

*Artistic Advisory*

*Peggy Baker ♦ Laurie Brown ♦ Max Dean ♦ Rita Shelton Deverell ♦ Douglas Gibson  
Lynda Hamilton ♦ Evelyn Hart ♦ Brenda Hoffert ♦ Paul Hoffert ♦ Thomas King ♦ Jani Lauzon  
Ranee Lee ♦ Guy Maddin ♦ Sheila McCarthy ♦ R.H. Thomson ♦ Mary Walsh ♦ Paul Wong*

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To the CRTC:

Your consultation document on the new Online Streaming Act, published in May 2023, referenced several groups that should receive more support through the Canadian Media Fund. The Canadian Artists Network is gratified that your list includes 'age.'

As we wrote in a letter published in the Globe and Mail on May 19th, 2023, ageism is the last acceptable form of prejudice. And nowhere is it more pronounced than in the broadcast media. In an era when nearly 20% of Canadians are 65+, the media continues to be obsessed with youth, and work opportunities for older performing artists are severely limited.

The situation is worse for older women; even for middle-aged women. One female actor, whose credits include a recurring role in Star Trek: The Next Generation, told me that she was on the verge of entering what she called "the crone zone," female actors who were facing a precipitous drop in roles simply because they were no longer young.

Actors from indigenous and racialized communities, along with those from the LGBTQ communities, face even bleaker prospects.

Much of the problem stems from a lack of stories about older Canadians. Even though we make up nearly 20% of the Canadian population, we are often relegated to the background, or ignored completely. And this is true in Canadian society as a whole. In a column published in the Globe and Mail on October 22nd, 2022, Andre Picard wrote, "Our culture reveres youthfulness, vitality, speed. In our money-obsessed society, your value drops precipitously when you retire and stop earning. We classify you in a new category: senior."

The irony is that artists don't retire. The creative gene does not shut off at 65; or 75, 85, or beyond. We know of actors still wanting to work, and more than capable of working, well into their 90s. But the opportunities simply aren't there.

A report published by Hill Strategies Research in 2010, "Senior Artists in Canada," that led to the founding of the Canadian Artists Network, revealed that artists in general,

including those in the performing arts, have no intention of ever retiring. The report also revealed that older artists feel they are doing their best work; or that their best is yet to come. Like all artists, actors improve with age. Their accumulated skills and experience heighten their natural talents to the extent that they are better at their craft. This rich resource is largely being ignored by the broadcast media.

In 2021, ACTRA/UBCP published a Member Census Report ([https://www.ubcpactra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/UBCP\\_ACTRA-2021-Member-Census-Report.pdf](https://www.ubcpactra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/UBCP_ACTRA-2021-Member-Census-Report.pdf)). Among its findings:

- Performers 50+ reported fewer work opportunities because there were fewer film and television projects that included their age range;
- 10% of members reported having experienced or witnessed mistreatment of older performers;
- Performers 45+ experienced the highest levels of ageism

What few stories there are about older Canadians often show them in decline, as Andre Picard pointed out; victims of dementia and other frailties. Rarely do we see stories of the vibrancy of elders. ACTRA Toronto's Act Your Age committee demonstrated this in a video called 'Misconceptions' that can be viewed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWxfHxqvl-w>

The Canadian Artists Network, formerly CSARN, was created in 2011. Our mandate is to provide services and programs for the overwhelming majority of elder artists who still want to create and contribute to Canadian society; and to speak on their behalf. We applaud the Commission's desire to see more stories by, about, and featuring older Canadians, and are more than willing to assist the Commission in any way possible.

Submitted by:



Scott Walker  
Executive Director  
Canadian Artists Network  
[scott@csarn.ca](mailto:scott@csarn.ca)  
[www.csarn.ca](http://www.csarn.ca)