



**Women in Production Action Plan**

**2020 Update**

**31 January 2021**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b><u>PAGE</u></b>
INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.0 OUR GENDER PARITY OBJECTIVE FOR 2025.....	4
2.0 AWARENESS AND OUTREACH.....	5
3.0 COLLECTIVE INDUSTRY ACTION .....	6
4.0 ACCOUNTABILITY .....	7
5.0 CONCLUSION.....	7

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Commission regularly examines issues and policies affecting Canadian television and the Canadian broadcasting system more generally. In December 2018, the Commission hosted an industry summit to discuss concerns regarding the participation and involvement of Canadian women in key creative production positions. At that meeting, the Commission invited senior executives of Canada's largest English- and French-language public and private-sector broadcasters to discuss the potential of developing voluntary action plans tailored to their business and markets that could specifically address this issue and bring lasting solutions.
2. Canadian broadcasters, independent producers and the industry overall have made concerted efforts to develop a more inclusive Canadian production industry. That said, the Commission highlighted to us the importance of developing broadcaster action plans to increase the participation of women in key creative positions (e.g., Producer, Director, Writer, Showrunner, Director of Photography and Editor).
3. In response to the Commission's request, on 30 September 2019, we filed an action plan with the objective of achieving gender parity in these key creative positions by 2025 (Action Plan). That objective applies to English- as well as French-language programming, reflecting our support and involvement in Canadian independent production in both languages. We further agreed to provide the Commission with updates on our Action Plan in subsequent broadcast years. The purpose of the present document is to outline our production projects and initiatives in the 2019-2020 broadcast year.
4. Of note, broadcasters are now also submitting Production Reports to the Commission in accordance with BIB 2019-304<sup>1</sup>. These Production Reports include detailed information about Canadian productions and acquisitions for all of our television services, including the list of production partners, budgets and licence fees for each program. They also contain itemized, per-program information regarding the participation of women in the same key creative production positions highlighted in our Action Plan. The most recent Production Report from Bell Media was filed on 30 November 2020, and already covers all of our program production expenditures for the 2019-2020 broadcast year.

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<sup>1</sup> Broadcasting Information Bulletin CRTC 2019-304, *Production Report to be completed annually by large English- and French-language ownership groups*.

5. There is little doubt that the 2019-2020 broadcast year was difficult for all Canadians, and the production sector is no exception. Government lockdowns and other public health measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the industry's ability to deliver on existing production projects, let alone new initiatives. While we have done our best to continue to deliver quality content in these unprecedented and trying times, it is quite clear that there have been significant production delays. That all being said, the current year has shown signs of improvement and the industry itself is hoping to re-establish a more consistent production calendar going forward.

## **1.0 OUR GENDER PARITY OBJECTIVE FOR 2025**

6. At the roundtable, we acknowledged the importance of providing the Commission with information about the participation of Canadian women in independently-produced programming at Bell Media. We also recognized the need to set targets, which can then form the parameters for further discussions going forward. On a going forward basis, data collection and annual reporting will provide the context within which we can discuss our efforts to address this concern, in collaboration with the Commission, independent producers and industry partners.

7. To assist the Commission in evaluating our progress in meeting this target, our Action Plan provided baseline information for independent productions at Bell Media. Appendix A provided summary data for the key creative roles in each of the three categories (i.e., Drama, Comedy and Factual), based on productions from the three previous broadcast years (2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019). We have updated Appendix A to also include data from the most recent broadcast year (2019-2020). This represents a summary of the information detailed in the Bell Media Production Report filed on 30 November 2020.

8. The Canada Media Fund (CMF) has separately developed initiatives to increase gender balance in key creative positions (which differ from those identified by the Commission). Broadcasters are required to spend a minimum of their CMF performance envelope allocations on projects where at least 40% of the total number of key creative positions are held by women. The thresholds set by the CMF began at 15% of each broadcaster's envelope in 2017, and have grown to now being 30% in 2020.

9. The current wording of our agreements with producers specifically indicate such a funding objective and require producers to use their best efforts to meet the CMF gender balance requirement. As a result, Bell Media exceeds the CMF requirement.

## **2.0 AWARENESS AND OUTREACH**

10. Bell Media already works closely with Canadian producers in an effort to ensure that our Canadian programming includes a variety of creative inputs and points of view. Under the leadership of our senior executives, the Original Programming team continues to be in regular contact with the talented Canadian production community and with writers, directors and actors. They are proactive in their ongoing search to identify new creative talent involved in productions throughout Canada, and review emerging Canadian talent and current programming trends to stimulate new programming and outreach ideas.

11. During the 2019-2020 broadcast year, the number of women in key positions on the Bell Media Quebec team increased through the following appointments and promotions:

- Suzane Landry was appointed as Vice-President, French-Language Content Development and Programming;
- Mélanie Bhérer became General Manager, Variety, Lifestyle, and Documentary;
- Sophie Parizeau was appointed as General Manager, Fiction and Digital Content; and
- Lucie Quenneville was appointed as General Manager, Programming Strategies and Acquisitions.

