

St. John's Summit on Women in Media Communiqué

AUTHORS

- **Association of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA);** Signatory: Heather Allin, Chair, ACTRA National Women's Committee.
- **Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen (CUES);** Signatory: Ferne Downey, ACTRA National President
- **Creative Women Workshops Association (CWWA);** Signatory: Carol Whiteman, CEO
- **Female Eye Film Festival (FeFF),** Toronto; Signatory: Leslie Ann Coles, Executive Director
- **Please Adjust Your Set;** Signatory: Sharon McGowan, Chair
- **Réalisatrices Équitables (RÉ);** Signatory: Anna Lupien, Member
- **St. John's International Women's Film Festival (SJIWFF);** Signatory: Noreen Golfman, Chair, Board of Directors
- **Women in Film & Television – Atlantic (WIFT-AT);** Signatory: Valerie Bachynsky, Co-Chair, Board of Directors
- **Women in Film & Television – Toronto (WIFT-T);** Signatory: Heather Webb, Executive Director
- **Women in Film & Television – Vancouver (WIFTV);** Signatory: Carolyn Coombs, Executive Director
- **Women in View (WIV);** Signatory: Rina Fraticelli, Executive Director

PREAMBLE

Media is art *and* industry; enterprise *and* culture.

Screen industries constitute a significant part of the Canadian economy. Given the nature of its products, there are virtually no limits to its growth, making this sector an important, future-proof industry. We also know that media industries thrive on innovation and diversity. We need to ensure that this industry offers equitable access to women and racialized minorities at every level of employment and remuneration. This is an issue of employment equity as well as good industrial and fiscal policy.

Media products are cultural products. Media industries may well constitute the most powerful forces influencing attitudes, and shaping our public discourses. As virtually no Canadian media content is created, distributed or exhibited without significant (direct and/or indirect) public investment, this investment needs to reflect the diversity of contemporary Canadian society.

RATIONALE

1. Studies from all over the world have been amassing in recent years, showing that women are disproportionately represented in cinema and the audiovisual sector, especially in positions of creative and financial authority. And that this inequity has significant implications not only for the industries involved, and the employment pool for those industries, but for society as a whole.

In Canada, the reality is equally problematic. As pointed out in **CUES'** (Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen) 2013 **Focus on Women Report**, screen-based media industries in Canada are still significantly gender-segregated, both vertically and horizontally.

Women in View reported that in 2012, women directed 22%, and wrote 20% of publically-funded films in Canada. Fewer than 2% of the women in the **Women In View** report identified themselves as a visible minority. Québec's **Réalisatrices Équitables (RÉ)** reported that of 32 feature films released in Québec in 2010, 27 (83%) were directed by a man.

2. The situation is much the same in the television industry. According to **CUES**, in television production, women outnumber men in occupations such as clerical, human resources, marketing, business affairs; but they are significantly under-represented in better-remunerated technical and content-determining positions.

Women in View's recent examination of 272 episodes from 21 Canadian television series produced between 2010 and 2011 found that only 16% of the directors were women, while 84% of directors were men. Fully half (11 out of 21) of the series studied failed to employ a single female director. What's more, on average, those women who were employed were given far fewer episodes to direct than male directors – a key factor in creating career opportunities, professional credibility and income stability.

The US situation is similar. The Directors Guild of America (**DGA**) estimated that in 2011, women directed less than 11% of the primetime television episodes on mainstream channels. **Celluloid Ceiling** author, Dr. Martha Lauzen, in her annual audit of the 2011-12 prime-time season reported that women comprised 26% of directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and directors of photography on broadcast television programs.

3. In virtually every field and in every industry, working women face a glass ceiling that, according to Women in Film and Television-Toronto **Frame Work II** report (2012), has simply moved up a level of seniority. Research from a wide range of sources and sectors consistently shows that the proportion of women and visible minorities declines sharply as one moves up the ladder to more senior roles. Women are estimated to make up less than 25% of senior management roles in screen-based media industries. At least half of the Canadian broadcasters report that they have no women on their ownership teams or boards of directors.

4. The impact of gender disparity among directors and writers extends to the employment opportunities for women actors, cinematographers and editors. For example, according to RÉ's 2013 report, in Québec films directed by a man, a male actor held the lead role 90% of the time; whereas in the five Québec films directed by women that year, the protagonist was a woman 80% of the time.

According to the annual Celluloid Ceiling audits, even while the percentage of female *characters* in films is increasing slightly, the percentage of female *protagonists* is declining. In 2011, for example, only 11% of the main characters in the top Hollywood films were women.

5. A further critical consequence of the gender imbalance behind the scenes is that women and girls are still largely stereotyped and sexualized in on-screen portrayals. Numerous studies from Québec as well as from the U.S., G.B., Australia and Europe conclude that female characters are far more likely to be shown in sexy attire, with exposed skin, portrayed as thin and referred to as desirable by other characters; and that they are less likely to be shown as having careers, working in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) or occupying positions of leadership in business or government.

CONCLUSIONS

Women are 51% of the population. Screen-based media constitute a significant part of the Canadian economy and play a crucial role in reflecting and shaping Canadian society. Employment in Canadian media production needs to truly reflect the gender balance and diversity of contemporary Canada. Only when this is the case will we be able to move forward to a more equal society with a distinct and thriving media sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1)** Government policy should explicitly promote the principle that the equitable employment of women and racialized minorities in audiovisual products benefits both genders and all cultural groups, and is vital to achieving genuine diversity.
- 2)** Government policy and regulations, at all levels, should explicitly seek to promote the equitable employment of women at all levels, behind the camera and onscreen, in the creation of Canadian media works.
- 3)** Public spending should demonstrably benefit Canadian women as well as Canadian men.
- 4)** Public investment in media industries should be tied to a requirement to demonstrate gender balance.
- 5)** Since federal and provincial funding agencies routinely offer a range of incentives in the form of tax-credits, streamed funding and other benefits to advance specific goals or production strategies, similar incentives to accelerate gender and racial parity behind the camera and on screen should be implemented.
- 6)** Recording, and annual public reporting on, gender and racial representation should become a part of applications and delivery requirements for public funding.
- 7)** Government media funding agencies and production institutions should report annually to the Canadian public on gender and racial representation in government spending, including tax incentives.

ADDENDA

Appendix A: Organizations Signatory to the Communique

Appendix B: Studies and Reports referred to in the Communique

Annex 1: Statements of intentions and policies by funding agencies and broadcasters

Annex 2: Online Resources, Policy Documents and Diversity Plans