

ACTRA TORONTO



RECOVERY & RENEWAL

ACTRA Toronto
Operating Plan
2021 - 2022



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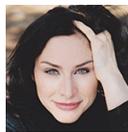
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Recovery & Renewal - ACTRA Toronto Operating Plan 2021-22

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew."

Arundhati Roy, 2020

While we continue to assess and manage the impact COVID-19 has had on our industry, we are also seeing positive change: improvements to health and safety; greater respect on set through consent-based interactions and the use of intimacy coordinators; greater engagement of members on-line and increased outreach and growth as the industry comes together in making commitments to address anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination.

2021 will be a year of recovery and renewal. We can take advantage of the lessons learned in the pandemic and the industry wide commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as we renegotiate the National Commercial Agreement (NCA) and the Independent Production Agreement (IPA). We can invest in the renewal of the industry through the efforts of the ACTRA Toronto Council and Committees in developing community partnerships and mentoring opportunities. Through our work on the new Broadcasting Act, we can help shape the legislation and regulatory framework to support and promote the development of Canadian content and Canadian creators. And, we can look within at our own by-laws and structures to renew and elect a new Council in the fall of 2021.

2019 saw record production volumes in Ontario, an increase in membership for ACTRA Toronto and a budget surplus at the end of February 2020. The impact of the pandemic on the industry and on the Union has been devastating. But we are not alone. We came together with our industry partners to lobby for supports for workers in the sector, tax credits to help cover COVID related costs and production insurance. And, we came together, as never before, to develop health and safety guidelines and protocols to get productions back up and running and people to work.

We can be very proud and grateful for the work everyone did to support each other through some very tough times and to stop the spread of COVID-19 by listening to health care professionals and heeding the advice to wear a mask, maintain physical distance and wash hands frequently.

It isn't over yet. but we are getting through this and will continue to move forward in recovery, together. And, we will use our creativity and commitment to lasting change to renew, reach out and build support – solidarity – to meet the challenges ahead.

Recovery & Renewal – Diversity is our Strength

In June 2020, following the tragic death of George Floyd, ACTRA Toronto issued a strong statement condemning anti-Black racism, police violence and discrimination. ACTRA Toronto Councillor, Kevin Hanchard, hosted a panel with former ACTRA Toronto Councillor and Diversity Advocate, Jani Lauzon, former ACTRA Toronto Councillor and Child Advocate, Tabby Johnson, former Co-Chairs of the Diversity Committee: Sedina Fiati and Farah Merani, current Co-Chairs of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee: Lisa Michelle Cornelius and Samora Smallwood, ACTRA Toronto Treasurer, Richard Young and Stunt Coordinator and former ACTRA Toronto Councillor, Angelica Lisk-Hann, to talk about past efforts and recommendations for the road ahead.

ACTRA Toronto has been a leader in the industry in promoting initiatives and programs to identify and encourage greater diversity in front of and behind our cameras and microphones. The Town Hall, hosted by Kevin Hanchard was a reminder of the incredible work done by members to make the diversity of Ontario talent visible through books, catalogues and now on-line databases. Ontario can play anywhere in the world and you can cast the world

here, too. Partnerships with cultural film festivals, casting go-sees, networking sessions and cross committee work has helped to further the growth of ACTRA Toronto's diverse membership.

One of the key recommendations made during the Town Hall was to increase dedicated resources to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. In July 2020, the ACTRA Toronto Council approved the hiring of an Industry Relations: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff person. ACTRA Toronto engaged the services of BIPOC Executive Search and are thrilled to welcome Jenn Paul to the ACTRA Toronto team. Jenn brings over a decade of experience as a producer, filmmaker, educator, organizer and champion of diversity to this new position.

ACTRA Toronto in 2021 will continue to develop its anti-Black racism plan including:

- Promotion of ACTRA Toronto's diverse members through *diversity.ACTRAonline*, the *ACTRA Toronto Spotlight* feature on social media and showcases that spotlight specific groups of underrepresented performers in the industry. The first Showcase, featuring Black Performers, was made possible through a grant from Ontario Creates and a partnership with the Casting Directors Society of Canada.
- *A Different Lens*, a project to support the development of demo reels for diverse performers, produced in conjunction with industry partners.
- Ongoing support of Voice Committee mentorship of performers who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour interested in voice work on commercials, animation and video game productions.
- Collaboration of Diversity & Inclusion Committee, the Women's Stunt Committee and the ACTRA Toronto Stunt Committee to identify and mentor stunt performers who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour.
- Continue to support and build on the work of *Working the Scene in Colour* by connecting Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) writers and diverse performers.
- Celebrate the *Sandi Ross Awards* to recognize industry professionals and production companies who have demonstrated a commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Work together with ACTRA National and industry partners on collective efforts to address anti-Black racism including outreach, training and mentoring of performers and crew
- Develop an anti-racism education course for members
- Explore on-line respectful workplace training for members of ACTRA Toronto together with members of other unions and guilds
- Continue to develop and grow partnerships with community and cultural film festivals including ReelWorld, imagineNATIVE, ReelAsian and the Regent Park Film Festival.

