

Observatoire du documentaire Documentary Network

DOCUMENTARY DECLARATION

- 1. Context.** We are living in an era marked by extreme turbulence — geopolitical, economic, social, ecological and cultural. Documentary filmmakers show us what they think about the world, and help us understand the realities around us, think critically and be more open to other people and other ways of thinking. Documentary filmmakers help create a free space that is essential to democratic life.
- 2. Prestige.** Documentary has secured Canada's reputation abroad since the arrival of cinéma vérité at the beginning of the 1960s. The many awards won all over the world by films produced by the National Film Board of Canada and by independent filmmakers and producers confirm the international recognition of Canadian documentary and contribute to the country's reputation.
- 3. Overall vision.** To ensure the survival and development of documentary, its situation must be analyzed globally and holistically so that all the elements that contribute to its success develop in harmony.
- 4. Creation and production.** Production financing is vital for high-quality documentary cinema. It gives filmmakers the freedom to produce high-quality films. In this regard, documentary needs strong national institutions with adequate budgets and long-term financing: The Canadian Television Fund, without which there would be no or few documentaries; Téléfilm Canada, which needs to create a program for feature documentaries for theatrical release; the National Film Board of Canada, a unique institution that encourages innovation and exploration of new forms; and the Canada Council for the Arts, for filmmakers' grants. At the same time, it is crucial that provincial bodies in charge of cultural programs offer support: the Quebec institution SODEC is in this respect a model whose budget needs to be increased so that production of documentary works can return to previous levels.
- 5. Television broadcasting.** Documentary is a precious contribution to democratic life and therefore should be accessible to all. Auteur documentary on television should be given more space and more priority. The national public television stations (SRC-CBC) as well as educational television (such as Télé-Québec and TVOntario) must be able to count on stable and substantial budgets. Generally speaking, private television must also make more room for documentary.
- 6. Distribution.** The creation of a network of digital theatres intended primarily for auteur cinema will provide the public in every region with access to documentary film. The Internet — and the new platforms — is becoming a more and more attractive distribution network for documentary. A study is currently underway of a portal project to make our documentary heritage accessible to the general public. However, these new avenues of distribution require serious consideration of the question of copyright and fair payment to copyright holders.
- 7. Training of filmmakers.** The number of filmmaker training programs is growing, but there must be concerted and varied ongoing training that allows professional filmmakers to keep up to date, especially where production and distribution technologies are concerned.
- 8. Audience development.** Festivals (RIDM, Hot Docs) and other broadcasting events attract new audiences to documentary and are therefore an essential part of a film's distribution. Furthermore, schools should teach children how to *decode* the audiovisual language, so that they will have an adequate knowledge of contemporary culture; and teenagers should be exposed to a film culture that is open to the world and considerate of their own universe.

October 2006