

THE PROBLEM WITH BEING FUNNY IN CANADA

A Canadian Comedy Story

POLICY BRIEF ON COMEDY IN CANADA

Prepared for:
Canadian Freelance Union / Unifor / CASC

Prepared by:
Sandra Battaglini

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 **unifor**
theUnion | lesyndicat



Executive SUMMARY

Canadian comedians occupy a paradoxical position within Canada's cultural landscape. Comedy is one of the country's most recognizable cultural exports and a powerful vehicle for expressing Canadian identity, yet comedians remain largely excluded from the institutional frameworks designed to support Canadian culture.

They will continue to face challenges to their livelihoods and struggle to build their audience base without important policy changes, which include eligibility for key funding mechanisms such as the Canada Council for the Arts as well as greater ability and ease to work in the United States. In addition, comedians in Canada deserve the creation of industry standards, protections to defend their rights as workers, and the ability to negotiate for fair and equitable pay and fair treatment within their workplaces.

Unlike writers, musicians, filmmakers, and theatre artists, comedians are not formally recognized within key federal cultural funding mechanisms. As a result, they cannot access public funding to develop work,



Jeff Paul, Keith Pedro, Matt O'Brien, Julia Hladkowitz, Cliff Myers, Kari Johnson, Hershawn Arora, Ali Hassan. *Ice Breakers Comedy Festival.*

tour nationally, record albums or specials, build digital audiences, or participate in professional training and mentorship programs. This exclusion creates a structural gap in Canada's cultural policy that undermines the sustainability of the comedy sector and leaves comedians among the most precarious cultural workers in the country.

These challenges have been further compounded by the rapid transformation of the digital economy, especially most recently where content creation is centre stage! Comedians are now expected to function as content creators first and performers second. The normalization of unpaid labour has heightened pressure on artists to sustain visibility, effectively turning discoverability into its own full-time job. This is no laughing matter. Meanwhile, global platforms—such as TikTok—exclude Canadian creators from monetization programs like the Creator Rewards Program, further limiting their ability to generate income from their work.

Belinda Corpuz, Alia Rasul and Maricris Rivera. Tita Collective. *All Of Our Parents Are Asian Improv Show.*



Photo Credit: Tyra Sweet

Andrew Phung and Jan Caruana. *Theatresports.*



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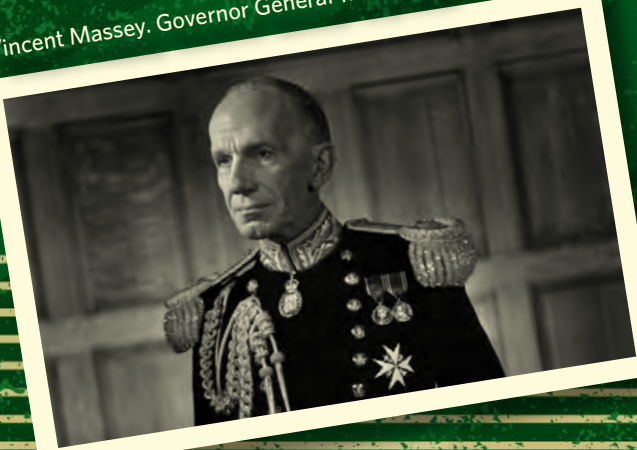
Canada has long recognized culture as a pillar of national sovereignty.

From the findings of the Massey Report in 1951 to contemporary debates about digital sovereignty and cultural policy, governments have repeatedly acknowledged that supporting artists is essential to maintaining a distinct Canadian voice in the shadow of the United States. Yet comedians—despite being central storytellers of Canadian life—have remained largely absent from these policy frameworks.

Comedy must be recognized as a legitimate artistic field within Canada's cultural policy architecture. Immediate federal action is required to formally recognize comedy as an art form, extend eligibility to comedians for public arts funding, address barriers to cross-border labour mobility, and establish sector standards that protect comedians as cultural workers.

Doing so is not simply about supporting a group of performers, it is about safeguarding a vital form of Canadian storytelling. Comedy reflects the everyday lived experiences and complexities of Canadian life in real time. Without meaningful policy support, Canada risks diminishing an essential voice in its cultural conversation—and ceding yet another space of cultural expression to U.S. dominance.

Vincent Massey, Governor General 1952-1959.



Affirmative Reaction. *All Of Our Parents Are Asian Improv Show.* Photo Credit: Tyra Sweet

Simply put, at the center of this problem is a structural contradiction: Canadian comedians are told they belong to the cultural industries, yet when the definitions of those industries are examined, comedians are nowhere to be found.

