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DOCUMENTARY ORGANIZATION OF CANADA RELEASES LATEST “GETTING REAL” REPORT: DOCUMENTARY SERIES DRIVING BOOM IN CANADIAN DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION AMID DRAMATIC DROP IN FEATURE DOCS

Toronto International Film Festival, September 14th 2023 - The Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) releases its 7th edition of “Getting Real”, presenting trends in the Canadian documentary production sector. “Getting Real 7” shows a strong appetite for home-grown documentaries and an increase in documentary production. In 2021, Canadian-made documentaries accounted for four of the top ten documentaries exhibited in theaters. Canadians watched 11.2 million hours of Canadian English-language documentaries and 5.1 million hours of Canadian French-language documentaries in 2021 – both increases from 2018. In 2021/22, the documentary genre was the second largest contributor to Canada’s \$1.10 billion increase in content production. From 2020-2021 to 2021/22 documentary production volume increased by 53.2%, the largest increase on a percentage basis across all genres.

“With this report, we really wanted to dig into what formats are being produced in Canada so we can see what’s driving the increases across the genre,” says DOC’s Executive Director Sarah Spring. “Overall, the numbers are pretty impressive: \$421 million towards Canada’s Gross Domestic Product in 2020/21, 32% percent growth over the last five years. Even though the sector as a whole dipped in 2020/2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, documentaries kept growing! Given all of this good news, our research was geared towards getting to the bottom of what this means for the 1,300 documentary makers that DOC represents across the country, fifty percent of whom are Indigenous, Black or racialized, many of whom live in rural / remote communities.”

The report shows that documentary series represents the majority of Canadian documentary production at 81% of 2020-2021 documentary production volume, with single episodes at 13% and feature documentary at 6%. Features saw the largest drop over the five years covered by the report: between 2016/17 and 2020/21, Canadian feature documentary production dropped from \$29.6M to \$19.4, the number of feature documentaries produced dropped from 60 to 35, and feature documentary’s share of total Canadian production volume dropped from 5.1% to 2.4%.

“Twenty years ago, DOC’s first edition of Getting Real reported that single-episode documentaries were in the majority. Now, when we talk about documentary production in Canada, we are increasingly talking about series. A healthy production sector needs balance, in terms of format and access. Within the current system, feature documentaries are falling off the map and our Report documents that members are still facing institutional and regional bias. Our members want to be able to produce a variety of formats within an equitable, sustainable sector, and to finance the high quality, feature documentaries Canadians are known for. This will be an extremely important piece as the industry grapples with how to implement Bill C-11: we need to ensure that our cultural policy - long form documentaries are expensive and difficult to produce, yet are central vehicles for communicating Canadian stories and values, to quote the CRTC - survives our commercial policy” says Spring.

ABOUT DOC:

The Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) is the collective voice of Canada’s independent documentary creators. Founded in 1983 to represent the interests of Canada’s

growing community of indie doc filmmakers, today DOC has over 1300 members across six chapters from coast to coast. DOC conducts valuable research and advocacy work that strengthens the ecosystem for documentary production, and runs National programs that support our community. DOC's mandate as a member-driven organization is to advocate for an equitable, sustainable environment for documentary production and to strengthen the sector within the broader cultural industry.

ABOUT THE REPORT

"Getting Real 7" was prepared by Nordicity and was developed using a mixed-methods approach including a literature review, analysis of industry data, a survey, and stakeholder interviews. Nordicity first acquired data from the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO) to form the foundation of the statistical and financial analysis of the documentary sector, and where possible (and applicable), drew on data from funding bodies such as Telefilm Canada (Telefilm), the Canada Media Fund (CMF), and the National Film Board (NFB). In order to protect anonymity, data points with a low number of responses was not shared with Nordicity or reported on. Nordicity then collected primary data via a survey of 234 documentary creators as well as interviews with 10 documentary producers across Canada. The survey was distributed utilizing various communication channels, including eblast, newsletter, as well as social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Additionally, the survey was made available to participants through a private discussion group specifically intended for DOC members.

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