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Heritage minister says hockey romance 'Heated Rivalry' is a Cancon triumph

OTTAWA — The Canadian TV show "Heated Rivalry" is winning fans all around the world — including Culture Minister Marc Miller, who calls the show a Cancon triumph.

Catherine Morrison, The Canadian Press
about 22 hours ago



Actors Hudson Williams, left, and Connor Storrie are shown in a scene from Crave's "Heated Rivalry" in this handout image. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Handout — Bell Media (Mandatory Credit)

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OTTAWA — The Canadian TV show "Heated Rivalry" is winning fans all around the world — including Culture Minister Marc Miller, who calls the show a Cancon triumph.

The Crave original series — a love story about pro hockey players on rival teams — is based on a series of romance novels by Nova Scotia's Rachel Reid.

Miller told The Canadian Press he has watched the first episode and is keen to watch more. He said "Heated Rivalry" has a "great plot" and is breaking down a lot of stereotypes.

The Crave series, which airs on HBO Max in the U.S., features a lot of Canadian talent, including writer-director Jacob Tierney and actors Hudson Williams, François Arnaud and Sophie Nélisse.

Miller said the show, largely shot in Toronto and Hamilton, also casts a spotlight on English and French culture in Montreal and on Canadian music. The score was composed by Quebec's Peter Peter.

The show scored the highest viewership of any Crave Original series debut on record and has been the theme for various events across the country — dance parties, trivia nights, viewing parties and improv comedy shows.

"It seems to have gained immense popularity," said Miller. "It's happening all over the world, in North America and elsewhere.

"It's pretty cool to see. That doesn't happen to every program with Canadian content."



Miller said the series showcases hockey as a source of Canadian cultural pride. He said it also resonates with people in the LGBTQ+ community and addresses issues that are "essentially taboo" in the hockey world.

"It is racy," said Miller. "People have to be ready for that. There's a lot of people going gaga over it for a lot of reasons that don't resonate with me, but I like it and so I'm going to keep watching."

"Heated Rivalry" has been renewed already and the city of Ottawa is expected to play a role in the second season plot line. Ottawa Tourism has already updated its social media bio to claim the city as the "birthplace of Shane Hollander," one of the show's main characters.

Earlier this week, Miller and Rob Oliphant, the member of Parliament for Don Valley West, toured Dark Slope Studios in Scarborough to see how they helped to produce "Heated Rivalry."

Oliphant, who is gay, said on social media that "Canada has the potential to be a global leader in culture and storytelling."

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"I'm not only proud of it because it's a gay theme, I'm not only proud because it's Canadian, but also because it is really well done," he told The Canadian Press, adding the show reminds its audience "what Canada is about."

"We're about human rights, we're about inclusion, we're about hockey," he said. "And we're about healthy, even heated, rivalry."

Miller said it was "amazing to see what's going on in that studio."

"It's pretty much 100 per cent Canadian content," the minister said. "It knocked it out of the park in terms of Cancon."

Miller said the show "even made Treasury Board look exciting" — a reference to a scene where one of the main characters says his dad works for the federal department.

"For Ottawa winks, that's an achievement in and of itself," he said.

Miller said Dark Slope Studios president Dan Fill and his team told him that before Crave picked it up, the show was pitched to a lot of people inside and outside Canada who passed on it.

"But the Government of Canada didn't," Miller said. "We put three and a half million dollars into it, plus the tax credits that these productions get.

"Not to make a joke but we got a lot of bang for our buck."

Miller said he hopes the show will encourage viewers to pay more attention to Canadian productions.

"It's piqued people's interest," he said. "Hopefully, it draws more attention to really a vibrant part of our culture."

This report by The Canadian Press was first published Jan. 15, 2026.

Catherine Morrison, The Canadian Press

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