and applicable laws from one province or territory to another, it would be challenging for us to impose a uniform framework on the entire audiovisual industry without encroaching into a complex domain regulated by different jurisdictions."

As you know, fair and straightforward measures requiring productions remain in good standing with unions and guilds are already in place at the CMF as part of their Core Development and Predevelopment Guidelines.

In addition, Telefilm's existing policies make clear that the agency already has both the tools and the mandate to act on this approach. Telefilm's recoupment structure includes penalties for producers who fail to meet contractual obligations. Program guidelines are designed to further broader public policy goals, stating – by way of example – that Telefilm invests in "content creation that helps advance sustainable production practices and that encourages environmental responsibility." Telefilm's evaluation criteria also delineate how Telefilm "considers the track record of the key creative team based on past and current performance including their full range of industry experience and level of expertise as it relates to the nature and scope of the project, as well as the applicant's history in fulfilling its contractual obligations towards Telefilm."

How can Telefilm expect productions to meet contractual obligations to the agency, but show no concern when productions fail to meet contractual obligations to their own teams, including even failing to pay their own crews? How is it a "sustainable production practice" to invest in projects that undermine the broader ecosystem of the industry, including both livable wages and basic protections for cast, crew and creatives? And how can refusing to treat one's team fairly, not be considered part of a creative team's track record?

Investing in projects that refuse to sign collective agreements – or that fail to abide by those agreements – leaves those working in the film & television industry without basic safeguards. Without fair contracts, the creative professionals who make this industry run have no advocates, nor guarantees, with respect to fair compensation, timely payment, talent development, diversity, workers' health & safety, workplace protections, health and retirement benefits, sustainability standards or the protection of creative rights. As a public institution, we believe Telefilm has an obligation to industry members, taxpayers and the public to advance and uphold each of these aims.

All of our organizations are steadfast in the belief that taxpayer dollars should not go to fund productions that refuse to sign fair contracts or abide by minimum standards, leaving creative industry professionals both unrepresented and unprotected. The decision of Telefilm to cite labour laws and bureaucratic jargon to punt this issue down the road is unacceptable.

We are calling on Telefilm to make revisions to its Production Program Guidelines in time for its upcoming Annual Public Assembly on November 28th. Program guidelines should be amended to ensure that, starting in 2025-2026, each funded production remains in good standing with all applicable unions and guilds and be required to sign collective or individual agreements guaranteeing minimum labour standards.

Our organizations look forward to continuing this dialogue and stand ready to collaborate with Telefilm to swiftly and effectively implement these two principles in a way that meets the industry's practical needs. We hope to hear from you soon regarding our request.

Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)

Association des Réalisateur·euses et Réalisateur·euses du Québec (ARRQ)

Directors Guild of Canada (DGC)

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (Canada) (IATSE)

NABET 700-M UNIFOR

Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma (SARTEC)

Union des artistes (UDA)

Writers Guild of Canada (WGC)