



Canadian Content in a Digital World

Topline Summary Halifax

October 11th 2016

Event Details

This is a flash summary of key themes and discussions emerging from the Canadian Content in a Digital World Roundtable session held in Halifax on October 11th, 2016 at the Halifax Public Library.

The session consisted of a half-day discussion in which participants were invited to provide their views and perspectives on three broad questions related to the ongoing Canadian Content in a Digital World consultation namely:

- What does a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice look like to you?
 - How do we support Canada's artists, content creators and cultural entrepreneurs in order to create a cultural ecosystem in which they thrive and that will benefit the growth of our middle class at home, and help them reach beyond our borders?
 - How can we meet the challenge of promoting Canada's creativity in the digital world, and how can we use Canadian content to promote a strong democracy?
- During the session each question was given an equal allotment of time. Given the overlapping focus of these questions and the organic nature of the conversation, many of the themes coming out of the discussion are applicable to different subject areas within each question. In order to avoid repetition, this topline summary has been organised to best represent the themes discussed.
 - The session was facilitated by Marc Beaudoin and each at table discussion was lead by an Ipsos facilitator.
 - A total of **27** individuals participated in the discussion. All roundtable participants were identified by PCH and recruiting was a combined effort between the department and Ipsos.
 - The Minister of Canada Heritage as well as PCH Policy representatives were on hand to listen to feedback first-hand and provide additional context as needed.

Key Takeaways

- There was no consensus between participants on the definition of Canadian content. Many felt that a better definition for who qualifies as a *Canadian creator* and what constitutes *Canadian content* is needed to allow for them to be truly protected and supported.
- Improve funding public models by streamlining them to facilitate access to a broader community of creators and a more diverse body of work and foster innovation.
- Revisit the criteria for awarding funding to strike a better balance between cultural value and profitability and to encourage collaboration between sectors. Offer more flexible funding arrangements that allow for longer term funding, loans and funding at different points in the development process.
- Raise awareness and educate the public on the value of Canada's cultural sector and its creators to generate respect and support for investing in it. This includes, cultural value, economic benefits and the role culture plays in seeding innovation in other sectors.
- Invest in developing our creators by providing them with access to tools and supports to enable them to build sustainable careers and business that contribute to our economic growth.
- Develop a new approach to distribution that leverages platforms (either new or existing) to better promote Canadian content and find ways to ensure that the financial returns generated by it remain in Canada through IP ownership, revised copyright laws and private sector reinvestment in Canadian creators.
- Ensure a diversity of voices in Canada's cultural sector to strengthen democracy and resume and invest in local capacities for reporting.
- Build a strong Canadian brand that is reflective of Canada's diversity and promote it abroad and at home.

Detailed discussion

What does a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice look like to you?

The strength of Canadian content was viewed to be the voices and stories of Canadians. Creating a demand domestically as well as abroad for Canadian products and recognizing that culture and business are not mutually exclusive were the key challenges identified by participants.

Many participants stressed the importance of cultural enterprises in the economy as well as the socio-political importance of this industry. Others felt that they provide a common basis for understanding and are potentially helpful in addressing gaps in acceptance and play an important role in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Supporting Creators

How cultural content is funded was at the core of the discussion on how to support creators.

