



**Writers Guild
of Canada**

Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance

**Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the 2026 Budget**

May 20, 2026

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen the institutions that support Canadian cultural sovereignty through increased federal funding.** This includes the **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation** (CBC/Radio Canada), the **Canada Media Fund** (CMF), and **Telefilm Canada**.
2. **Support and protect Canadian creative workers against threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).** Copyrighted works should not be used to train AI systems without the consent of, and credit to and compensation for copyright holders. AI outputs should not be copyrightable. In addition, Canadian cultural funding should not be directed to AI generated works, but should instead remain for the benefit of Canadian human creators.
3. **Ensure that existing Canadian cultural policies and supports are not undermined, traded away, or sacrificed,** whether in pursuit of other goals vis-à-vis Canada's relationship with the United States of America or any other purpose. This includes regulation pursuant to the *Broadcasting Act*, as amended by the *Online Streaming Act*.

Introduction and Background

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 sit at the heart of the domestic Canadian film and television sector which, in 2024-2025, generated 66,420 direct and spin-off jobs,¹ over \$3.4 billion in labour income,² and contributed over \$4.1 billion to Canada's GDP.³ This is within the larger arts and culture sector, which: directly contributed \$65 billion to the Canadian economy in 2024, accounting for 2% of Canada's nominal GDP; over the past three years, GDP stemming from the arts and culture sector has grown almost 8%, outpacing Canada's overall economic growth of 4%; supports \$131 billion of Canada's GDP and 1.1 million jobs across the country, when accounting for total impacts throughout the economy; and, supports more jobs per \$1 million in output than trade, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and oil and gas.⁴

Screenwriters are at the very foundation of the domestic Canadian film and television production industry, and the beginning of the value chain of virtually all production. Every powerful show, movie, or webseries requires an equally powerful script. Every powerful script requires a skillful, innovative screenwriter.

Screenwriters start with a blank page, and create entire worlds. No producer, director or actor can do what they do without the screenwriter first creating the story's arc, characters and themes. WGC members are the primary creators that the entire film, television and digital industry depend on.

Canadian screenwriters are also central to the Canadian identity of our film and television. In series in particular, long recognized as a "writer's medium," no other role is as creatively foundational as the showrunner and the screenwriters in the writing room that they manage. They are the authorial voice of the medium, and the Canadian authorial voice of Canadian content. As such, Canadian screenwriters are

¹ *Profile 2025, An economic report on the screen-based media production industry in Canada*, Exhibit 1-6 (<https://profile.cmpa.ca/en>).

² *Profile 2025*, Exhibit 1.7.

³ *Profile 2025*, Exhibit 1.8.

⁴ *Artworks: The Economic and Social Dividends from Canada's Arts and Culture Sector*, Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Business Data Lab, October 2025 (https://businessdatalab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/BDL_Artworks_Report_October2025_FINAL.pdf).

at the vanguard of Canadian culture, and supporting them and their industry is essential to the support of Canadian cultural sovereignty.

Culture is not a mere commodity. It is an expression of ideas, values, and identity. And *Canadian* culture is an expression of *Canadian* ideas, values, and identity. It is, among other things, an expression of the heart and soul of this country. Of what it means to be Canadian.

In his mandate letter of May 21, 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney articulated seven priorities, including, “Protecting Canadian sovereignty,” and ensuring that, “Canadians can invest more in the people and businesses that will build the strongest economy in the G7.”⁵ The WGC’s recommendations focus on these important elements, supporting Canadian cultural sovereignty and building Canada’s economy.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the institutions that support Canadian cultural sovereignty through increased federal funding.

The WGC proposes that this recommendation be implemented, in part, through support for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC/Radio Canada), the Canada Media Fund (CMF), and Telefilm Canada.

With respect to the CBC, the WGC recognizes the commitment made by the government to CBC in Budget 2025 to “provide \$150 million in 2025-26 to strengthen its mandate to serve the public and to better reflect the needs of Canadians”.⁶ However, the WGC also recalls the statements made in the Liberal Party of Canada’s most recent election platform that a Mark Carney-led government would, “Enshrine and protect CBC/Radio Canada by introducing legislation to establish statutory funding,” and, “Provide an initial \$150 million boost in annual funding while directing CBC/Radio Canada to develop a strategic plan consistent with this new mandate.”⁷

To modernize, strengthen and protect the CBC, the WGC recommends that the federal government follow through on this promise, including with respect to continued additional annual funding of \$150 million.

⁵ <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2025/05/21/mandate-letter>

⁶ <https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/pdf/budget-2025.pdf>

⁷ <https://liberal.ca/strong/unite/#protecting-cbc-radio-canada-protecting-canadian-voices>

The WGC also recommends that funding for the CBC/Radio Canada be made stable and permanent. A national public broadcaster cannot operate as effectively or engage in long-term planning in an environment of constant funding uncertainty.

