

August, 29th 2008

The Honourable Josée Verner, Minister of Canadian Heritage:

The Institut national de l'image et du son (INIS), the Canadian Film Centre (CFC) and the National Screen Institute (NSI) were informed on Friday, August 8, that the National Training Program in the Film and Video Sector (NTPFVS), which is financed by Canadian Heritage and administered by Telefilm Canada, will not be extended beyond April 1, 2009. No further communication has been provided and we have received no formal written communication of these cuts. The loss of \$2.5 Million to our schools, averaging 20% of our operating budgets, will have a deep impact on our programs (as well as those of the Canadian Screen Training Centre in Ottawa) and will jeopardise their continuation.

After years of close consultation with the department to develop, expand and improve the NTPFVS, and with every indication the funding we had been receiving would in the very least continue, it is deeply disappointing and disturbing to be informed of this decision which comes as a total surprise. Your department's cancellation of the NTPFVS, we would respectfully submit, is a completely inexplicable and mistaken strategy.

This decision comes on the heels of the Summative Evaluation of the National Training Program in the Film and Video Sector (NTPFVS) commissioned by the department, which did not recommend the cancellation of the NTPFVS at all, but rather advised that certain adjustments and realignments of the the Program be explored in further

consultation with the national schools and other stakeholders – recommendations which Canadian Heritage department management in the report are indicated as having accepted. On reading the Summative Evaluation, we fully expected to be holding additional meetings with you and your department on the NTPFVS to evolve a new partnership... not to deal with its abrupt and inexplicable cancellation.

Comments recently made in the media by yourself, the PMO's office and other federal officials speak to the cancellation of funding related to "underperformance".

However, among many positive observations and conclusions within the Summative Evaluation, it was stated that "Based on the evaluation of evidence, the four funded schools are clearly delivering good quality training and their graduates are highly satisfied."

The Summative Evaluation also indicated;

- that there was a strong rationale for a federal government role in this sector and that Canadian Heritage could play a lead role in coordinating national training;
- that the NTPFVS was successful in directly contributing to the financial stability and increased financial capacity of the four national schools;
- that Telefilm managers (representing the agency administering the NTPFVS on behalf of Canadian Heritage) indicated that additional funding for the NTPFVS would help it further reach its objectives;
- that the four national schools rely highly on the NTPFVS funding and utilize this to leverage the further support of the private sector, and perhaps most significantly;
- that it was not in the mandate of the present evaluation to assess the impact of the NTPFVS withdrawing its funding from the national schools.

Yet, despite these findings and recommendations, your department abruptly and without

any further consultation or discussion as to the impact of the loss of federal funding on the national training schools, cancelled the NTPFVS outright.

The contribution of the national training schools to the continued development of the professional film, television and interactive media industry through high-calibre, industry-focused training programs is recognized by all in these sectors.

It is important to remember that the industry itself was at the origin of our schools and their continued involvement as sponsors of our various programs and consultants on our curriculum underscore their belief in the value being delivered. The participation and presence of industry leaders as our board members, administrators, trainers and production collaborators has always been a determining factor as well in Canadian Heritage's support of the national schools over the last 20 years, towards ensuring quality training that meets industry needs and standards.

The cancellation of the NTPFVS is additionally surprising and contradictory, given that both the federal government and the national training schools place a high value on the economic benefits our training programs bring to the country. Our ability to demonstrate economic benefits, as well as our capacity to respond to changes in the environment and the convergence of media (evidence for which we have outlined in great detail over the years in reports, documentation and information submissions made to the Minister's office and Canadian Heritage department officials) helps to build a vibrant economic development strategy within the media sector.

Training is a long-term investment. Competencies, aptitudes, creativity and talent are acquired step-by-step. The training, mentorship and production experience offered by INIS, the CFC and the NSI prepares our alumni for the workplace and accelerates their careers. Our surveys show that from 80 % to 90% of our graduates work in the field for

which they trained. In the context of this success, the decision to cancel the NTPFVS will dramatically and adversely effect young Canadians working in knowledge industries.

We recruit from every region of the country. We train in every region of the country. Our alumni find work and generate employment there. They create content, they innovate, attract investment for their projects, and their products compete in a global marketplace. The national training infrastructure we have built over the years in partnership with Canadian Heritage has achieved this within the context of public policy and the direct needs of the industry.

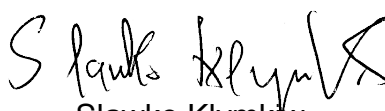
As you know, the Conference Board of Canada recently released a report attesting to the economic benefits of investing in Canadian culture. We need the federal government to play a key role in the redefinition and support of a national vision for training in the film, television and new media sectors of the country. This can't be exclusively realized by the provinces and the private sector alone. Our goals all along have been to continue to work with you and your department to evolve our partnership in keeping with the government's goals and industry needs for a national training platform.

In this regard, we are requesting an immediate meeting with you, Minister Verner, to discuss the decision to cancel the National Training Program in the Film and Video Sector, to communicate in full its serious and negative ramifications for the national schools, and to see if we can find a better way to mutually create and collaborate on an adjusted national program (as has been our intent all along) that both meets your needs and the industry needs going forward.

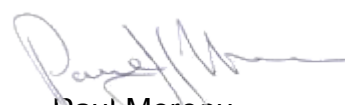
Yours truly,



Michel Desjardins
INIS



Slawko Klymkiw
CFC



Paul Moreau
NSI