- There was general agreement that public funding models need to be reinvented to foster greater diversity, innovation and economic viability and sustainability in the sector.
 - Some felt that there needs to be a decentralization of support and redistribution to allow support for more local and regional creators beyond the major centres and nationally focused organisations.
 - The current model most funding agencies use was seen by some as requiring creators to compromise the integrity of their pieces in order to satisfy different requirements to get funding and has them spending more time approaching different funding organisations than focusing on the development of their creations/stories.
 - A streamlined approach would be transparent and accessible to all sectors and would encourage inter-sector collaboration. It could also potentially allow for investment beyond the traditional streams to use grants or funding for promotion, equipment/tools, etc.
 - Many also agreed that creators need to be able to count on funding being available for the duration of their project in order to hire the resources required in some cases. Early on in a project, when an idea is new, some felt that it is easier to receive funding than after 10 years.
 - Investment in infrastructure for creators, including creator commons or spaces for production was also discussed. This would allow for mentorship between established, emerging and new creators as well as encourage interaction and sharing of ideas.
 - Financing of creative businesses needs to be encouraged, supporting small and medium enterprises through loans to get them started and allow them to become independent.
 - Models used in other jurisdictions were raised as potential best practices to draw on. These included Quebec's star system to the UK's spending targets, the peer review model used by the Irish Film Board, the Norwegian model, in which participants indicated artists are paid to be artists, and the Australian model, where a digital media fund funnels resources to artists from sources like social media and online advertisers.
- Diversity of funding sources was discussed. Private industries and funding sources outside of government should be fostered.
 - Crowdfunding was suggested as one means for funding, allowing citizens to directly contribute to support artists, while others suggested a guaranteed minimum income for artists.
 - Many suggested that larger companies (such as Netflix) should be further encouraged to invest in Canadian content, contribute to Canadian taxes and be incentivized to keep money in Canada, or more specifically in the region where they are investing.
 - Another suggestion was that the Canadian Media Fund should be broadened to include digital communications platforms, such as Facebook, Google, Apple and Netflix, or a levy be placed on internet access similar to the CMP model.
 - Incentivizing diversity of content, inter-sector collaboration and cooperation with international producers through taxes or subsidies were suggested.

Aside from funding the creation of cultural content, there was discussion of other supports needed.

- Training in business and entrepreneurship as well as support through services and counselling would allow creators to build a better and more sustainable “business” with their content. These services would put more of the control in the hands of the creator, making them less dependant on the “big names” or funding institutions.
- Marketing and distribution support were also highlighted as much needed supports.
- There was also support for developing ways to ensure that the creative sector offered a sustainable career path that could attract young Canadians to the field.

Many expressed that regulation around IP and copyright need to be revisited in order to ensure that the artists/creators can own their own IP and keep it in Canada.

- Ownership of intellectual property was seen as a concern given the influence funding support and producers can have on the outcome of how a story is told. The initial creator needs to be given the ability to maintain the Canadian integrity of their work but also licence to explore collaboration.
- Some suggested revisiting educational exemptions for copyright, which have impacted the creative community. Some also felt that private investment in IP should be encouraged. Crowdsourcing IP ownership was also suggested.
- Others suggested that clear rights for new channels need to be used for broadcasters, unifying licensing bodies to deal with clearance and ensure creators are paid.

Creating a culture of valuing Canadian stories and story tellers was a primary goal or desire of many of the participants present. Citizens should be encouraged to seek out Canadian content and stories.

- Many suggested that an investment should be made in educating the public about the economic, cultural and multi-sectoral (innovation in health, engineering and technology) benefits of investment in culture.
 - Some suggested that revisiting the copyright act would assist with encouraging the public to understand the importance of intellectual property and paying for content.
- Others suggested that citizens need to be encouraged to become involved and feel that they are included within the artistic community, from an expressive and an audience perspective
- One idea was reiterated throughout the discussion by many participants, specifically that a key value and strength of Canadian content is the diversity of voices. Some feel that this unique trait is under threat, that the cultural influences from Canada’s closest neighbour, the United States, and a myriad of other media sources is challenging Canada’s own cultural identity.

Support and development of Canada’s artists needs to encourage the diversity of Canada’s population to participate in the overall cultural ecosystem.

- Participants felt that encouraging regional programs by working with the provinces and other levels of government to expand support beyond the major centres (Toronto specifically) was important. There needs to be a level playing field for creators across genders, cultural backgrounds and regions. Rural artists should receive similar funding to those from urban centres. Suggestions to achieve a greater diversity of creators included:
 - Creating new channels and spaces for creators, increasing their ability to get their message heard;
 - Establishing advocates for the cultural sector within regions to support under-represented artists; and
 - Protection measures, to give creators a voice to ensure that funding provided reaches the intended audience and promotes diversity in voices.

Citizen Choice

Regarding respecting citizen choice, most agreed that citizen choice is inherent in the digital age. As such, the discussion focused on how to ensure that citizens are exposed to Canadian content in the unlimited shelf space of the Internet.

