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April 14th, 2015

Premier Stephen McNeil
Office of the Premier
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Dear Premier McNeil,

The Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) is the collective voice of almost 700 independent documentary filmmakers across Canada. Our mission is to champion the production and distribution of documentaries across all platforms; advocate on behalf of creators and producers and connect and strengthen the Canadian documentary community. We have six chapters across the country including one for the Atlantic provinces, the vast majority of which is comprised of members based in Nova Scotia.

It was with great disappointment that DOC learned about the Nova Scotia government's decision to cut Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia and the tax credit for film and television producers. We have been aware of proposed cuts and had hoped for a more positive outcome. What has been most disconcerting is that we have learned that this decision was taken without consulting the very stakeholders that it would affect. Therefore we are writing to you today on behalf of the documentary filmmakers who will be gravely affected by these cuts.

Documentary filmmakers in Canada face increasingly greater obstacles to finance their films. Even though they are a resilient and creative lot, our research indicates that thousands of jobs have been lost in the last decade and overall documentary production has declined. The hardest hit region in Canada has been Atlantic Canada where we have seen a 75% decrease in production over the last decade.

It is unequivocal that the elimination of Film and Creative Industries and the drastic tax credit reduction will have a devastating effect on documentary producers and those employed in the making of documentaries in Nova Scotia,

beginning immediately. The availability of provincial financing sources has significant influence on the decision-making of broadcasters and co-production partners from outside the province. Small documentary producers are particularly vulnerable to the loss of these types of financing sources, which makes them uncompetitive as production partners.

These credits are also used to bridge finance and cash flow productions – sometimes one hour documentaries – sometimes 13 part series. Without these credits, which often amount to 25% of a budget, banks will cease to loan money to cash flow production. Additionally, with the recent decrease in broadcaster slots for documentaries, docs are becoming an endangered form of storytelling. Nova Scotian documentaries are now further at risk because of the cuts you are proposing.

Even in the face of challenges, Nova Scotia's documentary filmmakers have continued to work tirelessly and successfully over the last two decades in large part because of your support. You have tough choices to make, and we appreciate that. But these are your storytellers who provide the opportunity for your citizens to know themselves and learn about each other, and to share their stories with the world. In short, they provide us a glimpse of our humanity from a Nova Scotia perspective.

We strongly urge you to work with members of DOC Atlantic to discuss how this new model will affect them in the short and long term, and hopefully to discuss alternatives that can be put in place to encourage and support this vital art form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Edwards'.

Connie Edwards
Interim Chair
Documentary Organization of Canada

c.c. Honourable Diana Whalen