CONSULTATIONS ON THE ACTION PLAN
FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

BRIEF

Submitted on January 8, 2017
Contact: Carol Ann Pilon
Executive director
capilon@apfc.info
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The arts, culture and cultural industries sector is one of the key pillars in the sustainable development of Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities. The Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada (APFC) represents francophone independent producers in official language minority communities (OLMCs). Those producers not only contribute to the diversity of Canadian film, television and multimedia but also help to keep artisans, artists and creators in their respective home communities. They also give their communities a voice and provide a mirror in which they can see themselves and which represents them in today’s audiovisual landscape.

In this brief, the APFC is happy to share its views on the critical role that the francophone media production industry plays in enhancing the vitality of francophone minority communities (FMCs) along with the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The APFC believes that recognition of the arts, culture and cultural industries sector by the federal government should be included in the new action plan for official languages. To inform and guide the discussion in the Canada-wide consultations on official languages, the APFC recommends that the Department of Canadian Heritage put in place mechanisms to help francophone minority communities develop and enable them to take full advantage of opportunities for growth. We suggest the following:

• The cultural agencies that support content creation and production should make clear, concrete commitments to foster the development and growth of arts and culture in Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities.

• Francophone media production in minority communities should be part of the government’s innovation strategy horizontally across all departments concerned.

• The Canadian government should facilitate the acquisition of skills needed to adjust and respond to digital transformations.

• The Canadian government should deploy the necessary tools (taxes and regulations) to ensure that the major corporate players in the digital chain contribute to the vitality of our cultural industries so that they remain competitive and relevant.
• Innovation labs should be established across Canada to explore innovation and creativity, share know-how and develop skills.

• All members of the OLMCs, no matter where they live, should have access to affordable unlimited Internet service without data caps and should be able to participate in digital culture and access the works of our francophone creators and producers.

• The Canadian government should support the development of a targeted promotion initiative to showcase francophone and Acadian arts and culture content on selected broadcast platforms in Canada and abroad.

• Initiatives to promote Canadian culture should reflect the diversity of francophone voices in Canada.

• Investments in international market development should strengthen professional support structures.

• The various funding initiatives of federal agencies should be coordinated so that they are complementary and together capable of supporting all the activities required to develop new markets, with the greatest possible impact.

• The government should support professional development for the culture sector, particularly in the international and digital domains.

• The organizations that help bolster the francophone media production sector should receive stable, multi-year base funding from the Official Languages Support Programs.

The APFC hopes that this dialogue will continue in a cooperative manner with our federal partners so that its needs and goals can be heard throughout the process of developing the federal government’s new action plan for official languages.
INTRODUCTION

Canada is a rich country, thanks to its abundant, multifarious resources, its innovative, comprehensive policies, and its diverse, engaged population. As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau so eloquently put it in the mandate letter of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, “Our cultural sector is an enormous source of strength to the Canadian economy. Canada’s stories, shaped by our immense diversity, deserve to be celebrated and shared with the world. Our plan will protect our important national institutions, safeguard our official languages, promote the industries that reflect our unique identity as Canadians, and provide jobs and economic opportunities in our cultural and creative sectors.”

On the cultural front, Canada remains the envy of the citizens of other countries as a result of the success of its many creators, including Cirque du Soleil, Véronique Dicaire, Xavier Dolan and Robert Lepage. Canadians’ capacity to excel internationally is no accident. Our government has always been committed to the cultural growth of Canadians, providing support for talented artists and creators and promoting their works across Canada and around the world.

Canada has established world-renowned institutions – such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the National Film Board (NFB), Telefilm Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) – and at the same time allowed the private sector to carve out a prominent place for itself on the Canadian cultural scene, in part thanks to a national cultural policy with interrelated, complementary mechanisms.

The arts, culture and cultural industries sector is one of the key pillars in the sustainable development of Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities. The federal government’s recognition of this sector is evident in the major investment it made in 2016 for the next five years. That recognition should be reflected in the government’s next plan for official languages. The benefits will be measured not only in economic terms but also in socio-cultural terms, with the perpetuation of Franco-Canadian identity through a growing, dynamic arts, culture and cultural industries sector.

We commend Minister Mélanie Joly for undertaking Canada-wide consultations on official languages in addition to the consultations on Canadian content in a digital world and on cultural exports. In our view, this convergence leading up to a review of public policy on culture and an adjustment of the governmental mechanisms that support it is very timely. It is also welcomed by the francophone minority media production sector. The Alliance des producteurs
francophones du Canada (APFC) is happy to share its views on the critical role that the francophone media production industry plays in enhancing the vitality of francophone minority communities (FMCs).