- Participants indicated that creators need to become platform agnostic and be given the tools to allow them to promote themselves across a broad range, allowing for more citizen choice.
 - Many viewed a digital hub as fostering a community of creators and citizens sharing content, others felt it put the control of distribution of this content into the hands of a few “broadcasters”, similar to the current linear models.

- Participants sharing the platform agnostic viewpoint felt that a broader range of options for creators as well as choice for citizens is the better option.

How can we meet the challenge of promoting Canada's creativity in the digital world, and how can we use Canadian content to promote a strong democracy?

Redefine Canadian content for contemporary Canada

Building a strong brand for Canadian content at home was seen as a key measure for promoting Canada's creativity globally.

- Investing in quality content and story telling, as well as infrastructure and innovation, to build a viable audience at home were deemed to be key factors to addressing this challenge.
- While most of the discussion turned towards the roles of creators and citizens, a discussion of Canadian identity was also used to help define this cultural system.
- Diversity and equality of voices was another key element to Canadian content. Some indicated that while in the past Canadian content laws and regulations have been a protective measure against the United States, Canadian content should instead become a point of pride.

A diversity of voices and stories was indicated by a majority of participants in Halifax (to being the key to strengthening quality information and promoting democracy).

- Diversity and inclusion in terms of region, gender, colour, inclusion of the LGBT community, Indigenous communities, immigrant communities and a diversity of opinion are each important to informing Canadians about each other and different aspects of local, regional, national and international events.
- Social responsibility in Canada, having a voice as a country and placing importance on not only the news culture but the entire cultural industry in promoting that voice was important to a number of participants. Some felt that this will assist in developing a cohesive Canadian identity.
- There was some general discussion concerning the media's lack of resources to cover Canadian and localized content but it is still important to share local and regional identities and information, some suggested that increasing support for the CBC is essential.
- Some acknowledged that news writers should be acknowledged as a cultural creative talent.

How do we support Canada's artists, content creators and cultural entrepreneurs in order to create a cultural ecosystem in which they thrive and that will benefit the growth of our middle class at home, and help them reach beyond our borders?

Positioning Canada as a culture and digital content leader

Many participants in Halifax already see Canada as a cultural and digital content leader, while others saw the potential for Canada to expand in this area. Canada's competitive advantages were identified by participants as the diversity of our voices and ability to tailor ourselves to niche markets within the international community, more specifically with outdoors programming where our vast landscapes lend credibility to Canada as a source for outdoor entertainment. These diverse voices reach audiences across borders, one example shared by a participant was the Trailer Park Boys, which took a very local viewpoint and story lines and successfully exported for international audiences.

- Canada needs to be proactive in promoting Canadian content worldwide and being proud of prominent Canadians who speak to Canada's voice, using the unique Canadian identity and diversity in their creations. Some participants felt, especially given recent global political climate, that Canada needs to export our values of multiculturalism through our creative industries.

Canada's cultural institutions were seen as just one piece of the overall system.

- While many felt it important to strengthen these institutions and/or their Canadians content regulations, a few questioned the infrastructure in place to support creators in reaching them. Many praise the Canadian

Broadcast Corporation (CBC), feeling that it is successful in the promotion of Canadian content with public funds, especially under-represented voices on the radio. Some felt that mandate for the CBC needs to be continued and better promoted among Canadians, feeling the current digital footprint for the CBC is cumbersome.

- Some felt that the interaction between and structure of Canada's national institutions needs to be revisited. They suggested a model that allows for greater collaboration between institutions and with the public and private sectors.

While many like the idea of promoting Canadian content, values and identity internationally, some felt that there is a stronger need to focus domestically before being concerned with international audiences.

- A key barrier for creators in promoting their content globally is connected to the issue of Intellectual property and Artists' resale rights. Creators are limited in their ability to benefit from secondary sales in Canada, which is a disadvantage compared to other countries around the world.
- A number of participants indicated that programs to encourage young creators to gain international experience and enabling them to work within a global community of creators would assist in promoting Canadian content globally. Engaging in a global community of creators through co-production support was also suggested.