



CANADA'S WORLD-CLASS BROADCASTING SYSTEM

The Government's Second response to *Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting*

Canada's broadcasting system is a public space where Canadians connect to one another and the world to share their values and common cultural experience. As such, Canadian broadcasting represents a powerful tool for reinforcing Canadian cultural identity and sovereignty.

The Government of Canada is committed to maintaining Canadian broadcasting as a world-class system that is effectively owned and controlled by Canadians and serves their needs first and foremost.

Goal: Canadian broadcasting must further Canadian interests by supporting their sense of belonging to Canada.

To ensure the Canadian broadcasting system continues to thrive and contribute to Canadian cultural identity in the years ahead, the Government will focus its ongoing efforts in three priority areas: Content; Governance & Accountability; and Looking to the Future.

Content

Canadians are best served by a broadcasting system that offers an ample supply of high-quality, distinctively Canadian content that enlightens, entertains and informs citizens. To achieve this, the Government will actively encourage the development of compelling programming – particularly drama, children's and cultural programming and documentaries – that reflects the Canadian experience and reaches out to large numbers of Canadians. The Government will also take action to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to news and public affairs programming that reflects a diversity of perspectives and voices.

Goal: Canadian broadcasting must encourage the creation of excellent and compelling Canadian content.

✓ To fulfill its role, CBC/Radio-Canada should reach out to as many Canadians as possible with programming that reflects its distinctive public service mandate. To assist, the Government has provided an additional \$60 million for 2005-06 and will set aside an envelope within the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) for the public broadcaster. The Government will also ask CBC/Radio-Canada's Board of Directors to deliver a strategic plan by September 2005 on the provision of its English and French television services.

Goal: Canada's public broadcaster must deliver high-impact content that appeals to Canadians, but does not seek audiences at all costs.

✓ In the wake of globalization, media convergence and consolidation, a key challenge is ensuring Canadians continue to have access to a diversity of voices at the local and regional level. As Canadians have clearly indicated this is important to them, the Government will direct the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to increase its efforts to ensure that Canadians in communities of various sizes have access to local and regional news and public affairs programming from a variety of sources.

Goal: Canadian broadcasting must ensure a diversity of voices in Canadian communities.

Governance & Accountability

Canadians are already well-served by a broadcasting system that features tools that encourage and support the creation of high-quality, compelling Canadian content. The Government recognizes, however, that there is room to improve the degree of synergy and complementarity among the various players. To achieve this, the Government will work through its policy instruments – including the CRTC, CBC/Radio-Canada, Telefilm Canada, the CTF, the National Film Board (NFB), the Canadian Film or Video Tax Credit (CPTC), Canadian Audio-visual Certification Office (CAVCO) – to increase efficiency, simplify procedures and reduce administrative burden on Canadian creators, producers and broadcasters.

Goal: Canadian content funding must be used by creators to create, not to navigate a complex maze of funding sources.

- ✓ The Government remains confident that the CRTC has successfully helped the broadcasting system achieve its objectives. However, in an era of constant change and emerging new challenges, the CRTC should continuously and systematically review its regulatory policies and regulations to determine if they are achieving their stated objectives and indeed whether those objectives remain valid over time. In this regard, the Government will ask the CRTC to prepare annual reports concerning the steps it has taken to streamline its rules, regulations and decision making processes. This is consistent with the Government's overall smart regulation agenda. Furthermore, the Government will explore whether monetary penalties should be added to the CRTC's toolkit for ensuring compliance with broadcasting regulations.
- ✓ The strength of the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) is critically important to the overall health of Canadian broadcasting. The Government acknowledges recent improvements to both the governance and administration of the CTF and is currently working with stakeholders on further improvements which are expected by June 2005.
- ✓ Recognizing that Telefilm Canada is best-positioned to continue building Canada's audio-visual capacity, the Government has tabled legislation to provide it with the authorities to continue its work. In the near future, the Government will make changes to further modernize Telefilm's legislation.

Looking to the Future

Canadians will continue to be well-served if their broadcast system is equipped to respond to the exciting opportunities and significant challenges of ever-changing communications technologies. To ensure this, the Government will continue to work closely with regulators and the industry to identify and remove impediments to digital transition in the radio, television and new media arenas.

- ✓ Recognizing that CBC/Radio-Canada can play a leadership role in the transition to digital television, the Government is inviting the Corporation to submit a fully-costed digital transition plan.
- ✓ The Government is expecting the CRTC to actively encourage other broadcasters, especially Canada's private conventional broadcasters, to accelerate their transition to digital.
- ✓ The Government has adopted a strategic approach to preserving Canada's audio-visual resources to ensure the best materials are preserved and made accessible to all Canadians. The Department of Canadian Heritage's Canadian Culture Online Program, for example, has already invested about \$59 million in the digitization and online presentation of Canadian cultural collections.
- ✓ To ensure Canada's cultural policy instruments remain appropriate, the Government will proactively undertake several initiatives to assess rapidly evolving trends in technology and evaluate their impact on existing regulatory and policy models.

Goal: Canadians must continue to be served by a world-class digital broadcasting system that reflects Canadian values, ingenuity and creativity.

Conclusion

We are at a critical juncture in Canadian broadcasting – an exciting new era in communications and culture as a whole. High-speed, broadband, video streaming and virtual reality have become part of our everyday lives. Even in the two years since the Heritage Committee delivered its recommendations for Canadian broadcasting, the very notion of "content" has continued to evolve with each new technological advancement.

Clearly, we cannot afford to sit by and watch passively. We must embrace new ways of doing things – new ways to push the boundaries of our past achievements. In this response, we are laying the groundwork for doing just that. We are looking to the horizon and charting a new digital space where Canadian creators, producers, journalists, actors and distributors can continue to deliver their finest efforts to Canadians and the world. After all, for Canadians, broadcasting has always been about much more than radio and television signals. It reflects who we are and how we want to connect to one another and to the world.