Goal

The goal of this project is to establish comedy as a recognized cultural sector within Canada's arts and cultural policy landscape and to create sustainability, structure, and permanence in the comedy sector in Canada.

Despite comedy's cultural significance and economic contribution, Canadian comedians—specifically those who perform stand-up, improvisational and sketch comedy—remain excluded from the primary federal institutions designed to support artistic creation and cultural production.

This initiative seeks to correct that structural gap by advocating policy changes that recognize comedians as cultural workers and ensure they have equitable access to the resources, protections, and opportunities available to other artists.

(From the correspondence of Samuel Marchbanks)

To Apollo Fishhorn, Esq.,

March 5, 1950

Dear Mr. Fishhorn:—

You want to be a Canadian playwright, and ask me for advice as to how to set about it. Well, Fishhorn, the first thing you had better acquaint yourself with is the physical conditions of the Canadian theatre. Every great drama, as you know, has been shaped by its playhouse. The Greek drama gained grandeur from its marble outdoor theatres; the Elizabethan drama was given fluidity by the extreme adaptability of the Elizabethan playhouse stage; French classical drama took its formal tone from its exquisite, candle-lit theatres. You see what I mean.

Now what is the Canadian playhouse? Nine times out of ten, Fishhorn, it is a school hall, smelling of chalk and kids, and decorated in the Early Concrete style. The stage is a small, raised room at one end. And I mean room. If you step into the wings suddenly you will fracture your nose against the wall. There is no place for storing scenery, no place for the actors to dress, and the lighting is designed to warm the stage but not to illuminate it.

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This includes:

- Formal recognition of comedy as an artistic discipline within the **Canada Council for the Arts** funding framework and all provincial and territorial funding bodies.
- Improved labour protections and industry standards for comedians.
- Greater equity in cross-border labour mobility between Canada and the United States.
- Policy solutions addressing digital platform monetization and discoverability.
- The development of research and data that accurately reflects the economic and cultural impact of Canadian comedians.



Photo Credit: DJ Tran

The Tita Collective. *Our Big Fat Immigrant Christmas*.

Together, these measures would strengthen the sustainability of Canada's comedy ecosystem and ensure that comedians are included in national cultural policy conversations.

Excluded from key funding structures and facing barriers to both domestic and international markets, Canadian comedians operate within a system that offers little institutional support for the development and export of their work.

This exclusion represents more than a professional challenge for comedians—it is a missed opportunity for Canada's cultural sector. Canadian comedians have achieved global success and helped shape international comedy, yet much of that success occurs outside the country.

At a time when Canada continues to confront the challenges of cultural sovereignty in a rapidly evolving digital media landscape, supporting comedy is not merely an issue of fairness. It is an investment in a uniquely powerful form of Canadian cultural expression.

Recognizing and supporting comedians as cultural workers would strengthen Canada's creative economy, expand opportunities for Canadian voices, and ensure that comedy remains a vibrant part of the nation's cultural future.

Mike Myers, Neil Young and Adele. *Rivoli Wall of Fame!*



Cliff Myers, *Ballroom Bitz 11*.



Introduction

Canadian comedy is frequently treated as entertainment rather than as a recognized sector within Canada's cultural industries. Stand-up, improv and sketch comedians generate economic activity through live performance, festivals, digital content production, touring, television and streaming appearances, writing, and international cultural export.

Canadian performers have played a defining role in shaping global comedy—from the improvisational traditions of the Second City to the sketch comedy legacy of the Kids in the Hall, to the international success of breakout artists such as Robby Hoffman, Mae Martin, Laura Ramoso and Steph Tolev. Despite this influence, comedy remains largely absent from Canada's formal cultural policy architecture. While other cultural sectors receive structured support through agencies such as the Canada Council for the Arts, comedians operate outside these frameworks, often building internationally recognized careers without the institutional support afforded to other Canadian artists. Recognizing comedy as a cultural industry is therefore not a symbolic gesture—it is a necessary step toward aligning Canada's cultural policy with the realities of contemporary creative work.

It is worth noting that the federal government does provide funding to comedy in Canada through a number of measures that are mostly dedicated to venues and festivals. According to a response email from a Department of Canadian Heritage representative:

The Government acknowledges the barriers that Canadian comedians face in accessing American stages. It may interest you to know that several Canadian Heritage funding programs already recognize humour as an eligible performance discipline, namely the Canada Arts Training Fund, the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, and the Canada Arts Presentation Fund. Comedy-focused organizations are welcome to apply if they meet program criteria. Many have recently received support, such as l'École nationale de l'humour in Montréal, HubCap Comedy Festival, the Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival, Arctic Comedy Festival, Halifax ComedyFest, ComediHa! Fest, and Juste pour rire.

