

Montréal Game Summit

Address by Charles Bélanger
Chair of Telefilm Canada

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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to begin first of all by sincerely thanking Alliance NumériQC for having invited me to the Montréal Game Summit, an event which proves beyond a doubt that we are living in a world that is constantly re-inventing itself.

A world in which we Canadians, Quebecers and Montrealers have a major role to play. I was very pleased to learn, recently, that Wired Magazine has identified Montréal as one of the world's four leading centres for the development of video games. There's no question that this summit is being held in the right city, at the right time!

Over the next two, event-filled days, you will be turning your attention to a number of crucial issues: game theory and practice, design, distribution, management, product development, new languages, cinematic effects, and so on. It's not often that an event brings together thinkers, administrators, practitioners and artists, and I salute this exceptional achievement.

So what exactly is Telefilm Canada doing, sailing cheerily through the sometimes stormy waters of new technology – technology which aims to enrich our lives and our culture?

Our commitment

Our commitment to the funding of interactive digital production coincides with the explosive growth of choice in new media and with the increasing importance of the Internet. Telefilm administers the Canada New Media Fund, one of the funds set up to help our country achieve its goals in the area of on-line Canadian culture. An initiative of the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Fund has an advisory committee made up of new-media professionals. Telefilm works jointly with the Department and the industry to ensure that the Fund truly does meet the needs of its clients.

Telefilm wants to be a **partner** in the journey you've embarked upon, at home as well as abroad, whether you're developing prototypes or taking your finished products to international markets. The Corporation is a cultural investor in film, television, new media and music. Our principal objective is to **increase the number of audiences, consumers and users** of Canadian cultural products, today and for the future. We firmly believe that Canadian creative endeavours, including

new-media products, must have the greatest impact possible, both at home and on the international stage.

Telefilm was first given the task of administering a multimedia fund – "multimedia" was the term we used back then – in 1997. Needless to say, after more than 30 years spent navigating the cultural waters of film and television, our organization was entering uncharted territory when it turned its attention to new media. But we've done our homework over the last few years. Indeed, we evolved along with the industry by always striving, as did the industry, to see a little further ahead.

Thanks to new media, we are now reaching out to a new client base: young people who are "plugged in" to new technology, who turn to their computers when they want to learn, share and be entertained. Alongside them, we've taken the plunge into innovation and interactive experimentation!

We fully understand that new interactive technologies will have an influence on the culture of the future. These technologies will have a distinct impact on the way we think, and therefore on the way we deliver entertainment products.

That's why Telefilm is so committed to its partnership with companies and creators in the new-media industry. We're also aware, however, that the world in which you work is in a constant state of flux, and that performance and results are measured on a global scale.

Challenges and achievements

The greatest challenges you face are financial ones. Because producers in the new-media sector assume considerable risk when compared to other sectors of cultural production, and because the revenue models you work with are still a challenge, the Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board has recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage make increasing the creation of original content a priority. This would be achieved, notably, by increasing the level of funding available to the industry. Telefilm backs this recommendation and is working with the Department and the industry to make it a reality.

At the national level, the current budget of the Canada New Media Fund allows us to support some 40 companies each year, primarily SMEs. We are looking for additional financial resources because the projects being submitted to us – especially those for games – are more and more ambitious and, as a result, require significant levels of funding. We would like to increase our contribution to these

projects, something which would certainly provide encouragement to new-media companies.

Telefilm serves as a financial partner as well as a business partner, one who works side-by-side with its clients at every stage of a project, from prototype to international markets. We are a cultural investor, not a bank, and our clients welcome the advice and guidance services we offer, which they see as an added-value element in our relationship with them. We have teams of experienced analysts who come from the new-media world and who are in tune with what's happening in this world. Our programs evolve and adapt in step with the changing needs of our customers.

We are involved in several areas of activity: the development of prototypes, production, market research, and distribution, as well as in events such as the Montréal Game Summit, which help improve creative and professional practices in the games sector.

On the **international scene**, Telefilm runs the Canadian Pavilion at E3 in Los Angeles. Each year, the Pavilion hosts more than 20 Canadian companies who take advantage of its facilities to sell their products and make valuable networking contacts. Telefilm's staff includes international marketing specialists, who work wonders. Through the Canadian Pavilion at E3, Canadian companies – and not just those which enjoy Telefilm support – have a unique opportunity to display their products at a nominal cost during the world's largest gaming event.

Canadian games are big sellers on the international scene. The Canadian industry is being called on to play an increasingly active leadership role in positioning our country on the world stage.

If increasing audiences is an important objective, so is **building the potential** of your industry. Telefilm aims to reduce the financial burden that companies face, notably by simplifying its processes, by encouraging greater diversity of financial resources, and by promoting strategies for international development. We also believe in the importance of advanced training in this new knowledge-based society. We are currently studying available training resources across the country, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, so that we can develop a multi-year training plan. New-media professionals and companies won't be overlooked in this initiative.

I hope that the next two days of the Montréal Game Summit will be productive ones for all participants. I also fervently hope that this event has a bright and solid future, that it grows to become a true reflection of Canada's game industry, in all its vitality and energy.