The APFC represents francophone independent producers in official language minority communities (OLMCs). It is responsible for overall management of the francophone minority production sector in Canada. As the advocate for the francophone television, film and digital content industry from coast to coast since 1999, it includes most Franco-Canadian independent production companies across Canada, which provide the francophone and Acadian communities and all Canadians with diverse cultural and historical content in which they can see themselves.

In addition to being entrepreneurs and job creators, the APFC’s members are cultural and economic agents that have deep roots in their communities and are well aware of the important and necessary contribution that they make to the entire francophone minority and the long-term development of the francophone and Acadian communities. The APFC’s member producers play a part in diversifying Canadian television content, stimulate the local economy, employ skilled labour, help to sustain and retain a pool of artists and creators, and contribute to our social fabric.

The Franco-Canadian media industry is responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect economic spinoffs. The impact is significant. The volume of French-language television production outside Quebec by the APFC’s member producers has grown at a phenomenal pace since 2003. Hours produced increased from 72 in 2003 to 173 in 2013. The amount spent by television broadcasters on licences rose a total of $3.5 million to $10.3 million between 2003 and 2015. In addition, the combined total production budgets of APFC members more than doubled between 2003 and 2015, climbing from $13 million to more than $30 million. With direct and indirect economic multipliers on top of that, television production activity alone generated a total impact of $1.2 billion between 2003 and 2013. For digital projects, the total production budget was more than $1.5 million in 2013.

During that period, a number of programs produced by francophone minority independent producers were aired by television broadcasters in prime time – Destination Nor’Ouest, Pour l’Amour du Country, La Ruée vers l’Or, Belle-Baie, Motel Monstre and Le Clan, to name only a few – earning significant audience ratings and several Gemini Award nominations. Many documentaries produced by APFC members also received awards at international festivals. Les enfants d’Armageddon won the coveted International Federation for Human Rights award at the 2009 Festival des libertés in Brussels as well as eight other awards. Musique pour un monde nouveau took the Gold Remi Award at the Houston International Film
Festival. The documentary *Champions grisonnants* was selected as Best Documentary at the 27th Sports TV and Movies International Film Festival in Milan. *Zachary Richard, toujours batailleur* received two “La vague” awards at the 30th Festival international de cinéma francophone en Acadie (FICFA) in 2016. Digital productions have also fared well. The APFC’s independent producers have earned a number of Numix Award nominations for best website and Gemini Award nominations for productions such as the *Ruby* magazine and the children’s series *Mon Premier Emploi* and *Motel Monstre*.

The APFC is a leading organization in the Canadian Francophonie; it has formed significant partnerships with cultural agencies and institutions such as Telefilm Canada, the Canada Media Fund (CMF), the NFB and the CRTC. It has developed special relationships with all public and private television broadcasters.

Through its interventions and its close ties with these stakeholders, the APFC has achieved many goals, most notably the establishment of the CMF’s Francophone Minority Program: Production. This special initiative has proven its worth in a number of respects. In addition to ensuring a more equitable distribution of funding for Canadian productions, it is bringing the reality of 1 million minority francophones to the screen. In so doing, it is contributing to the Canadian broadcasting system’s capacity to fulfil its public policy objectives.
1. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

A cultural system that supports creators and respects individual choices is a system that reflects the diversity of citizens and recognizes the talent and expertise of creative people across the country. A healthy cultural system is one that supports the production of original works and the training of artisans, so that creators can evolve and remain at the cutting edge of their art and their craft.

Innovation means taking risks, which requires a strong commitment to invest in our creative potential. You have to be bold to position yourself as a leader on the global scene. As Minister Joly told the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in August 2016, [translation] “We have a leadership role to play on the international scene, but that is rooted in the fact that we want to be sure to support our communities, to support our artists, to support our artisans.”

Then we have to promote that Canadian talent and provide exposure for it both at home and abroad. The profound transformations caused by the emergence of digital culture are opportunities to be seized inasmuch as our cultural products are valued and benefit equitably from market development initiatives. We need to stimulate, encourage and feed the creativity that we know is of international calibre and worthy of recognition, creativity that we have in abundance in all of its diversity (francophones, anglophones and Indigenous people), diversity that brings us together and contributes to the country’s prosperity and cultural and economic potential. We need to believe in our identity and nurture our image to make it distinct, and that is up to all of us: business owners, individuals and governments all have a role to play in defining and developing who we are. Franco-Canadian culture is inseparable from the uniqueness of Canada. It is part of our history; it evolved in every part of Canada, and it is helping to build a bilingual, multicultural country. We have been working on this for a very long time, and we continue to put time and energy into it, because we believe in it.

