



**Banff World Media Festival: The Next Evolution
2018 Pre-Budget Submission
To the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance**

August 4, 2017

Executive Summary

The Banff World Media Festival (BANFF) appreciates the opportunity to take part in the consultations for Budget 2018. We believe our ideas can help accelerate the production of Canada's highly valued and world renowned media industry at home and in the fast-expanding global export market.

For 38 years, BANFF has been Canada's largest and most important international marketplace for the content industry. Taking place in the heart of majestic Banff, Alberta, the event welcomes 1500+ delegates from 25 countries including leading figures in the entertainment industry.

The not-for-profit flagship event is considered to be a lifeline for the Canadian independent production community and the production service companies that support the creation of new content projects. These businesses come to BANFF to gain exposure and access crucial sales and networking opportunities with international content buyers, creators, and producers.

Building on the great success of these annual conferences, BANFF is developing its expanded vision as a year-round undertaking. This 365-day-a-year operation will greatly expand and extend our promotional activities, our global reach and our dynamic networking opportunities for Canadian producers and digital media professionals.

Our goals are in line with and support the federal government's drive to strengthen and accelerate Canadian cultural and media development and become more competitive in the potentially huge export market for Canada's creative industries. We hope to work in collaboration with the federal government as we continue to develop programs and initiatives that will give BANFF even more opportunity to contribute to these goals.

Following up on the questions specified for this consultation, our recommendations are as follows:

Question: What federal measures would help **Canadians** to be more productive?

Recommendation #1: "Diversity of Voices."

The federal government should earmark funds aimed specifically at supporting its cultural diversity goal, which would enable BANFF to develop its "Diversity of Voices Action Plan." This new program would enable more Indigenous, Francophone and female creators to participate in the annual Festival and take advantage of enhanced opportunities to tell their stories and gain markets globally. Cost: \$418,500 a year.

Recommendation #2: “The Next Ones: Creators Showcase.”

Provide funding support for a new BANFF initiative called the “The Next Ones: Creators Showcase.” BANFF is establishing an internationally-attuned program that will allow the finest young Canadian creative talent to be profiled alongside other promising young creators from around the globe and improve access and opportunities for up-and-coming Canadian creators to achieve international success more efficiently. Cost: \$400,000 a year.

Question: What federal measures would help **Canadian businesses** to be more productive and competitive?

Recommendation #3: Make more funding available through cultural funding bodies.

Doing so would help BANFF and others within our sector strengthen and expand Canada’s media content and production more effectively, particularly so that Canadian creators and producers could become more competitive in the fast-growing and crucial global market.

Recommendation #4: Identify effective strategies for expanding global interaction and reach

As the federal government puts the finishing touches on Showcasing Canada’s Cultural Industries to the World and other programs to spotlight Canadian artists and cultural industries, among other we recommend a renewed effort to identify and take advantage of existing initiatives, and attract the international content buyers and producers whose presence at the four-day event here in Canada provides unparalleled networking and global business opportunities for the Canadian artists and creators in attendance.

Looking Ahead at a Crucial Moment for the Canadian Media Industry

With the federal government engaged in a sweeping review of Canada’s cultural sector, the Canadian media industry and its creators stand at an historic crossroads.

Heritage Minister Joly, a regular BANFF participant, is committed to a major overhaul of Canada’s digital content regime and has underscored the importance the federal government places in Canada’s media sector as a source of innovation, middle-class jobs, exports and economic stimulus.

Canada’s broadcasting, media and cultural industries add \$48 billion a year to the economy and the single biggest challenge they face is not the quality of creative output but finding better ways to export the material on global platforms, Minister Joly has said.

With these crucial developments in mind, we believe the BANFF team’s experience and global reach puts us in a unique position to collaborate with the federal government in an effort to step up and broaden programs and initiatives that will move Canada’s creative output to a new, higher level. In particular, we can continue and expand our efforts to help Canadian television and digital media producers develop the connections, expertise and capabilities needed to greatly expand exports globally.

A Record of Success with Clear Economic and Cultural Benefits

BANFF has a proven record of success as a productive marketplace for making contacts, finding production partners and green-lighting new projects. Featuring in-depth spotlights on key international territories, pre-booked Face-to-Face Meetings with industry decision makers and unparalleled opportunities for networking with potential partners from across the globe, the annual BANFF program is designed to help content creators catalyze new development and production opportunities.

An independent study conducted by Nordicity after the 2015 conference found delegates advanced or sold \$1.7 billion worth of business deals. The value of the event is reinforced by 2017 data that shows 41 per cent of delegates believing BANFF is an “important” or “very important” factor in getting their projects funded. Similarly, 40 per cent of delegates believe the event is either “critical” or “very important” to their annual business development efforts and 51 per cent felt that the quality of networking opportunities was better at BANFF than other industry events. The conference also carries an exceptional 91 per cent recommendation rate.

In recent years, the importance of the global buying community has rapidly elevated due to consolidation and other long-term market forces. BANFF has responded by shifting its delegate mix and attracting 25 per cent of attendees from outside Canada. This has created a powerful infusion of opportunity and outside knowledge and context for the content producers who represent half of all delegates.

In addition to its annual four-day Festival, BANFF has evolved over the past six years to become a year-round endeavour. This includes the launch of two additional annual events in Toronto and Los Angeles, an online networking platform (BANFFxchange) as well as the highly respected Rockie Awards competition.

