

CMPA Regional Task Force Recommendations

The CMPA Regional Task Force, after considering the position of both CMPA members and non-members across the country, and having received the unanimous endorsement of the CMPA Board of Directors, makes the following recommendations:

Development

The ability to develop and produce projects in all the regions is critical to the continued existence of a national independent industry. Access to broadcaster decision makers was named as a critical component missing from the playing field on which producers from regions other than Toronto play. The Task Force supports the CMF's "pre-pitch" funding for producers and recommends that it be augmented to further assist producers who must fly into Toronto to meet with creators, writers and potential co-producers, as well as to pitch new ideas to broadcasters. This funding should also be available to producers from Toronto so that they can fly to other regions to meet with regional broadcasters, writers and creators and potential co-producers. We further recommend that CMF English-language development funding be both large enough and distributed in a manner that will ensure robust development in the regions.

The Task Force also recognizes how important it is for broadcasters to have a major decision maker visit all the regions of the country regularly. This allows producers to meet broadcasters on their own turf and also allows emerging producers to introduce themselves to broadcasters. In this regard, the Task Force considers the CRTC's requirement in its group licence renewal decision that broadcasters report to the CRTC regarding their efforts to meet with regional producers in their regions to be a positive step forward. We recommend that the CMF recognize the importance of this CRTC requirement to the development of a thriving national industry.

Production

One of the roles of the CMF is to support "regional television convergent productions". The CMF currently provides financial support for programming that represents the diversity of voices found in all regions of Canada. The Task Force believes that the Canadian production industry, Canadian broadcasters, and, most importantly, the Canadian public, deserve to have the highest quality Canadian programming on their screens and that this is achieved when Canadians from all regions participate. We all want a system that allows the best projects to be produced.

The Task Force would accordingly recommend that the current English Production Incentive (EPI) be renamed and significantly revamped. The new fund would build upon and improve on the EPI in the following key ways:

- **Increased allocation to the new fund.** Currently \$10 million is annually allocated to the EPI. The Task Force would recommend that the annual funding allocation to the new fund be a minimum of \$20 million, with modelling to be undertaken by CMF Staff to determine the exact amount needed to ensure that the new fund is a meaningful business tool in support of diversity of production across Canada.
- **Allocate funding to regions, rather than to provinces.** The EPI currently allocates funding on a provincial and territorial basis. In the Task Force's view, this unduly subdivides the available funding, thereby reducing the attraction of the incentive. The Task Force accordingly recommends that the CMF return to allocating funding on a regional basis, with those regions being British Columbia (including the Yukon), the Western provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, including the North West Territories), Ontario (including Nunavut), Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland).
- **Funding to be awarded on a twice annual basis.** One of the consistent concerns expressed about the EPI is that, because it is awarded annually to regions having experienced significant drops in production based on historical averages, it is necessarily a reactive tool that has sometimes exacerbated, rather than mitigated, production instability in certain regions.

The Task Force therefore recommends that this “yo-yo” effect be reduced by having the new fund be allocated to eligible regions twice a year, with \$10 million being allocated on April 1st and the remaining \$10 million on October 1st. The CMF would allocate the first \$10 million to regions based on need, and using the most recent available data. The second \$10 million would be allocated using the same methodology, and would include an analysis of production data from the previous six months, thereby enabling the CMF to be more responsive to “changes on the ground.” Access to the available funds would be on a first-come, first served basis.

By serving as an incentive for established broadcasters, as well as providing a boost for new broadcasters to support regional production, we are confident that the new fund would ensure both a better balance in the allocation of regional funds and support a diversity of voices and production across the country.

The Task Force also recognizes that, in considering our proposal, important questions will arise regarding how the new fund would be administered and funding allocated. We are committed to collaborating with CMF Staff as it undertakes the necessary modelling and due diligence to ensure that the fund achieves its objectives in the most effective and efficient possible manner.

Taken together, we believe that the new fund, as well as the development recommendations outlined above, are critical components to ensuring the long term growth of the Canadian production industry and the creation of the best Canadian programming.