

CRTC 2024-288 Public Hearing

OpenMedia Remarks

Introduction

Good morning, Commissioners and Commission staff, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm Matt Hatfield and I'm executive director of OpenMedia—a community-driven non-profit that works for an open, affordable, and surveillance-free Internet. I'm joined today by my colleague Jenna Fung, senior campaigner at OpenMedia, who led our submission to this proceeding.

Our community unites over 250,000 people across Canada who fight for digital policies that reflect their voices and the reality of our lives. We take the radical view that Canada's digital policies should be built to serve the needs and wants of ordinary Canadians, first and foremost. That's what we're here to ask from you.

Since Bill C-10 was introduced back in 2020, one question has been most fundamental: what is a Canadian story, and who gets to tell one? The more funding and support available because your content counts as Canadian – or are denied to you because it doesn't – the more important the answer to that question is.

We asked our community across Canada to tell us what they believe Canadian content is, and received 2,332 responses from people all across the country, each included in our submission. What we heard is very clear: people believe deeply in the value of Canadian content and storytelling. But we don't think Canadian content should be excessively sheltered from global competition. In fact, many believe that Canadian stories can—and should—stand proudly on their own, not hidden away or protected in a bubble.

As one community member, Chantelle Grohn from Ontario, put it:

“In our current global market, the CRTC should be **helping Canadian creators on the world stage**—not just the small Canadian one—because they can no longer control what Canadians consume. I'd like the next system to work with streaming services to have a

Canadian category in the lists. I'd like to hear adverts for Canadian content, and where to find it. I'd like to see Canadian talent promoted in Canadian venues. **Meet us where the current world is at**—not force the world into the **antiquated model of the past.**”

Being “Canadian” means...

So, what is Canadian content, really? To our community, it's about storytelling that reflects who we are as people authentically with broader, more inclusive definitions that ensure every voice counts. A huge majority—over 85%—want content created by Canadians. Over 80% say it's important that it reflects Canadian culture, history, and values.

This reinforces the result of the CRTC's commissioned polling, which found 72% of Canadians see Canadian locations as defining Canadian content, 56% Canadian actors, and 51% Canadian stories – but only 29% thought Canadian content could be defined by behind the scenes production roles.

We were surprised and deeply disappointed to see the CRTC indicate a preliminary intention to provide no additional points in its new definitions of Canadian content for any indicator of Canadian cultural significance.

Canadians expect there to be something notably Canadian on-screen or on mic when telling a Canadian story, whether that be locations, themes, or actors. They do not like to see shows about the Tudors or President Trump regularly ranked as more Canadian than the Handmaid's Tale or shows about the Maple Leafs.

While a point system that included content as well as production criteria wouldn't make that confusing outcome impossible, it would make it significantly less likely. It's great that CRTC took the initiative to ask Canadians nation-wide how we believe Canadian content should be identified. Now you have to act on what you learned.

Canadians have overwhelmingly told you they want clear signs of Canadian history and culture to count in defining Canadian content. The system needs incentives for content Canadians

recognize themselves in, not just fixed production criteria. If you don't revise it now, it will keep failing its core purpose, and eventually, it will die.

Preserving the past, embracing the future

Our community strongly values our cultural roots, past **and** present. Nearly 80% said Canadian content should reflect where we've been as a country—and almost 74% said it should reflect where we are today. People want Canadian stories that live and breathe with us—not ones that are stuck in a museum.

People are noticing a disconnect between legacy broadcasters and the growing ecosystem of independent creators. Without meaningful bridges between the two, these worlds remain separate—and we're missing out on powerful opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and growth.

Our community respects traditional Canadian media production, but also strongly supports emerging media formats. We're asking you to expand Canadian content into modern formats, such as podcasts (49.53%), short online videos (37.26%) like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube content, as well as interactive or experimental media (37.91%) like games and AR/VR experiences. It's particularly important to invest in productions that mix the virtues of old and new media and support deeper engagement and storytelling, like podcasts and long-form videos.

As a supporter from New Brunswick, Audrey Lounder, put it “We need to step up to the plate for our youth who are exploring their creativity through new and emerging channels...” This isn't a question of either/or. It's about building a system rooted in flexibility and inclusion. A system that centres creators that knows how to find a broad modern audience, one that enables Canadian creators to thrive on global platforms with the right tools, the right training, and an environment that lets their creativity grow.

Key priorities and wrap-up

Canadian content is about much more than entertainment. It's how we understand each other, learn where we come from, and shape a shared identity. These stories are the threads that strengthen our social fabric, and pass a richer vision of Canada to future generations.

We've only touched on the voices of thousands of Canadians who care deeply about our content ecosystem. We've shared what we could—but there's so much more to discuss.

We welcome your questions on our submission, especially regarding user choice in CanCon promotion, supporting digital-first storytellers, evolving the points system, and news in broadcasting regulation.

OpenMedia and the CRTC's survey both show strong public support for Canadian content with deep social and cultural value—like educational and historical programming (79.55%), high-quality journalism (71.14%), and stories that reflect our regional and cultural diversity (68.65%). But the point system needs to change to ensure more of that type of content gets made.

Thank you for listening, and we look forward to your questions!