In addition to work challenging anti-Black racism, the ACTRA Toronto Council and Committees will continue to advance gender equality, diversity, equity and inclusion through:

- Continued work to prevent sexual harassment, including working with industry partners to develop best practices and oversight for educators, coaches and teachers

- Calling on agencies and government funders to require productions in receipt of tax credits and public monies to collect and report demographic information to measure and track the industry's commitment to gender equality and diversity.
- Exploring options to update the ACTRA Toronto census.
- The promotion and celebration of women who are "walking the talk" through the Nell Shipman Award, presented by the Toronto ACTRA Women's Committee (TAWC) that recognizes a female-identifying producer, writer, showrunner, mentor or programmer who has advanced gender equality in the industry.
- Continued support of mentorship programs like the Tool Kit sessions and Film Creation Lab that are connecting women identifying filmmakers to develop their skills on both sides of the camera.
- The promotion of Working with Queer Performers, a best practices guide produced by outACTRAto, ACTRA Toronto's Queer Committee.
- Participation in the Pride events, including marching in the Pride Parade.
- Bringing together writers and ACTRA Toronto's LGBTQ+ performers in script readings following the successful model of Working the Scene in Colour.
- Supporting Act Your Age (AYA) on-line skill building and networking sessions for senior performers.
- Challenging ageism by promoting work and work opportunities for AYA performers.
- Partnership with Holland Bloorview to identify and support child performers living with disabilities.
- Continued support of the Young Emerging Actors Assembly including the development of YEAA Shorts and partnership with ReelWorld.

Recovery & Renewal – At the bargaining table

2021 will see the renegotiation of the National Commercial Agreement (NCA) and the Independent Production Agreement (IPA) as well as the renewal of the CBC agreements and the ongoing bargaining of the CTV agreement with Bell Media. Preparation for bargaining will include a survey of lessons learned during this pandemic and an assessment of steps we can take through bargaining to further the industry-wide commitment to address systemic discrimination.

Through surveys and focus groups, we will learn more about the experiences and issues facing members including: the demands on performers for self-tapes and standards for auditions; the positive role of intimacy co-ordinators and further needed improvements to provisions to help prevent harassment; barriers to work opportunities; compensation; and improvements to ensure safe and healthy working conditions.

While we survey members about gaps and areas to be improved in our agreements, we are mindful of the impact the pandemic has had on the industry as a whole. The industry is in recovery and all forecasts suggest that we will surpass the precedent production volumes we celebrated in 2019 but it may take a year or two. We are committed to working with Producers and Engagers to see the industry recover but we will need to ensure that the recovery is not on the backs of performers, the most precarious workers in the industry. We need to be innovative. We need to

be creative. We need to stand together. **No concessions.**

ACTRA Toronto in 2021 will:

- Work with ACTRA National and Branches to renegotiate the National Commercial Agreement (NCA), the Independent Production Agreement (IPA), the CBC Agreements and continue bargaining the CTV agreement.
- Promote the new Low Budget Production Guidelines for first time and emerging producers and the Web independent Production Guideline (WiP) for low budget web-series.
- Continue to work with producers in the live entertainment sector to “pivot” their programming to reach audiences through recorded on-line media
- Work with Casting Directors to develop audition standards
- Promote guidelines: *Working with Queer Performers, Best Practices for Scenes involving Nudity, Intimacy, Simulated Sex and Sexual Violence, Best Practices for Acting Coaches and Educators* (in development), and the recommendations of the *Audition Facility Accessibility Audit*.

Recovery & Renewal – Oh, Canada

On November 3rd, 2020, the federal government introduced Bill C-10, *An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act* and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. This Act marks a beginning of the long-awaited reforms to the legislative framework for media in Canada and a significant win for ACTRA members.

Earlier in the year, just before the pandemic shut down production, the task force charged with reviewing the legislative and regulatory framework, made 92 recommendations. ACTRA Toronto’s members having lobbied for changes to ensure funding and support of Canadian content, Indigenous and diverse creators, welcomed the recommendations which included levelling of the playing field: treating the on-line broadcasters like Netflix, Disney and Crave like the traditional broadcasters.

The new Act, if passed, will do just that - potentially adding over \$830 million to the system by 2023. And the new Act includes amendments to the objectives to encourage programming that serves the interests of all Canadians including “Canadians from racialized communities and Canadians of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and ages...”

ACTRA Toronto in 2021 will:

- Participate in the consultation process on Bill C-10 and support its early passage into law.
- Lobby the CRTC to move forward with changes as provided in Bill C-10.
- Continue to support the work of FilmOntario, the industry coalition that ACTRA Toronto helped to establish, in its work to ensure competitive, stable and streamlined tax credits that attract and build production capacity. And work with FilmOntario to explore additional incentives to help increase gender equality and diversity in work opportunities for Ontario’s performers and culturally diverse content creators.
- Support the recovery of the industry and the promotion of Ontario as a safe, healthy and stable production

centre with the Ontario Creates *Ready to Roll* campaign.