While this financial support is welcome, in practice the funding does little for working comedians and performers and does not filter down to comedy creators. In fact, much of the money given to these festivals is used to bring in American acts.

Kids in the Hall. Kevin McDonald, Scott Thompson, Bruce McCulloch, Dave Foley, Mark McKinney.

Photo Credit: CBC/CBC Comedy



Gilda Radner, Dave Thomas, Rosemary Radcliffe, Eugene Levy, John Candy.



1. *The Structural* **PROBLEM**

Comedy and Canadian Cultural Sovereignty

In its Legislative Review in 2020, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) emphasized the urgent need to recognize that in the digital age, audiovisual content is central to preserving and expressing Canada's cultural identity and sovereignty in all its diversity.

As global platforms increasingly dominate the cultural marketplace, the stories Canadians see, hear, and engage with risk being shaped by foreign interests—primarily those of the United States—unless immediate action is taken to put Canada first.

This monumental shift in the informational landscape has added a significant pressure to produce a constant stream of content. Within this rapidly shifting cultural marketplace, Canadian comedians face a uniquely precarious position—one shaped not only by market forces but by structural exclusions within Canada's own cultural policy framework.



2. *Why Comedy* **MATTERS**

Comedy is an integral component of Canada's economy, its culture and identity. Low-key we're known around the globe as being funny. So why then does Canada not recognize it?

How about a little context shall we?

During the Second World War, Canadian arts groups urged federal investment in arts and culture in response to totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, as a way of protecting democracy. (*Background Paper, Federal Arts Policy on Arts and Culture, 2010*).

As a result, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent officially appointed a Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in 1949.

The report found that:

As an agricultural and industrial nation Canada ranks high in the world. But as a cultured nation exploring the human mind and soul she ranks low. She has excused herself because of the size of her population, her youth and the battle she has had to wage wresting the country from nature. Those last two excuses are valid no longer, the first one never was.

— (*The Massey Report 1951*)

Not only did Canadians want to protect their democracy at the time, they were also intent on safeguarding the very existence of the country itself. In the post-war era, this took on particular urgency as the Massey Report warned about the 'anemic state of Canadian culture and the pervasive influence of American culture in Canada.' Canada's increasing military and economic ties to the United States fuelled fears over continentalism—a doctrine that Canada and the U.S. should merge into one North American nation. Therefore, it recommended strengthening "those permanent instruments which give meaning to our unity and make us conscious of the best in our national life."

The report concluded that:

No novelist, poet, short story writer, historian, biographer, or other writer of non-technical books can make even a modestly comfortable living by selling his work in Canada. No composer of music can live at all on what Canada pays him for his compositions. Apart from radio drama, no playwright, and only a few actors and producers, can live by working in the theatre in Canada. Gifted Canadians must be content with a precarious and unrewarding life in Canada or go abroad where their talents are in demand.

— *The Massey Report.*



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Nearly 70 years later, the warning reads less like a historical footnote and more like a familiar refrain—one which Canadian comedians know all too well. From the earliest versions of Canada's modern cultural policy framework, comedians were largely absent from the conversation—and in many ways they remain so today. What the Massey Commission could not have anticipated was that an entire cultural field would emerge outside the structures it helped build. Comedy would become one of Canada's most recognizable cultural exports, yet the artists who created it would remain largely absent from the institutional frameworks designed to support Canadian culture.

Since the publication of the Massey Report, anxiety underlying the continental merger intensified in 1989 with the coming into force of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement—a watershed moment in Canadian economic policy and a profound test of cultural sovereignty. What had once been framed as the risk of artists leaving for opportunity abroad became entangled with a new structural reality: the increasing integration of Canada's cultural industries into a continental market.



Photo credit: Fred Chartrand/The Canadian Press
John Turner and Brian Mulroney. Leader's debate, 1984.

In a televised debate between John Turner and Brian Mulroney, Turner foresaw what was to come.

Once a country yields its agriculture, once a country opens itself up to a subsidy war with the United States... then the political ability of this country to sustain the influence of the United States to remain as an independent nation, that is gone forever. We built an infrastructure that deliberately resisted the continental pressure of the United States. For 120 years we've done it. With a single signature of a pen. You've reversed that. Thrown us into the north-south influence of the United States and will reduce us I'm sure to a colony of the United States because when the economic levers go, the political independence is sure to follow.

