

Minister, it's on our watch

The Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

October 12, 2016

Minister Joly,

You have stated that "everything is on the table" as your government embarks on a digital re-set of our \$50-billion media industries.

From film production and TV broadcasting to internet streaming and news journalism, your ministry's current public consultation will touch on core Canadian values, our expression of who we are, and our access to the information needed to hold political leaders and powerful institutions to account.

We write to you today as members of Unifor - Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 310,000 Canadians including 12,000 media workers and journalists. As the voice of those working in this important industry, with an especially large presence in local TV, print, and digital news coverage, we encourage you and your cabinet colleagues to keep in mind three things during the big media rethink.

First, no matter how globalized the digital world becomes, we can't lose sight of the basic principle of supporting Canadian news, information and entertainment in our media. Government assistance and regulation has always been our hedge against the natural tendency of American media to overwhelm our media and our sovereign identity.

Second, our governments have long supported Canadian media through film production tax credits and government funding for the CBC. Thanks to government regulation, large media companies have provided important financial support for independent film productions funds and local TV. That support needs to continue and be adjusted to the new digital media environment.

Third, digital disruption has revolutionized the media advertising market, and not to Canada's advantage. Large media companies - particularly large US tech giants - have gobbled up this country's media advertising market. Canadian news providers are being starved for the ad dollars that allow them to provide free or low-cost news to Canadians. That flow of Canadian news and information is vital to our democracy. **Let us not mince words: the financial viability of news coverage is in peril.**

Minister Joly, as you move forward with public consultations on Canada's media landscape, Unifor urges intelligent regulation to protect what Canadians value most. We look forward to meeting your committee to discuss the problems we see on the ground as media workers and journalists, and offering some of the solutions that can help.

Sincerely,

Canada's Journalists and Media Workers



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