- Ensure that the recovery encourages sustainable production practices to lower carbon emissions and reduce waste through our support of the *Ontario Green Screen* initiative.
- Promote and celebrate Canadian performers through the *19th Annual ACTRA Awards*, *ACTRA Spotlight* podcasts and vlogs, on-line showcases and panels.
- Expand outreach to communities, schools and acting programs through enhanced industry relations, to help raise awareness of the opportunities here in Canada for performers.
- Work with the ACTRA Toronto Stunt Community to identify training and mentoring opportunities and to showcase the depth of talent and experience in the community to producers nationally and internationally.
- Increase outreach to producers and engagers who have not previously worked with ACTRA members promoting the new Low Budget Production Guideline, the Web independent Production Guideline (WiP) and the ACTRA on-line Opportunity Pilot Project (AOPP).

Recovery & Renewal – Looking within to build for the future

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have encouraged members to exercise physical distance but stay connected. Members reached out by phone and on-line to support each other through the early weeks and months of isolation and uncertainty. The generosity of members to the AFC, delivering food to people in their homes, setting up food tables in the community, making masks and participating in town hall calls to share strategies for coping and at-home professional development are life-lines for many members as this pandemic continues. Thank you.

The ACTRA Toronto website continues to be a hub for COVID-19 resources and profiles of ACTRA Toronto performers (ACTRA Toronto@Home) supporting each other and sharing stories of what to expect working under COVID protocols and getting back to work (ACTRA Toronto@Work). ACTRA Toronto's social media channels have seen huge growth in followers, as we spotlight performers and productions. June was Audiobook month, July was all about web-series, August was animation and the fall saw the spotlight on TIFF, ReelWorld, Reel Asian, and imagineNATIVE.

Communication has never been more important and, at ACTRA Toronto, there is room for improvement.

ACTRA Toronto in 2021 will:

- Promote the new ACTRA Toronto website. Clearer, cleaner and streamlined. it is easier to find current information as well as links to ACTRA Toronto's on-line publications, committees, resources, guidelines and agreements.
- Continue to hear from members returning to work through ACTRA Toronto@Work vlogs.
- Hold regular Town Hall sessions for members.
- Support performers working in the background category through on-line education sessions and outreach to Background Agents.
- Support committees to hold meetings and educational workshops on-line.

- Continue to develop and offer on-line member education and *Respect on Set* sessions.
- Integrate content, resources and guest speakers to talk about the role of Unions historically and currently in advancing worker rights, equality and fairness.
- Hold on-line sessions for stage parents, guardians, agents and minors about getting started in the business, internet safety and rights and protections under ACTRA's agreements and the law.
- Work with ACTRA National to develop and implement the new membership system.
- Continue work with Producers and Engagers to go paperless: digitizing vouchers and the safe storage of personal information.
- Together with FirstOntario, promote Creative Arts Financial (a division created with the merger of CASCU and FirstOntario in October 2020). Creative Arts Financial will be able to provide greater financial services to ACTRA members including financial planning.
- Better promote the services of the HAVEN Helpline including access to mental health supports and the LifeWorks app.

ACTRA Toronto supported changes to the ACTRA Constitution and By-laws in 2020 that updated the governance model to be more representative and accountable to performers where they live. It was a start in the review of the Union's Constitution. ACTRA Toronto looks forward to consultations in 2021 on membership criteria and a sustainable funding model. 2021 is also a local union election year. Local Union elections and governance is conducted in accordance with the ACTRA Toronto By-laws. The pandemic delayed a review of the By-laws and the roles of Councillors and Committees, including the election of the Stunt Committee, Ombudsperson and Advocates. It is time to get that review back on track.

In the spring of 2021, the ACTRA Toronto Council will:

- Conduct a review of the ACTRA Toronto By-laws. Recommendations for changes will be presented to the ACTRA Toronto membership by referendum no later than May 2021 to implement any adopted changes in advance of elections to be held in the autumn of 2021.

Finally, Recovery and Renewal needs resources. The impact of the pandemic on ACTRA Toronto's revenues continues to be substantial. Balancing the need to support performers and productions with decreased revenue has been possible thanks to the reserves built up by ACTRA Toronto, federal government support, and the ACTRA Toronto staff through temporary lay-offs, reduced hours and work-sharing arrangements. It has been difficult. We deeply appreciate how challenging the pandemic has been for members and staff.

The collection of basic dues was deferred in 2020 and an option was provided to members to reduce the amount payable by 25%. The majority of ACTRA Toronto members opted for the reduction. ACTRA Toronto will need to continue to closely monitor the impact of the pandemic and the pace of recovery on the Union's resources and remain flexible to adapt and adjust our plans as finances permit.