



DOCUMENTARY
ORGANIZATION OF CANADA
DOCUMENTARISTES
DU CANADA

Documentary Organization of Canada presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Transport and Communication

The subject matter of Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts

Presentation:

Thank you Senator and Members of the Committee for inviting me to appear today as part of the pre-study of Bill C-11.

My name is Sarah Spring, and I am the Executive Director of the Documentary Organization of Canada, or DOC.

Since 1983, DOC has been the collective voice of our independent documentary creators, representing 1,000 members across six chapters from coast to coast.

DOC supports passing Bill C-11. This important legislation is urgently needed to ensure that our sector and Canadian creators, including documentary filmmakers, can continue to grow and thrive in a modern broadcasting system.

Documentary is a powerful tool to achieve our cultural, economic and social objectives.

Because Documentary is a doorway. For many creators, documentary is their first point of entry into filmmaking.

Documentary is more accessible to a wider spectrum of creators from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Filmmakers without access to personal or inherited wealth, or a privileged network can finance and interim finance their productions.

Documentary is more accessible to filmmakers who face historic barriers to entry rooted in systemic racism, colonialism or other forms of oppression. In fact, almost half of DOC's 1,000 members identify as Indigenous, Black or racialized.

Documentary filmmakers are also by definition independent producers and their successes build strong small and medium business in every region, employing Canadians across the country.

Documentary is also the champion of Canadian stories and storytellers.

Canadian documentary films are consistently celebrated and sold around the world. They shine a spotlight on our country for years after a film's initial release. This longevity is important to the strong imprint that Canadian culture has around the world.

This year, Canada's official submission to the Academy Awards is a documentary. "Eternal Spring" is not only the first documentary to be honored in this way, but it is also the first Mandarin-language film, and the first animated feature to be submitted by Canada for the Oscars.

This is a good example of how Documentaries are a key tool to authentically share who Canadians are in all our diversity. Many documentaries are about family and community that share a uniquely Canadian point of view. Together, they represent an evolving act of co-creation of Canadian identity.

I say all this because while documentaries have never been more popular, the number of documentaries financed through our mainstream funding systems is going down every year. Without regulation, this important sector is at risk. This is a sector of professionals specialized in the skills of researching, crafting, filming, interviewing, editing and releasing documentary films, rooted in the ethical and practical concerns of how to tell their own and others' stories.

Not only would Bill C-11 bring with it additional funding to Canadian content, including documentary, but it is our hope that some specific amendments will ensure that C-11 will be an effective tool to ensure an equitable, sustainable sector, enriched by professional storytellers.

DOC supports the Amendments proposed by some of our colleagues who have already presented their Briefs. Specifically:

- The Racial Equity Media Collective and the Black Screen Office's proposal that the words "Black and racialized" be inserted into the Act, and the REMC's proposal to gather race-based data as cornerstone of any effective equity policy.
- The CMPA's and AQPM's proposal regarding 3.1.i.v. to ensure a significant contribution from the Canadian independent production sector in order to ensure support for independent, autonomous media content created by a broad diversity of Canadian storytellers.

- The Canadian Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions' proposal regarding 3.1.f to ensure that foreign entities make maximum use of Canadian resources, just as Canadian broadcasters and online services are required to do within the Act.

Furthermore, the directives for this Bill will be critical. C-11 will need a clear policy direction that signals documentary as a key tool for how to achieve the objectives of the Bill. The new Government Directives should:

- Set a clear priority on supporting documentary as a stand-alone program of national interest
- Present Documentary as a key genre to help achieve the equity and inclusion objectives of the Act.

As we build this modern broadcasting system, we need to remember why we established the Act in the first place. We're here to celebrate and grow Canada's commercial success in this sector but to also keep in mind that taken together, and over many years, all this content we're creating fuels our next generation of storytellers and is intrinsic to a deeper, richer understanding of Canada and Canadians. This longevity is, I believe, one of the central purposes of the Act.

I thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions.

Thank you.