



Ensuring Canada's youth voices are reflected in public policy

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

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The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the federal government acknowledge in a meaningful manner the importance of supporting the creation, production and discoverability of Canadian content for children and youth – on all platforms. For example, through the creation of an Ombudsman for Youth with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the office could ensure that a percentage of media funding goes toward the children’s sector.

Recommendation 2

That the federal government ensure that a dedicated review and dedicated consideration of children’s programming is taken into account when funding strategies are being developed.

Recommendation 3

That the CRTC update and modernize research around children and youth programming and viewing habits.

Recommendation 4

That the federal government support and invest in online safety measures for children.

Introduction

On behalf of the Shaw Rocket Fund, I'm pleased to submit to the House of Commons Finance Committee's Budget 2020 process to ensure that Canada's youth are recognized and reflected in federal public policy.

Who we are

The Shaw Rocket Fund is an innovative and vital partner in driving the creation of robust world-leading children's content on all platforms. We are a unique proactive investor that supports Canadian-made media for children and youth across the globe while positively showcasing leadership on the world stage. We leverage our position in the Canadian and global media landscape to support content creators in delivering high quality Canadian children's programming globally while driving discoverability of the content we invest in so content creators are better able to reach kids at home and abroad – on the platforms where kids are.

Since its establishment 20 years ago, the Rocket Fund has evolved into a unique enterprise: a true equity fund within a not-for-profit framework, driving the production of high-quality diverse media through strategic investments with the goal of reinvesting returns to benefit the wider children's production industry. The Rocket Fund represents an innovation-based model of social enterprise. We support programming in both official languages, as well as Indigenous and various minority languages, on all platforms that air Canadian children's and youth programming.

Since 1999, we have invested more than \$217 million into 877 Canadian-made audio-visual and associated digital media programs for children, youth and families.

Gen Z setting stage for global media consumption: Ombudsman for Youth required to ensure children's media sector taken into consideration

Canadian children and youth, known as Gen Z (born 1996 to 2011) and Gen Alpha (born 2010 to 2025), make up 21% of Canada's population¹. The children's production community in Canada alone serves millions, but shockingly, children's and youth voices are rarely part of any formal proceedings when it comes to the sector.

Canadian children and youth have access to global programming on demand, making it more important than ever to ensure they have quality Canadian-made programming. In 2018 Gen Z was averaging only 14.2 hours/week of traditional linear television and teens less at 12.8 hours per week² compared to 2015, when children and teens ages 2 to 17 watched an average of 20.6 hours of television per week.

During a time where media consumption is at an all-time high, this demonstrates that young people are streaming content online and on demand. They are setting the stage for media consumption globally and expect a seamless media experience across all platforms.

¹Statistics Canada Population estimates on July 1st, 2017 www.150.statcan.gc.ca

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/234311/weekly-time-spent-watching-tv-in-canada-by-age-group>

Moreover, children are early adopters of new and emerging technologies: Having access to Canadian content and having it meaningfully discovered on their platforms of choice is most important, now more than ever. In 2005, only 6 per cent of Canadian children 9 to 10 years old had access to their own smartphone. Today over half of Canadian kids 10 to 13 have their own smartphone with 77 per cent of 14-15 year olds owning their own device.³ Consumption of video content on mobile devices continues to rise globally.

The Rocket Fund is dedicated to the ongoing sustainability of this special sector of the media industry. We believe we have a collective responsibility to ensure that Canadian children continue to experience Canadian stories – *their* stories – and that the creation of original Canadian children’s content is not lost during this time of incredible change within the Canadian broadcasting sector. Canadian kids’ content must become a priority.

As the only dedicated fund that supports audio-visual and digital content specifically for children, youth and families in Canada, and as a champion of high-quality Canadian children’s programming, the Rocket Fund maintains that the media consumption habits of young Canadians are a paramount consideration for federal public policy makers. We are helping creators navigate these disruptive times to support creation, production and discoverability of Canadian content. The role of technology, coupled with the viewing habits of children and youth, true early adopters of all things digital, is critical to advance a communications sector in today’s digital economy that speaks to all Canadians. The Rocket Fund is uniquely positioned to help advance such objectives through its role in the industry.

This is why we call on the federal government to acknowledge in a meaningful manner the importance of supporting the creation, production and discoverability of Canadian content for children and youth – on all platforms. For example, through the creation of an Ombudsman for Youth with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the office could ensure that a percentage of media funding goes toward the children’s sector. With that in mind, the office could also ensure that a dedicated review and dedicated consideration of children’s programming is taken into account when funding strategies are being developed.

