



Ottawa permanently renews creative export initiative, pledges \$95-million over five years

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Culture Minister Marc Miller, shown on April 10 at the Liberal Party convention in Montreal, announced the new funding Monday.

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On the eve of the Cannes Film Festival, where the industry chatter on the ground suggests that the era in which global

culture revolved around the United States is now over, Culture Minister Marc Miller announced the permanent renewal of a large-scale initiative supporting Canada's creative pursuits abroad.

The Creative Export Strategy, or CES, was launched in 2018 under the Trudeau government, initially designed as a five-year \$125-million initiative to enhance the export potential of Canadian culture. Early recipients included the Canada Book Fund, the Canada Music Fund, the Canada Arts Presentation Fund, and Telefilm Canada.

According to Canadian Heritage, over the past eight years, the CES has helped more than 3,200 Canadian businesses and organizations reach 120 international markets, generating \$167.7-million in commercial deals.

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"There was some talk about not renewing this, and frankly we were quite nervous that it wouldn't. But the Prime Minister was quite clear in saying that this not only needs to be renewed, but it needs to be made permanent," Mr. Miller said in an interview about the program, after the announcement was made in Montreal. Ottawa will dedicate \$95-million to the initiative over the next five years, and \$19-million annually after that.

"It's amazing to have a Prime Minister who is putting culture at the centre of his export strategy," the minister added. "We know there are examples where these things are giving us five to one, six to one bang for your buck on return, so that's important from an economic perspective, but also as a part of radiating Canadian culture inside Canada, and outside."

The news arrives at a time when political leaders in Canada and the European Union are increasingly turning toward each other to deepen bonds, as the United States faces political and cultural isolation under President Donald Trump.

"I think it's a really important coincidence that we can leverage. I'd be lying if I told you that I could have predicted where this was going," Mr. Miller said.

He highlighted the example of Crave's hit show *Heated Rivalry*, a Canadian production. "The reason it's doing so well is that it was supported from us. They were passed over by a lot of American studios. And we embrace the risk and trust their instinct."

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It's not yet clear which agencies and institutions will be prioritized under the renewal of the CES, which is led by Canadian Heritage as opposed to Export Development Canada.

"This isn't about piggybacking on trade missions with other departments, but it's looking at the industry and seeing what it needs, and maybe doing our own missions focused on specifically creative industries," Mr. Miller said. "There is an opportunity for us to make sure that we share more and more of our film and TV and any creative industry with Europe, where there is some cultural affinity."

The minister announced the CES funding at Montreal's Phi Foundation for Contemporary Art – an ocean away from the Cannes Film Festival, the world's most prestigious and glitzy cultural gathering, but still a symbolic creative hub close to the state of global arts.

While relatively few Canadian filmmakers are on the official Cannes program compared to recent years, the homegrown industry is running high on a series of domestic productions that have broken key box-office and critical thresholds.

Running in parallel with the Cannes festival's black-tie screenings is the industry-facing Marché du Film, where the world comes to buy and sell movies. There, representatives from more than 200 Canadian companies will be on the ground to help build their businesses while they help expand the country's bustling cinematic scene.

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"At the end of the day, the big business is at the market, and we have quite a strong delegation going this year to make sure that we're part of the conversation worldwide," Julie Roy, executive director and chief executive of Telefilm, told The Globe and Mail ahead of the festival's launch. She added that Canada now has more co-production treaties than any other country.

"Diversification of markets is one of the government's top priorities, and it's the same in our sector," she said.

Ottawa is set to see the fruits of another key film-industry investment this fall, when the Toronto International Film Festival launches its inaugural content market. It will be similar to the Marché du Film, but will include television, digital and immersive media.

In 2024, the Trudeau's government pledged \$23-million to TIFF over the course of three years to stage the market, whose

organizers will be busy on the ground at Cannes this week to drum up attendance from media buyers and sellers around the world. However, Mr. Miller cannot yet say whether Ottawa will renew its investment in the festival’s content market.

“We’ll have to look at it. I know that [TIFF CEO] Cameron Bailey is working his butt off in a lot of ways, including on this new trade committee, but we’ll have to look at it and assess its success,” Mr. Miller said. “I’m really psyched about it, but I want to see it myself. If that helps and we see the returns, I would push for it. But I can’t give you that guarantee right now.”

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