The French-language television, film and digital content industry contributes to that richness by offering Canadian content to Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities, and by promoting our culture nationally and internationally. Consequently, a high-calibre francophone production industry needs to be properly funded if it is to compete on the Quebec market and in the international arena. All it takes is having equitable access to opportunities and markets. We need to develop and support our creators, our producers and the next generation, who are a source of renewal in the arts, culture and cultural industries sector and form the basis of a thriving creative economy.
The convergence of new investment in arts and culture, the review of cultural policy and the development of the new plan for official languages should help stimulate growth in the sector. We need to make up for lost time and upgrade our skills and knowledge so that our talent and entrepreneurs can keep up with the changes in the sector.

To have a concrete impact on the development of our sector, Canada should alter and modernize the governmental mechanisms and levers to ensure that the effects of this new infusion in the culture sector are felt in all FMCs and reach the francophone creators and cultural entrepreneurs who enliven them. This transformation affects not only the agencies, institutions and government departments that support the industry and artistic creativity but also those concerned with diplomacy, the economy, innovation and heritage.

Respect for differences and the opportunity for every person to develop herself or himself through policies that recognize the value of the francophone, anglophone and Indigenous cultures are characteristics for which Canada is known around the world. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2001 promotes the principle that cultural diversity “is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.”

Canada’s new plan for official languages should reflect this principle and help the OLMCs develop to their full potential so that they can contribute to the growth of their region and the country as a whole.

In addition to the money earmarked for the government’s new plan for official languages, several federal arts and culture support agencies (the Canada Council, the NFB, Telefilm Canada and the CBC) received significant increases in their parliamentary appropriations in the last federal budget. It is paramount that those agencies make clear, concrete commitments to foster the development and growth of arts and culture in Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities.

This is why it is so important for the sector to be well represented. The APFC’s role in pursuing this goal is to stay abreast of new trends, help producers obtain access to decision-makers and industry leaders, develop partnerships that make use of each partner’s strengths, get the industry to work in concert, and provide the necessary support so that the industry can
develop to its full potential and compete on every market open to it. The APFC serves as the main contact with industry stakeholders and participants with the aim of facilitating genuine horizontal coordination between the various federal agencies that fund Canadian content production and work to support the media production industry in minority communities.

2. CANADIAN CONTENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The media productions of francophone minority communities (FMCs) are an important part of the Canadian cultural landscape and should be reflected in the digital culture that is currently developing in Canada and internationally.

Over the past 15 years, digital technologies have become more prominent in the media production sector. The emergence of new technologies in recent years has resulted in profound changes in today’s consumer habits and cultural practices. It is now impossible to ignore the digital environment in which we live, as it is having far-reaching effects, some of them positive, others negative, on every segment of the cultural creation, production, distribution, promotion and consumption chain.

The FMCs’ creators and cultural enterprises need special digital infrastructure provisions to ensure that they are properly represented within it and to enable them to pool resources and share in exchanges and opportunities to learn from various communities of knowledge and practice. We have to make it easier for francophone minority independent producers to acquire skills they need to design and develop content in such a way that it can be deployed on the new broadcast platforms.

While access to high-quality Canadian content is central to the discussion on the future of digital, we have to develop business models that effectively showcase the works of our producers and creators. Minority francophone media production should be part of the government’s innovation strategy horizontally across all departments concerned.

In this age of media convergence and the radical transformation of viewing habits, particularly among young people, the digital content sector is becoming the way of the future for television. Hence, the presence of French in general and francophone communities in particular in the multi-platform universe is a critical development issue. Despite the proliferation of opportunities provided by the Internet for reaching new audiences and despite producers’ steady incursion into digital content production, Internet broadcasting, in both French and English, remains unprofitable and has to depend on public funding. At the moment,
it is impossible to assemble all of the funds required for the digital deployment of television productions. Provincial and federal funding programs need to be adjusted to support that innovation. The APFC intends to watch closely to make sure that its members receive the proper support so that they can participate fully in the migration to new broadcast platforms. It will also work on putting in place collective initiatives to broadcast and promote Franco-Canadian production on the Web.