12. These changes underscore our commitment to the career advancement of women to play a leading role in the Canadian television industry, and the production of original, compelling and exceptional content in Quebec.

13. Our Original Programming teams had to adapt quickly to the impact COVID-19 had on the production industry across Canada. At the start of the pandemic, amid government shutdowns, they quickly adjusted to working remotely and were able to continue to stay in touch with the independent production community by conducting meetings by video and telephone conferencing.

14. In broadcast year 2019-2020, Bell Media's production executives attended 967 meetings with producers and creators from across the country, and received nearly 940 pitches for project ideas in the English-language market. Members of the Original Programming team attended 34 industry events, and were actively involved in 14 different educational initiatives throughout Canada. During a challenging year to travel, Bell Media production executives continued to engage in industry events, many of which switched to a virtual format for 2020.

15. Members of our French-language production team held more than 261 meetings with independent producers, partners and talent from Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. These meetings, aimed at developing the best projects for Bell Media's French-language television services, were held at our Montreal offices or by video and telephone conferencing, and at 27 industry events involving independent producers that were held at locations such as Montreal, London, and New Orleans, or in a virtual format. They allowed programming managers to meet the representatives of more than 45 production companies.

16. All of these industry outreach meetings provide us with a unique opportunity to broaden the awareness of this important issue and strengthen our resolve to work together with our industry partners as we strive to meet our gender parity objective for our independent production slate.

17. Outside of production itself, we have also participated in industry initiatives which sought to increase the participation of women in production. As such, we welcome the opportunity to work with other broadcasters, producers and industry partners to further develop ways to address this issue. Over the course of the year, we were involved in events such as *Tricksters and Writers*, a feature film screenplay writing program for Indigenous women; *From our Dark Side*, a contest seeking the best genre film project ideas by diverse, Canadian women; and the *St John's International Women's Film Festival*.

### **3.0 COLLECTIVE INDUSTRY ACTION**

18. While we are prepared to work with the Commission and pursue the objective of gender parity by 2025, the reality is that we cannot do it alone. There are practical considerations that effectively impact our ability to develop and implement initiatives in this area.

19. While we commission and work on program projects, independent producers are more directly involved in the production process and have significant operational authority throughout the steps of that process. As a result, while we can set gender parity targets and develop action plans, Canadian independent producers must also become involved, and allocate the appropriate time, attention and resources that we may need for any number of industry initiatives in the years ahead.

20. We must also work with other broadcasters and other digital media companies, now and going forward. It will take a concerted and collaborative industry effort to apply principles and best practices on an industry-wide basis.

#### **4.0 ACCOUNTABILITY**

21. As mentioned earlier, Bell Media also submits Production Reports to the Commission, providing detailed information about each of the Canadian productions and acquisitions, for all television services, including specific information regarding the participation of women in a number of key creative production positions. Our most recent Production Report was filed on 30 November 2020, and contains such information for the period of September 2019 to August 2020.

22. On an annual basis, we will continue to provide the Commission with an update of our Action Plan. Such an update will contain production participation information and an overview of the initiatives undertaken during the year to increase the participation of women in our Canadian independent productions.

#### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

23. We look forward to continuing our work on this ambitious and important industry initiative over the years to come, and in working with the Commission, and alongside other industry partners, to further expand the contributions of Canadian women in key areas of Canadian programming.

\*\*\* End of Document \*\*\*

**Appendix A**  
**Bell Media - Women in Production**  
**Percentage of Key Roles held by women (BY GENRE)**  
**(as of August 2020)**

<b>ENGLISH-LANGUAGE GROUP</b>						
<b>Key Role</b>	<b>DRAMA</b>		<b>COMEDY</b>		<b>FACTUAL</b>	
	<b>Prior 3 years</b>	<b>BY 19-20</b>	<b>Prior 3 years</b>	<b>BY 19-20</b>	<b>Prior 3 years</b>	<b>BY 19-20</b>
Producer	60.24%	56.76%	19.19%	25.86%	55.38%	44.72%
Director	8.21%	33.33%	46.87%	66.67%	9.00%	15.15%
Writer	47.03%	65.22%	26.75%	16.67%	50.59%	34.94%
DOP	3.24%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.99%
Editor	16.53%	22.22%	3.62%	0.00%	7.40%	13.82%

<b>FRENCH-LANGUAGE GROUP</b>						
<b>Key Role</b>	<b>DRAMA</b>		<b>COMEDY</b>		<b>FACTUAL</b>	
	<b>Prior 3 years</b>	<b>BY 19-20</b>	<b>Prior 3 years</b>	<b>BY 19-20</b>	<b>Prior 3 years</b>	<b>BY 19-20</b>
Producer	54.64%	56.14%	38.53%	50.00%	55.38%	61.20%
Director	31.04%	28.57%	9.97%	23.08%	9.00%	23.66%
Writer	64.47%	46.67%	22.67%	21.43%	50.59%	38.14%
DOP	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	7.39%
Editor	72.05%	57.14%	15.92%	38.46%	7.40%	52.73%