Further, Rocket Fund last conducted a comprehensive survey on Canadian children and youth’s viewing habits in 2014. Updated and modernized research is required beyond what Rocket Fund on its own is able to provide. As digital platforms evolve and children’s viewing habits rapidly change with digital innovation, regular robust research is necessary to better understand children’s media habits as they are driving the future. We are of the opinion that the CRTC in its role as regulator should undertake to this research about Canadian children and youth programming and viewing habits. More and better data will help properly inform public policy.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the federal government acknowledge in a meaningful manner the importance of supporting the creation, production and discoverability of Canadian content for children and youth – on all

³ Digital Well-Being of Canadian Families, MediaSmarts, 2018

platforms. For example, through the creation of an Ombudsman for Youth with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the office could ensure that a percentage of media funding goes toward the children's sector.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the federal government ensure that a dedicated review and dedicated consideration of children's programming is taken into account when funding strategies are being developed.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the CRTC update and modernize research around children and youth programming and viewing habits.

Government should support safety measures for children online

Online safety and privacy for kids has been an increasing concern for the production industry. Launched in September 2018, we're proud of the Rocket Online Safety Program which ensures that all Canadian digital content receiving Rocket Fund investment be certified based on established online safety and/or privacy standards currently through the kidSAFE Seal Program, an independent safety certification service designed exclusively for children-friendly websites and technologies. Online game sites, educational services, virtual worlds, social networks, mobile apps, tablet devices, connected toys, and other similar online and interactive services are all eligible for this program.

Through the program, Rocket Fund financed 100 per cent of the cost of kidSAFE Seal Certification over the first year of the program, demonstrating our commitment to supporting producers in an evolving digital environment. A safe online environment for kids is paramount. We want to help Canadian creators of kids' digital content take this very important step towards a safer online experience for our children. We're excited to offer the Rocket Online Safety Program to help set the stage for safer online experiences.

Additionally, the Rocket Fund provides funding assistance of up to 75% of the cost of certification required in foreign regions for programs that the Fund has invested in, such as COPPA in the U.S. or GDPR in Europe, should a producer require it. Supporting certification in other countries will help to ensure that Canadian digital content acknowledges established safety standards for kids around the world.

RECOMMENDATION 4

It is incumbent on the federal government to support and invest in online safety measures for children.

Rocket Fund's investments establishing Canada as global leader in children and youth programming

Today, the Rocket Fund is able to offer Canadian producers flexibility in a rapidly changing media landscape by maximizing regulatory policy: allowing for a [minimum 6/10 Canadian content points](#), having no broadcast license requirement, allowing for co-ventures and supporting script & concept development while focusing on the promotion and discoverability of the programs we

invest in. We are a proactive investor who leverages our unique position in the Canadian and international children's media environment by developing strategic global partnerships to support producers while helping drive the discoverability of our great content with children at home and abroad.

The Rocket Fund's international work has established Canada as a global leader when it comes to children's and youth programming. Rocket Fund-led international roundtable discussions on the future of children's media have resulted in forward-thinking initiatives such as the Rocket Online Safety Program in partnership with kidSAFE Seal to certify the technology of digital content as safe for kids, as previously mentioned. The Rocket Fund has also been asked on numerous occasions to help raise awareness of the importance of kids' media globally from a Canadian point of view. Examples include being the inaugural partner for the International Emmy Kids Awards, representing Canada (NYC, 2012), creating an innovative workshop for industry executives: The Future of Kids TV Summit in conjunction with MIPTV (Cannes, 2014), asked to comment on the University of Westminster CAMRI's Policy Solutions and International Perspectives on the Funding of Public Service Media Content for Children (UK, 2016), representing Canada at a roundtable hosted by the Duchess of Cambridge at the Children's Global Media Summit (Manchester, 2017), spearheading an international conversation on the media industry's role in cyber-bullying prevention (Cannes, 2018), being the designated international guest at the Children's Financing Forum (Sweden, 2019), resulting in Canada being the Country of Distinction for 2020, and contributing to creating a declaration for the sustainability of children's films in Europe at KIDS Regio (Germany, 2019).

Rocket Fund, in its capacity as a Certified Independent Production Fund, is doing its part to the best of its ability to ensure the sustainability of Canadian children's media sector both at home and abroad. In today's evolving digital landscape, the Rocket Fund alone cannot ensure that Canadian children will have ongoing access to Canadian-made media experiences that form part of their every-day lives. It is time for updated regulation and policy to protect Canadian content for our children.

Conclusion: Meeting the needs of Canada's future leaders, children's voices integral to public policy

Gen Z and Gen Alpha are the future of our country — our voters, our political representatives and community leaders. For the good of Canada, we need to make sure their voices are heard — through the creation of an Ombudsman for Youth and ensuring that the creation and accessibility of high-quality, Canadian-centred media content on all platforms for children and youth is a national commitment and lasting priority. In today's digital world in which children are online every day, they must also be kept safe. In that context, it is imperative that the government develops policies that ensure Canadian children and youth are included.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Budget 2020 process and highlight the importance of Canadian children and youth voices.