**Production funding and regulation of industry participants**

Access to the publicly owned airwaves is a privilege in exchange for which there is an obligation to return to the community a tiny portion of the revenue, which can be quite substantial, generated by those who use the airwaves. That is the principle on which the laws and regulations governing Canada’s broadcasting system are based. However, that system is currently going through a difficult period marked by a highly globalized digital environment in which very large multinational corporations, most of which are anglophone and foreign-owned, control large swaths of digital content production and distribution. This situation has shifted the balance dramatically in the very delicate Canadian digital production market. With foreign corporate giants taking up more and more space in Canada’s digital universe, it is becoming imperative for the Canadian government to deploy the necessary tools (taxes and regulations) to ensure that those major players contribute to the vitality of our cultural industries so that they remain competitive and relevant.

This imbalance is especially troubling for the Canadian Francophonie, for which access to screens, of whatever size, has always been a challenge, a struggle and, at the same time, a fundamental prerequisite for its existence and evolution. Notwithstanding the quality of the productions and their ratings breakthroughs, a ratings-based market approach alone cannot ensure the survival of production in minority communities.

Canada’s cultural policy has always rested on four main pillars, which should also guide government action in the digital universe:

- the rules on Canadian ownership in the broadcasting and print media industries;
- Canadian content quotas;
- broadcasters’ contribution to Canadian production through public and private funding;
- copyright holders’ right to fair compensation.
Like many other organizations in the arts and culture sector, including the Canadian Arts Coalition and the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF), the APFC is asking the Canadian government to introduce sound regulations that will uphold these principles in the digital universe.

With the majority of our national broadcasters renewing their licences over the next few years, the APFC will provide a voice for francophone regional producers regarding the FMCs’ concerns, rights and aspirations with respect to Canada’s broadcasting policies, particularly in the media production sector, at CRTC hearings.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

With Canadian content funding models shifting away from traditional broadcasting, in order to survive, we have to reinvent the way in which we approach the corporate players in the digital chain to secure private-sector funding.

- A mandatory culture royalty charged to Internet service providers (ISPs) and over-the-top services that would help fund national digital production
- Modernize the *Copyright Act* to provide fair compensation for artists, creators and all stakeholders in the creation, production and distribution chain
- A percentage of Advanced Wireless Services spectrum auction sales to fund Canadian content production
- A “culture” tax on all devices used to read digital content, similar to the royalty charged on blank analogue media (including audio cassettes)

**Skills development and support requirements of creators and producers for digital transformation**

The digital transformation is now an integral part of the professional activities of Canadian artists and culture workers. However, many arts professionals are reporting new problems caused by the advent of those technologies (Source: Guy Bellavance and Guillaume Sirois, *Chantier sur l’adaptation des droits d’auteur à l’ère numérique. État des lieux du secteur Arts de la scène et muséologie*, Montréal, Institut national de la recherche scientifique – Centre Urbanisation Culture Société). Of particular note are the following:
• the difficulty of tracking very rapid technological developments;
• the need for training in order to be able to exploit the opportunities created by digital technologies;
• the high cost of purchasing, maintaining and replacing technological equipment.

Back in 2011, the Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC) noted the need to enhance digital skills in the cultural industries (Source: Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC), Culture 3.0: Impact of Emerging Digital Technologies on the Cultural Sector in Canada, Ottawa, CHRC).

Beyond the development of specialized skills, capacity-building is needed so that cultural enterprises and organizations can not only make the transition to digital but also participate fully in the emergence of digital culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We envisage a future in which innovation and creativity are explored in innovation labs across the country. Those centres would marshal the arts, cultural industries and technology sectors to push back the boundaries of the possible by sharing their knowledge and expertise so as to create original content and new business models and discover new value chains for Canadians, creators and producers.

In addition to this know-how sharing and skills development initiative, there would be measures to help the sector acquire the tools needed to adjust to and address the digital transformations.

• A support program for the acquisition and maintenance of technical equipment
• A reverse mentorship program: technology-savvy young creators coach seasoned creators
• An incubator and accelerator program for the development of digital content
• A research fund to support analyses of the state of the industry, studies of market forces and assessments of intervention strategies

Broadband access for the whole country is a prerequisite for all Canadians being able to participate in digital culture
On December 21, 2016, CRTC Chairperson and CEO Jean-Pierre Blais made the following statement: “Access to broadband Internet service is vital and a basic telecommunication service all Canadians are entitled to receive.” This statement coincided with the creation of a $750 million fund to provide Internet service to underserved regions. The APFC is pleased with this development, and we encourage the government to make sure that Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities are not ignored in the expansion of this infrastructure, which is so critical to the communities’ future.

There are francophone/Acadian communities in every province and territory of Canada. Very large numbers of francophone minority communities are located in rural areas far from major centres. Unfortunately, high-speed Internet access, which is necessary for the consumption of many cultural products and for citizens to exercise their democratic rights, is unavailable in many of those areas or available only at exorbitant cost.

