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Canada's Policy of Cultural Diversity Reporting in the Audiovisual Industry: Making Monitoring Meaningful

Recent research from Canada, the United States, and Europe points to the *continued* marginalization of women, individuals with disabilities and visible minorities in the audiovisual sector despite acknowledgment, effort and attention from both government and industry. Individuals from these marginalized groups are underrepresented in all aspects of the field, especially in top creative and decision-making roles, and earn less on average than their non-minority counterparts.

Canada, in particular, serves as an illuminating case study. Canada is often touted as a *cultural mosaic* both officially and more colloquially, and its commitment to multiculturalism is codified in the country's most fundamental legislation, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Canadian Broadcasting Act also requires that the broadcasting system must reflect Canada's diversity through both its programming and employment opportunities. In addition, despite the fact that the main regulating body, the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) began experimenting with reporting requirements related to the status of women in the regulated broadcasting industry as early as the 1980s, and has required broadcasters to report annually on their diversity management strategies since 2001—the industry is still dominated by white, middle-aged men, and the growth of individuals from the marginalized groups in the audiovisual sector lags behind their growth in the general workforce. This is curious to say the least, since monitoring has been identified as a hallmark of successful diversity management strategies in previous studies.

In order to get at the core of the issue, we undertook a comprehensive review of the current Canadian diversity reporting process and related policies. We began with a brief examination of the 152 broadcaster reports submitted to the CRTC since the introduction of the requirement, and examined more closely the 30 reports submitted in the two most recent reporting cycles using qualitative data analysis software, QDA Miner. We found that the reports vary significantly in format, content, breadth, depth and even sincerity. In this paper, we evaluate the reasons behind these variations and assess the policy framework's readiness for the future.

We argue that a more meaningful, evidence-based and refocused monitoring regime is urgently required. An absence of consistent, regularly produced indicators in pursuit of meaningful and measurable goals, lukewarm policy leadership on the part of the regulator, generally weak advocacy by the affected groups, all hinder genuine progress in this area. We also argue that the current diversity reporting procedures fail to address where the bulk of the work is and increasingly will be—the independent (and unregulated) production sector. As work becomes increasingly casualized, and as more producers turn to making content for alternative platforms—the current reporting procedures will become even less effective. We also make the case for an expanded definition of *diversity*, which encompasses other currently unmonitored bases for discrimination, such as age and sexuality. This case study will prove instructive for both policy-makers and researchers. It demonstrates the need for standardization, measurability and dialogue in diversity monitoring regimes and underscores the ascending importance of designing policies that address the realities of working in the digital age.