With respect to the CMF and Telefilm Canada, the WGC acknowledges the three-year investments made into sunseting programs at both agencies, including \$50 million annually to Telefilm and \$42.5 million annually to the Canada Media Fund.⁸ To strengthen Canada’s audiovisual industries and promote stability, the WGC urges the Government of Canada to make these funding increases permanent.

Finally, to modernize the screen sector, we understand that the government is considering the creation of a single agency that could combine the CMF, Telefilm Canada, and/or the National Film Board. The WGC recommends that the creation of any such single agency involve robust consultation with affected stakeholders, including with respect to what the funding program(s) of a single agency would look like.

In particular, we note that the CMF currently strongly supports Canadian key creative personnel through a “10-out-of-10 point” requirement that ensures, among other things, that especially vulnerable yet creatively invaluable Canadian screenwriters are engaged on projects it funds. Other funders, such as Telefilm Canada, have lower requirements, and this is reflected in increased challenges faced by WGC members working in feature film. The WGC is especially concerned that a “lowest common denominator approach” might be taken, in which the high-bar set by the CMF in this regard is eroded in pursuit of frankly superficial goals like “simplification,” but which results in serious damage to the core cultural objectives of this funding. We caution against such an approach, and so recommend that if a single agency is created, it reflects high standards and robust supports for Canadian creators, including screenwriters, such as those found in the CMF’s “10-out-of-10 point” requirement.

Recommendation 2: Support and protect Canadian creative workers against threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).

The emergence of AI – and, in particular, generative AI, which can generate complex text, sounds, and images based on simple text prompts – has resulted in immense concern amongst Canadian creative workers, and poses a potentially existential risk

⁸ <https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/pdf/budget-2025.pdf>

to their jobs and livelihoods. The WGC is among the many creator organizations that have raised concerns and taken action, including through the negotiation of AI protections and guardrails in our latest collective agreement.⁹

Government has a vital role to play in supporting and protecting Canadian creative workers against the threats posted by AI. In particular it should:

- A. Regarding the **use of copyrighted works to train AI systems**, ensure respect for the “Three Cs” – i.e. that any such use: requires the **consent** of the copyright holder, with such consent being explicitly required (“opt in”), and *not* presumed to exist unless explicitly withheld (“opt out”); results in **compensation** to the copyright holder, as negotiated via a market-based licensing or analogous process, and *not* via government-set rates; and, results in **credit** to the copyright holder. **No new “fair dealing” exception should be created** for the training of AI systems on copyrighted material. It should be recognized that training of AI often occurs in **jurisdictions outside of Canada**, and Canadian creators are entitled to equal protection with respect to these activities.
- B. Regarding the outputs of generative AI systems, such **AI outputs should not be copyrightable**. The standard for the transformation of AI outputs through subsequent human effort should be sufficiently high, in order to prevent **“copyright laundering”**¹⁰ of AI-generated works.
- C. **AI-generated works should not be supported by cultural funding from the Canadian government**. Public funding for culture must 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.
- D. Regulation of AI should be accompanied by sufficiently robust public **transparency and accountability** rules and processes.

⁹ <https://www.wgc.ca/wgc-cmpa-ipa-2024-2027-0>

¹⁰ https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/people-have-rights-that-machines-dont-lets-keep-it-that-way/article_2d1b0d5e-e5fd-11ee-ae87-7ffa0e71a785.html

Recommendation 3: Ensure that existing Canadian cultural policies and supports are not undermined, traded away, or sacrificed.

Support for Canadian cultural industries and Canadian creators is longstanding, but has been hard-won. Canada has successfully negotiated a cultural exemption in numerous free trade agreements to protect its ability to support these sectors that are so central to Canadian cultural sovereignty.

More recently, the Canadian government passed Bill C-11, the *Online Streaming Act*, which was essential legislation to ensure that Canadian broadcasters could be put on a level regulatory footing with giant, largely U.S.-based streaming services, while ensuring that those services contribute to Canadian programming for Canadian audiences.

In the current climate of international trade conflicts, this vital work cannot be undone, traded away, or sacrificed. Our multi-billion-dollar industry, our creative and cultural jobs, and our very voice as Canadians are at stake.

The WGC urges the Government of Canada to use Budget 2026 to strengthen the institutions, policies and workers that sustain Canadian cultural sovereignty. Stable and permanent support for CBC/Radio-Canada, the Canada Media Fund and Telefilm Canada, strong protections for creators in the age of AI, and the preservation of Canada's cultural policy framework – these are all essential to ensuring that Canadian stories continue to be made, and seen by Canadian and global audiences.

Canadian screenwriters are not only contributors to a successful economic sector. They are central to how Canada tells its own stories, reflects its own values, and safeguards its own cultural voice. Budget 2026 is an opportunity to reaffirm that this work matters, and that the federal government will continue to stand behind the creators and institutions that make Canadian culture possible.

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