As in the case of cable or satellite television, the APFC would like all Canadians to have access now to affordable unlimited Internet service without data caps, no matter where they live. The works of our francophone creators and producers must be able to reach a wide audience in every part of Canada.

The need to work on the discoverability of the cultural content of francophone minority communities in the digital environment

There are now a very large number of platforms on which producers can exhibit their digital content. In this sea of highly varied content, the main concern is to stand out so that the content will reach potentially interested audiences.

In general, media production industry representatives are not in favour of creating new platforms for the distribution of particular content, since it seems pointless to try to compete with digital industry giants.

So, as suggested at the Discoverability Summit, jointly organized by the CRTC and the NFB, the challenge today is to showcase our content in an age of content overload. The Canadian government could contribute to this effort by supporting initiatives to promote the digital content of francophone minority communities.
The cultural industries should be part of the government’s innovation strategy horizontally across all departments concerned, and their initiatives must be complementary.

- A targeted promotion initiative to showcase francophone and Acadian arts and culture content on selected broadcast platforms in Canada and abroad
- In conjunction with certain content aggregators, develop francophone/Acadian content channels or lists (modelled on the Espace francophonie on ONF.ca)
- A working group on digital content production and promotion, with representatives from the APFC, the NFB, Canadian Heritage, Radio-Canada and Telefilm Canada
- Strategies to promote regional productions more effectively on television broadcasters’ websites

3. EXPORTING AND BRANDING

The arts and culture of the Canadian Francophonie are an essential component of the Canadian identity. Accordingly, they should form an integral part of Canada’s diplomatic efforts on the international scene.

The investment goals should reflect the realities and needs of the Canadian arts community.

The objectives of the old Prom'Art program were very responsive to the realities and needs of Canada’s arts groups. For example, two of the objectives were as follows:

- “improve professional opportunities abroad for Canadian artists and open new markets for Canadian cultural products”;
- “demonstrate at home and abroad that a distinct and vigorous identity has placed Canada firmly in the mainstream of international artistic excellence.”

Supported initiatives should serve both Canada’s foreign policy objectives and the objectives of Canada’s arts and culture industries. Investments should promote the Canadian identity in all its diversity and develop new markets so as to generate employment for our artists and economic growth for our cultural enterprises.
Positioning media production on the international scene is a long-term process that requires a significant investment of time. International relations and foreign market development are not just a matter of exhibiting completed works. They are also achieved through the deployment of initiatives that foster production partnerships, residencies, and exchanges between creators and content producers, all of which entails networking efforts.

Making art in minority communities involves specific realities that have to be taken into account. Those realities include the following:

- Regional creators have a huge disadvantage due to Canada’s centralized decision-making bodies. Opportunities for meetings between producers, presenters, distributors and funding providers are essential for building trust.

- The fact that francophone creators and producers are scattered over very large areas makes it difficult to reach local and national markets. However, as noted in the Canada Council report on the Market Access Strategy for Official Language Minority Artists, market development is usually a step-by-step process, and work on the national market often serves as a springboard for reaching international markets.

- The lack of representation entities (agents, distributors and so on) prevents francophone creators and producers from being properly represented on the national market and, by extension, on the international market.

- The public funding process is very competitive, and most of the time, it fails to take account of the specific realities of making art in minority communities (including the special challenges of exhibiting works in a minority context).

- Export markets are often seen as the third priority, the Canadian francophone market and the Quebec market being the first two. As a result, the financial and material resources and efforts that our cultural industries can put into exports are limited.

We are all convinced of the importance of providing visibility for our works in other countries in order to create a rewarding cultural exchange and give new impetus to our artists and artisans. The international Francophonie by itself provides many market development opportunities. However, not all works of art are necessarily exportable. The fact that they are designed for local audiences does not mean they deserve less respect and appreciation. Our primary client base is still the francophone minority communities, but we also want to build bridges with the rest of Canada, interest francophone Quebecers in our culture, and offer our content to francophiles and the “franco-curious” across the country.
In our view, Canada’s cultural system does not have to be a carbon copy of the system of our southern neighbours. The American industry is based on large conglomerates, whose main raison d’être is to make a profit. Canadians have always distanced themselves from that purely commercial model by encouraging excellence and creativity in the development of original, non-standard, outside-the-box content. This “pro-creative” approach has paid off handsomely and helped Canada carve out a prominent place for itself in the world. A Canadian cultural policy that recognizes that fundamental difference between our systems and values originality over profitability at all costs will give us a distinct, relevant voice at the global level.

