

Topic	SUPPORTING CANADA’S COMEDY INDUSTRY		
Date	February 23, 2019	Location	1300 Gerrard St E, Toronto ON
Host(s)	Sandra Battalini , Exec Member, Canadian Association of Stand-Up Comedians		
Participants	Sarah Fowlie Anna Gustafson Simon Rakoff Derek Seguin Phil Luzi Allison Dore Christelle Pare Gavin Stephens Dave Hemstad Millan Curry-Sharples		Michelle Daly Tim Steeves Nick Beaton Barry Kennedy Tracy Rideout Monty Scott Louise Richer Steve Patterson Matt K(?)
Notetaker(s)	Ben Duval Zoe Brownstone Natalie Tomasella Johanne Smith	Facilitator(s)	Jane Farrow Adam Growe Adam Helfand-Green
Invitation	<p>“Please join Mass Culture and the Canadian Association of Stand-up Comedians for a gathering of participants from across the comedy industry including broadcasters, comedy clubs, bookers, festival organizers and comedians. We hope you can join us and bring your unique perspective to the table and help us answer the following question:</p> <p>How can professional Canadian comedy creators make Canada a global leader in comedy content?</p> <p>It will be an historic gathering and mark the leap-off point for strengthening the comedy industry in our country for everyone.”</p>		
Perspectives and thoughts	<p>CASC proposed two sets of ideas to participants for their feedback. Each set referred to a key element of an ideal system that would provide high impact supports for Canada’s stand-up comedy industry: “Money In” (where funding could come from) & “Money Out” (how funding should be spent). The discussion was mostly framed around roles that the Canadian Association of Stand-Up Comedians could take in actualizing this system.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Money In”</p> <p><u>Public Funding</u>: Canadian comedians need to be eligible for existing public culture funding beginning with recognition as an art or field of practice through arts funding programs. Moreover, Canadian comedians need to have access to new streams of funding that will benefit the entire comedy industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Other programs identified included those that fund creation of media content, tourism events and cultural content exports. ● Contributions from private entities that generate revenues through Canadian comedy should be mandated and pooled with public funding to 		

	<p>create a source of funding specifically for comics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More specifically, establishing an economic and development infrastructure that would create a source of funding specifically for comedians, that would also benefit all relevant stakeholders in the production, presentation, broadcast, and distribution of Canadian comedy content. Such an infrastructure would support programs that fund the creation of media content, live performance, tourism events, and cultural content exports. • In addition to the financial outcomes, explicit recognition of comedy as an art form and “field of practice” by public sector arts councils is needed in order for comedians to have access to domestic and cultural export funding programs. This is a priority, as, in addition to the immediate financial assistance, recognition through funding would strengthen Canadian comedy’s legitimacy in the eyes of the government and the public at large. <p><u>Live Comedy:</u> The cost of attending live comedy in Canada has not increased along with other forms of entertainment. Coordination among all players in the live comedy ecosystem is needed to raise average ticket prices and improve margins for everyone.</p> <p><u>“Cancom”:</u> A Canadian content policy framework for stand-up comedy should be created and designed to benefit Canadian artists, not simply broadcasters/producers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royalties generated through SiriusXM’s Canada Laughs station are an integral part of the financing system that supports Canadian comics. <p><u>Private Financing:</u> There are several gaps in accessing private financing/resources that could be addressed to the benefit of Canada’s comedy industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated platform that promotes comics and that allows greatest access to private companies will create more well-paying opportunities. • Credit Unions that recognize the unique careers of artists exist that could be accessed to support comics. • Travel companies, airlines, car rentals, venues & hotels could be approached to create programs that benefit comics. <p style="text-align: center;">“Money Out”</p> <p><u>Public Awareness Campaign:</u> An effective public relations strategy for Canadian comedy is needed to overcome US dominance and attract larger, paying audiences. The strategy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote individual comics to raise the profile of Canada-based talent and highlight the issue of significant talent outflow to the US. • Convey the challenging realities of a Canadian comedy career and the unique value of comedy as a form of art and entertainment. • Raise awareness of the lack of reciprocal border treatment that Canadian comics face when trying to enter the US, compared to US comics coming to Canada.
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	<p><u>Comedy Community Outreach:</u> Creating a simplified message to attract Canadian comics and partners in the wider ecosystem to join the advocacy movement is needed. Outreach will also be necessary when/if comedy funding programs are created.</p> <p><u>Funding:</u> The highest priority for funding Canadian comedy is offsetting touring costs. Funding could also support recording & releasing album/specials and marketing costs.</p> <p><u>Resources for Comedians:</u> Create a central hub of resources for comics covering topics such as standardized contracts, navigating funding programs, Canada-wide touring routes, ethical comedy venues, other general professional development information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Other ideas included creating a comedian mentorship program and creating comic residencies across Canada. <p><u>Canadian Comedy Festival:</u> Creating a truly Canadian Comedy festival on behalf of the comedy community that includes up-and-coming Canadian comics would be a strong step forward as an industry. This could take the form of a cross country tour or through individual events across the country.</p>
<p>What research would be useful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic and cultural impact research of Canada’s comedy industry. ● Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM) assessment of comedy ● Appropriate way to define “professional comedian” for determining eligibility to a funding program.
<p>Whose voices are missing around the table?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More comedy club/venue operators ● Representatives from private broadcasters & OTT services ● Greater diversity of comedians. ● Public funder representation ● Comedy audiences & the public
<p>Resources & Links (mentioned during discussion or shared afterwards)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research, programs and expertise developed at the l’Ecole nationale de l’humour in Montreal Quebec. ● The Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union (www.creativeartscu.com) identified as created specifically for artists. ● The Investors Group Comedy Tour was identified as the largest truly Canadian comedy tour.
<p>What next steps were mentioned as a result of the Gathering?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing a CASC action plan based on findings and recommendations. ● Connect with ACTRA members to find out what has and has not worked for them. ● Follow-up discussions with broadcasters, Canada-based OTT services and comedy venue operators on recommendations and findings.