



June 1, 2023

The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez
Minister of Canadian Heritage
15 Eddy Street
Gatineau, QC K1A 0M5

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
235 Queen St
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5

Dear Minister Rodriguez and Minister Champagne,

Re: Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) and the role of Canadian creators

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) is the national association representing approximately 2,500 professional screenwriters working in English-language film, television, radio, and digital media production in Canada. Our members take a blank page and fill it with stories, characters, ideas, and emotion. Before a line of dialogue can be spoken, a scene filmed, or a plot brought to its dramatic conclusion, it must be written in a script. We write those scripts.

I am writing you with respect to our growing concerns around the rapid development of artificial intelligence (A.I.) and the threat it represents to Canadian artists and creators. While A.I. has been in development for some time, the recent launch of ChatGPT and other generative A.I. tools represent a paradigm shift in the ability of this technology to create text, audio, visual, and audiovisual content that could compete with, or even replace, human content creators. This in turn threatens the economic wellbeing of Canadian artists, as well as their role as social critics and commentators, and ultimately their fundamental human dignity as artists. The impacts of A.I. on the creative sector with respect to public policy are far-reaching, from copyright and cultural funding to industrial relations and beyond.

Artists create works to inspire, challenge, provoke, educate, inform. Unlike machines, they have intention and purpose. Government support for the arts and culture in turn has a public policy purpose. It is to preserve culture and facilitate cultural expression. It is important for cultural identity, sovereignty, and historical legacy.

A.I. generated work is just content for the sake of content. Machines seek no public policy purpose, and there is no public benefit in replacing artists with them as content creators. A.I.-generated content is purely profit-driven, not culture- or public policy-driven. The use of A.I. already in children's programming is especially alarming, yet is just one possible worrying outcome among many.

A Member of the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds

366 Adelaide Street West
Suite 401
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1R9

Tel 416 979-7907
1-800-567-9974
Fax 416 979-9273
info@wgc.ca www.wgc.ca

By contrast, human screenwriters are intentional about the stories they tell and the characters they create. Even on shows which might seem “light” or conventional, writers consider how to make old tropes new, with novel twists and ideas.

In our cultural policy, are we creating nourishment for the mind and soul or are we manufacturing junk? Our industry should be supporting an environment that allows for the creation of the best that human beings can achieve, not mass-producing artificial content that fills up space but leaves us feeling bloated but empty.

Given all this, the WGC feels strongly that government has a leading role to play in protecting the role of Canadian creators—*human* creators—in the age of A.I. For one, the benefits of creators of copyright must clearly inure solely to human beings. A.I. should not be recognized as an “author” under the *Copyright Act*, nor should the *Copyright Act* be amended to diminish or derogate the rights of human creators for the benefit of A.I. or those who design, manage, use, or own A.I.

For another public funding for culture must similarly remain for the benefit of human creators. This includes funding from the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Film or Video Tax Credit, or any other funding with a cultural purpose. We must not divert essential limited funding from human artists to A.I. These are cultural funds, not technology development funds.

On our end, we will continue to use our ability to represent Canadian screenwriters in pursuit of their interests, and we hope that the Government will support us in that task as well, ensuring that collective bargaining for artists is maintained or strengthened wherever possible.

In this, we support our colleagues at the Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma (SARTEC), who we understand are writing to express these same concerns. Both the WGC and SARTEC are united in our support of Canadian creators, and our strong belief that A.I. must not undermine screenwriters’ economic wellbeing or human dignity as artists.

Best Regards,



Neal McDougall
Assistant Executive Director, WGC

Cc: Brian MacKay, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage
Ron Ahluwalia, Director of Policy, Office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage
Shristi Radhakrishnan, Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
Boyan Gerasimov, Director of Policy, Office of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
Michel Sabbagh, Director General, Broadcasting, Copyright, and Creative Marketplace Branch,
Canadian Heritage
Amy Awad, Acting Senior Director, Broadcasting, Copyright, and Creative Marketplace Branch,
Canadian Heritage
Terry Stechysin, Director, Copyright Policy, Canadian Heritage

Paul (Zorn) Pink, Manager, Copyright Policy, Canadian Heritage

Patrick Blonar, Director, Copyright and Trademark Policy Directorate, Innovation, Science, and
Economic Development Canada

Tanya Peatt, Senior Project Leader, Copyright and Trademark Policy Directorate, Innovation,
Science, and Economic Development Canada

Victoria Shen, Executive Director, WGC
Council, WGC