By coordinating the various funding initiatives so that they are complementary and together capable of supporting all the activities required to develop new markets, we will preserve relevant cultural industries that are capable of reaching all types of audiences. We need to make room in our ecosystem for all kinds of original content. The multiplicity of Canadian voices that can express themselves through creativity makes Canada a richer place. We need to recognize the uniqueness of the Canadian people and celebrate their values.

**Initiatives to promote Canadian culture should reflect the diversity of francophone voices in Canada.**

The importance of promoting the art works of both official language communities in Canada must be clearly indicated in the objectives of initiatives to promote Canadian culture on the international scene.

Canada’s reality is that a very large portion of francophone art comes from just one province (Quebec). As a result, the automatic response by institutions is often to favour content and art works from Quebec (which are often better known and recognized by juries and program managers). However, if we want to properly reflect the reality of national art production, promotion initiatives must include francophone and Acadian art from every province and territory of Canada.

In the past, Prom’Art occasionally made room for that art, particularly in the following years: in 2005-2006, 31 projects received a total of $373,125, and in 2006-2007, 24 projects received a total of $255,900. The APFC urges the Canadian government to pursue those efforts to promote Franco-Canadian culture on the international scene.
The investments should strengthen professional support structures for international market development.

The digital revolution has disrupted our cultural industries and the traditional economic chain. For the OLMCs, on the other hand, the revolution has also brought about new opportunities, in particular by democratizing the means of production. Today, the OLMCs’ cultural products easily measure up to the best in the world.

However, success on international markets is not exclusively due to product quality. It also depends on marketing. Over the last few years, the OLMCs have seen the emergence of a number of new content producers, but they have not all evolved at the same pace. Professional support seems to be essential for international market development. While the international popularity of Canadian artists who are already well-known abroad certainly needs to be cultivated, the investments also need to help young creators take their first steps on the international scene. In our view, the Canadian government’s new investments should focus on their contribution and provide greater support for their development efforts.

The fact that the core market in the OLMCs is so small limits the exhibition platforms available to independent producers. Exports seem to be a necessity to make their production activities profitable. However, when it comes to international market development for the cultural industries, the OLMCs are trapped, in a way, between Quebec, which jealously guards its brand image, especially on francophone international markets, and Canadian initiatives, which do not automatically include the OLMCs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The investments should include incentives for co-production with Quebec and with members of the international Francophonie.
- The funding should allow the honing of the francophone/Acadian communities’ brand image on developed markets and the exploration of new markets.
- The funding should cover solicitation, networking, collective promotion and professionalization (in exporting) as well as the development and upgrading of digital promotional materials by, for example, encouraging producers to attend national and international film and television events on a regular basis (Banff, MIPTV, the TV Festival de Cannes, Hot Docs in Toronto, Sunny Side of the Doc in La Rochelle).
• The funding should make it possible to prepare (train) creators and producers more thoroughly for export conditions.

• Mission services should act as intermediaries, identifying potential partners and helping to arrange meetings for the priority markets selected by the sector.

• The investments should be made through strategic partners that have expertise in managing international market development initiatives, such as Telefilm Canada and the CMF.

• The initiatives carried out by all federal agencies should be coordinated so as to complement one another for the greatest impact.

4. ENERGIZING THE INDUSTRY AND OUR COMMUNITIES

In a universe where the principal conveyors of culture and information – television, film, digital media and the Internet – shape our view of the world, the television, film and digital production sector has become a tool that is vital to the development of francophone minority communities. Thanks to the talent of a dynamic community of producers, filmmakers, screenwriters and artisans in various parts of the country, their voices, images and creativity are making a growing contribution to the richness and diversity of Canadian content.

The vitality of our communities depends on having a dynamic, growing media production sector that can carve out a prominent place for itself on the national and international scene. Legislation (the Broadcasting Act and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act), incentive programs (film and television production tax credit) and key institutions such as the NFB, Radio-Canada, the Canada Council, Telefilm Canada and the CMF are the product of policies and programs that safeguard and promote the creation of Canadian content reflecting Canada’s linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity. Together, they form a solid foundation on which we can build to encourage the production, commercialization and promotion of Canadian cultural content on the national and international levels. With these mechanisms in place, we now have to tailor them to meet the needs of a fast-evolving sector and expand their influence by improving access to them so that everyone can benefit from the growth opportunities in their communities.
Federal agencies should make clear, concrete commitments to back the efforts of the Official Languages Support Programs.

