

**EXECUTIVE BOARD STATEMENT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 2005**



“KEEP THE CAMERAS ROLLING”

Canada has had a long history as a film and television producing country. Feature films have been made in Canada since 1910, while television production dates back to 1952 when CBC went on air. Toronto film and television production workers have played a significant role in the continuing development of the industry, both here at home, and farther abroad. Hollywood itself has been built in part upon the careers of many Canadians.

In Toronto, film and television production is a multi-million dollar industry. According to statistics from the City of Toronto, the industry contributes approximately \$2.5 billion and 25,000 jobs to the local economy. Approximately 17,000 workers are represented by unions, the vast majority belonging to ACTRA. Other unions include the CEP, IATSE, the Media Guild, Directors Guild, Writers Guild and the Musicians.

The industry, however, has been in decline since 2000. A multitude of issues have made their contribution. Federal government policy has weakened to allow broadcasters to reduce their commitment to air Canadian content on our public airwaves. Cutbacks to programs such as the Canadian Television Fund have created instability. Globalization has led to increasing competition, not just internationally, but in just about every province across the country.

Fear mongering has generated much publicity around the so-called "runaway productions" issue, while in truth, employment figures in Hollywood have actually increased. Not much is said about the fact that of first run films shown, only 2% of screen time in Canada has originated in this country, or that billions of dollars are siphoned from the Canadian economy through the box office, the television market, and video and DVD rentals. Between 1998 and 2003, this amount was over 6.5 billion dollars.

At the local level, while we were once ranked third in North America for film and television production, we now lag far behind both Vancouver and Montreal, not to mention New York and Los Angeles.

The outbreak of the SARS epidemic in 2003 saw foreign production spending drop by 35% compared to 2002. In the City of Toronto, bureaucratic problems left over from amalgamation, decreased cooperation from City departments, long standing issues at the TTC, Exhibition Place and the Toronto District School Board, and community "burn-out" are issues that remain to be addressed.

In addition, the rising dollar, the war in Iraq, the shifting nature of the industry and the rise of "reality TV", the concentration of media companies, and changing and converging technologies have all contributed to an industry where workers are facing increasing battles and mounting pressure to roll back, and even eliminate decent wages and working conditions.

Just recently, industry mobilization resulted in the provincial Liberals finally making good on their commitments to vital film tax credits. Labour Council will add our voice and support to film and television production workers and their unions, and work with them to continue to develop sector-wide solidarity and political leverage around key industry issues.

The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

1. Form a working group of film and television production and post-production unions to address sector issues and economic development opportunities.
2. Support the recommendations of the City's Policy and Finance Committee, including the creation of a new City of Toronto Film Board chaired by Mayor David Miller.
3. Support the creation of a purpose-built studio complex, including sound stages for major feature film production, and facilities for scoring music.
4. Follow up with the provincial government on its commitment regarding tax credits for the film and television production industry.
5. Demand changes to CRTC policy and the Broadcast Act to increase the commitment of broadcasters in Canada to air Canadian content and television drama.
6. Call on the federal government to increase in funding for the Canadian Television Fund and restore foreign ownership thresholds for Canadian media and telecommunications companies.