Of particular value, BANFF’s operations are now teamed with those of *Playback*, Canada’s leading production, broadcasting and interactive media information outlet. *Playback*’s community engagement platform provides year-round dialogue delving deeper into topics raised through BANFF, with issues-driven and creator-centric content overseen by respected industry journalists. This partnership leverages a highly engaged readership: 5,000 quarterly print subscribers, 10,000 daily newsletter readers and 200,000 page views per month.

Detailed Budget Recommendations:

Recommendation #1: New Diversity of Voices program

We believe that the provision of funds to support the federal government’s cultural diversity goals would be highly valuable. In our case, this would help in the establishment of our “Diversity of Voices Market Action Plan” to enable more Indigenous, Francophone and female creators to participate in the annual Festival and take advantage of enhanced opportunities to bring their artistic creations to market.

The program, at an estimated annual investment of \$418,500, includes complimentary attendance at Banff World Media Festival (100 delegate capacity) and comprehensive mentorship from established global industry leaders. Participation culminates in a market access program at BANFF with

customized opportunities for chosen Canadian content providers to pitch projects to domestic and international buyers.

As a means of profile-building for the Indigenous, Francophone and women delegates, their work will be showcased at special industry screenings at BANFF and there will be recognition of key successes through an industry awards program facilitated by *Playback* through the expansion of *Playback's* '5 to Watch' program recognizing up and coming creators.

Recommendation #2: Provide funding support for a new BANFF initiative called the “The Next Ones: Creator Showcase Program.”

BANFF is establishing an internationally-attuned program that will allow the finest young Canadian creative talent to be profiled alongside other promising young creators from around the globe and improve access and opportunities for up-and-coming Canadian creators to achieve international success more efficiently. Cost: \$400,000 a year.

BANFF will leverage global media partnerships in an open call for submissions for young content creators to apply for the program. Several dozen Canadians will be chosen. As part of their training and preparation, industry mentors will work with the successful Canadian applicants to help fine-tune the presentation of their portfolios for the showcase.

In addition to full access to the BANFF program, Canadian applicants will have special opportunities as part of the conference to showcase their portfolio and network with international producers among other international talent. We believe the mentoring, opportunity to build personal connections and exposure to the global marketing environment are highly important elements for Canadian content providers hoping to compete more efficiently outside Canada and establish a presence in the international market.

Recommendation#3: Increased funding for cultural funding bodies

We recommend making more funding available through the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm and other cultural funding bodies to help BANFF and others within our sector strengthen and expand Canada's media content and production more effectively, particularly so that Canadian creators and producers could become more competitive in the ever-expanding and crucial global market.

Backing from federal government-supported institutions has become more vital as the revenues that contributed to cultural funding have been affected by shifts in the media industry in recent years.

In the search for new sources of backing through Heritage Canada-supported institutions, BANFF has come up against criteria challenges which preclude organizations within the film and television industry from qualifying for funding. We believe it would be of immense value if the federal government would through Heritage Canada or other commit to directly funding this gap in support.

To continue to pursue the goals of developing a stronger and more internationally competitive Canadian media sector, organizations like BANFF need to be able to count on continued funding support from the



federal government. This may require the federal government to increase its base funding for cultural granting agencies.

Such support is vital, we believe, to the overall goal of enhancing the competitiveness and capability of Canadian media producers and enabling the sector to give this country's stories and artistic creations the greater presence they deserve on the world stage. From our perspective, such funding is instrumental in the support of the key elements of future global success: Networking opportunities and international connections, mentoring, the development of expertise needed to compete in the fast-changing content export market and the creation of uniquely Canadian stories.

Recommendation #4: Identify effective strategies for expanding global interaction and reach

As the federal government puts the finishing touches on Showcasing Canada's Cultural Industries to the World and other programs to spotlight Canadian artists and cultural industries, we recommend a renewed effort to identify and take advantage of existing initiatives that can provide dynamic, cost-efficient strategies for maximizing Canadians' global reach and engagement beyond our borders.

Additional support for BANFF, for instance, would provide a ready-made way to achieve these goals by leveraging the Festival's ability to attract the international content buyers and co-production partners whose presence at the four-day event here in Canada provides unparalleled networking and global business opportunities for the Canadian artists and creators in attendance.

In our case, BANFF also has the capacity to redouble the positive impact of this global cultural/business interaction through its affiliation with *Playback*, which can tap into an extensive, highly engaged Canadian and international audience through its print and online media outlets. With appropriate funding, the BANFF team could also amplify its contribution to the development of the export potential of Canadian content creators by editorializing their unique capabilities and success stories.

In closing, we would point out that the BANFF team very much appreciates the federal government's commitment to prioritizing cultural interests and upgrading support for the country's creative industries.

As BANFF's operations move toward a 24/7/365 day presence, we have an increasing capability to deliver our services and media products on various platforms with a multitude of audiences. And we hope that, with adequate funding support, we can use our established international brand presence, collaborative experience and communications capabilities to expand our contribution to the federal government's goals of stimulating innovation, middle-class jobs, cultural excellence, inclusive development and economy-boosting export competitiveness.

We hope this submission is helpful and we would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Commons Finance committee.

Sincerely,

Russell Goldstein, President & CEO