We are familiar with the success of tailor-made initiatives to address the specific challenges of minority community production. Among the most significant measures of the Interdepartmental Partnership with the Official-Language Communities (IPOLC) were the following highly successful initiatives: the establishment of a special development envelope at Telefilm Canada; the annual embedding of producers with television broadcasters in Montréal to diversify exhibition platforms; and one-time producing, screenwriting and directing training events. These success stories are examples of what Telefilm Canada, the NFB and Radio-Canada can accomplish when the resources available to them are commensurate with their obligations under the Official Languages Act (OLA).

We respect the independence and autonomy of the management of the agencies that make up the Canadian Heritage portfolio, but we believe that the government can develop mechanisms to help the agencies carry out their responsibilities more effectively, particularly with regard to Part VII of the OLA.

The convergence of new investments in the arts and culture sector, the review of Canada’s cultural policy and the development of the new plan for official languages presents an ideal scenario for building the sector’s capacity to remain competitive and relevant, especially in the international and digital arenas. We believe that the expertise developed by Canada’s cultural agencies must be put to good use, and our entrepreneurs and creators expect nothing less: to be able to take advantage of Canada’s know-how and international reputation.

Maintain a pool of artists, artisans and production staff in every region of Canada

For our communities to benefit from genuine cultural vitality, arts and culture stakeholders must be proficient in certain skills and keep learning and refreshing their skills throughout their careers. A number of factors combine to make this a particularly delicate issue in the FMCs.

Travel distance limits access to specialized arts and culture courses given in French. Being part of a linguistic minority accentuates the isolation of creators and artisans from specialized courses and contributes to assimilation. This situation results in formidable challenges in recruiting, retaining and developing human capital, and in promoting this career choice.
To maintain their current production operations, develop new production lines, such as feature films or fiction series, or migrate to digital platforms, francophone producers in minority communities face the recurring challenge of putting together teams that have all the qualifications to meet their projects’ administrative, technical and creative requirements at the pre-development, development, production and post-production stages. Access to a sufficiently large pool of trained, qualified francophone human resources in the regions is a critical issue for the future of the media industry in the francophone and Acadian communities.

Continuing education has become an essential part of any career path, particularly in a rapidly changing environment such as media production. Investing in training makes cultural enterprises more effective and more innovative. Training programs are essential to succession planning in Canada’s francophone cultural enterprises in order to keep them strong and agile. “New technologies and globalization both represent tremendous opportunities for employment in cultural occupations. However, without adequate financial support to upgrade skills and/or leverage these opportunities, these same factors represent additional obstacles for the culture sector to overcome in order to succeed.” (Source: CHRC, Labour Market Information Report for Canada’s Cultural Sector, March 2010)

RECOMMENDATIONS

To keep Canada competitive and relevant in the international and digital arenas, the government’s new plan for official languages should support professional development in the culture sector.

- Introduce a framework to allow better coordination between the various agencies that support creation and production and thus foster alignment between programs
- Support professional development in the sector through the transmission of know-how and expertise developed in Canada
- Create a new component (or allocate money, e.g., 3.5%) in the Canada Arts Training Fund (CATF) to support francophone initiatives
- Create a training program in partnership with regions of Quebec that have similar realities
- Introduce a mentoring program for young leaders
- Establish an on-the-job training program to help production teams upgrade their skills

Training courses for theatre artists at the Banff Centre, an initiative of the Association des théâtres francophones du Canada (ATFC), are an example of programs that meet the needs
of official language minority communities. This is a collaborative venture between the Banff Centre and the National Theatre School of Canada (both recipients of CATF funding) and the ATFC. The workshops have been going successfully since 2011, with 15 to 20 students receiving theatre training each year.

**The APFC’s role as a catalyst in the media industry**

Since the APFC was established in 1999, its interactions with government and industry decision-making bodies and its partnerships with institutions such as Telefilm Canada, the NFB, Radio-Canada and the CMF have fostered remarkable growth. With cooperation and support from many stakeholders, concerted efforts in the areas of policy, representation, distribution, training and market development have produced meaningful results. The APFC serves as a strong link between its 20 member companies by providing them with a national forum for meetings, discussions and coordination on the major issues of funding, distribution, promotion and training.

Since money is the name of the game, the 2004 decision to allocate 10% of the CMF’s francophone envelope to French-language production in minority communities is the most meaningful accomplishment. This special initiative, known as the Francophone Minority Program (FMP), is now specifically mentioned in the contribution agreement between Canadian Heritage and the CMF. It is worth noting that this percentage is not a ceiling but rather a lower limit, since projects by producers in minority communities may also receive funding from the Broadcaster Performance Envelope (BPE).

In 2015, the proportion of the CMF’s francophone envelope earmarked for francophones in minority communities was 12%. The increase is due in part to an upswing in the number of high-quality projects submitted and to the emergence of a new player in the television landscape, the Unis TV network. The APFC is extremely pleased with Unis TV’s commitment to make original Canadian programming 85% of its total programming. We cannot ignore the substantial impact that the activation of a large number of licences has had on the strength of the media production industry in the regions. Since Unis TV went on the air, 11 new production companies have opened their doors outside Quebec, and 30% of the original productions it has ordered have been sold on the international market. This was a $5.6 million investment by the CMF in 2015. It was a great success, and it promises more, but it also comes with a challenge: the competition for the available funds in the FMP.

This breakthrough by minority-community independent producers in a universe previously dominated by the main francophone production centre (Montréal) is no accident. It
is the fruit of the APFC’s efforts and the support of public institutions such as the Department of Canadian Heritage, which is responsible for coordinating the implementation of sections 41 and 42 of the Official Languages Act. In this regard, a few initiatives targeting production in minority communities have been, and still are, crucial in its evolution.

Under the auspices of the Interdepartmental Relations and Accountability Directorate, Official Languages Support Programs, Department of Canadian Heritage, the Working Group on Media Arts (WGMA) holds an annual meeting of all public institutions involved in production and broadcasting. With cooperation and support from many stakeholders around concerted efforts in the areas of policy, representation, training and market development, the WGMA is a particularly effective mechanism for including communities in policy and program development.

Needless to say, such achievements must be consolidated and maintained so that the industry can continue developing in a minority language context, where it plays an essential role in enhancing the vitality of our communities. To that end, the APFC needs stable multi-year financial support from Canadian Heritage. Such funding would help reinforce the APFC’s organizational structure and provide the human resources it requires to carry out its mandate. It would also improve coordination in the industry and foster cooperation between stakeholders, which will make the industry more prolific, more efficient and more effective. At the moment, despite the evidence of its impact on the development of our communities, the media production sector is the only cultural industry that receives no base funding from the Official Languages Support Programs.

The media production sector is in a precarious situation, as its future will be affected by certain changes in the CMF, a decrease in the Broadcaster Performance Envelopes and in broadcasters’ advertising revenues, the termination of the Local Programming Improvement Fund (LPIF), and the transformations due to globalization of the digital environment. The funding crisis in the industry is affecting all producers, especially those in minority communities. More than ever, the Canadian Francophonie needs a strong, energetic APFC that is able to defend the interests of producers, creators, artisans and the next generation, as well as the interests of content consumers who live in the FMCs.

The APFC is present at all of the discussion tables, and because of its professionalism, its expertise and the commitment of its members, it is an indispensable contact for the industry, the government and groups representing francophone communities. It contributes to the development of the media production sector in the FMCs, and that sector in turn contributes to the development of the FMCs themselves by attracting a pool of creators and enabling resident creators to thrive and remain there.
While media producers help to keep artisans, artists and creators in their respective home communities, they also have a mission to give their communities a voice, provide them with a mirror in which they can see themselves, and afford them opportunities to express their view of Canada and the world.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Increase the Francophone Minority Program’s (FMP’s) lower limit to 15% of the CMF’s francophone envelope
- Provide the APFC with stable, multi-year base funding from the Official Languages Support Programs
- Distribute regional productions to French-language and immersion schools and public libraries
- Add an enforcement provision to the OLA requiring all departments and agencies covered by the Act to develop performance measures under Part VII in their action plans for official languages, in consultation with the OLMCs.
CONCLUSION

The APFC hopes that in addition to serving as a forum for discussions on the development of a new multi-year action plan for official languages for Canada, the consultations will provide an opportunity to take a new look at the essential role that the francophone media production industry plays in enhancing the vitality of francophone minority communities. Francophone independent producers have a deep attachment to their communities and are well-placed to tell stories that are important to Canadians. They are also well-placed to tell those stories to the entire world.

The Canada-wide consultations undertaken by the government in the last 12 months raise many questions to which the industry is also looking for answers. The APFC wants to work closely with the government to find answers, and we encourage the government to continue the conversation with the representatives of francophone minority communities. We hope that this dialogue will continue in a cooperative manner with our federal partners so that the needs and goals of the arts, culture and cultural industries sector can be heard throughout the process of developing the new action plan for official languages. We believe that our development objectives can be achieved by leveraging governmental mechanisms and policies to help the francophone independent production industry in minority communities to develop and prosper in Canadian society.