Mulroney countered, "I believe in my own modest way, I am nation building." Perhaps this is what Mulroney believed but as history has shown it submerged us deeper into a tangled web of American dominance and near total monopoly over so many aspects of our Canadian life. The most stunning – our culture.



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In a report commissioned by the Mulroney government on the cultural industries in 1987 entitled, *Vital Links*, it was reported that:

Most of the off-stage cultural fare that Canadians consume comes from somewhere else. Seventy-six percent of books sold in Canada are imported, 97% of theatrical screen time goes to imported films, 89% of earnings in the sound-recording industry accrues to 12 foreign controlled firms that principally market imported popular music, and despite decades of effort to regulate broadcasting, over 90 percent of dramatic television presentations are non-Canadian in origin. Our bookstores, newsstands, record shops, cinemas and television screens testify to Canada's position as one of the greatest importers of cultural products in the world... The concern is not with the ease of access to the products of other cultures. It is rather with the difficulty of access to our own products, a difficulty that is primarily a function of the economics of the cultural industries which place the cheaper, mass-marketed, imported products at such a distinct advantage...



More than 35 years ago, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences described the basic danger: the disproportionate volume of every kind of foreign, principally American product flowing into Canada made it difficult for our own products to be seen and heard. Progress has unquestionably been made since then. There were hardly any Canadian books, records or films around in 1950 and for that matter, virtually no professional performing arts companies. In the three decades since a steady build up of creative organizations has taken place and... On paper Canada is now comparable to that of other developed countries. However, these achievements are fragile. The basic point is that the fundamental structural dilemma affecting Canada's cultural industries has worsened, in part because of a rapidly changing external environment.



In consequence, as contemporary British observer Anthony Smith has noted, 'No country in the world probably is more committed than Canada to the practice of free flow in its culture and no country is more completely its victim.'



3. *The Emergence* **OF A COMEDY MOVEMENT**

For decades, Canadian comedians operated without any formal industry structure, collective representation, or access to public cultural funding. That began to change in 2016 when a small group of comedians organized around a simple demand: recognition and reciprocity.

In that same debate between Turner and Mulroney, Turner proclaimed that Canada does not have **reciprocal rights** into the American market. It coincidentally became the rallying cry for the movement that emerged in 2016 when Canadian comedians rallied behind an open letter to then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, asking for “Just a Little Reciprocity,” written by Sandra Battaglini. The letter called for access to arts funding and the easing of restrictions to work in the United States. They soon after formed **CASC** (The Canadian Association of Stand-up, Sketch and Improv Comedians), a move unprecedented in the world and made their first trip to Ottawa during the NAFTA re-negotiations with the generous stewardship of Temple Scott & Associates in 2018.

CASC participated in multiple meetings with Ministers and federal departments regarding labour mobility. At the time, the government was compiling a list of potential retaliatory measures to counter the Trump administration’s new tariff war and asked whether CASC would support a tariff on American comedians entering Canada for work. After much deliberation, CASC declined, citing solidarity with their American counterparts. Shortly thereafter, labour mobility was removed from the negotiating table.

Officials from the Department of Trade cited Canada’s unwillingness to open its telecommunications sector as the cause since major firms such as Rogers Communications and Bell Canada could be subsumed by American telecom giants. In turn, the United States declined to advance discussions on labour mobility. In effect, Canada prioritized the protection of its telecommunications industry under the banner of cultural sovereignty, as they are meant to be primary disseminators of Canadian culture.

To that end, in a press conference, Justin Trudeau stated: “It is inconceivable to Canadians that an American network might buy Canadian media affiliates, whether it’s newspapers or TV stations or TV networks. So, we’ve made it very clear that defending that cultural exemption is something that is fundamental to Canadians.” (CBC, Sept 5, 2018)

Sandra Battaglini, Ludmilla von Hoyningen Huene, Sean Carson and lobbyist Chris Gray. Canadian Parliament.



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Certainly, protecting Canadian media companies from acquisition by American conglomerates is defensible if those entities are meaningfully investing in and generating Canadian cultural assets. However, for years, companies such as Bell and Rogers have relied heavily on acquiring American programming and designating it as Canadian content, prioritizing commercial returns over substantive cultural development.

For decades, Canada has justified cultural policy as a defence against American cultural dominance. Yet, within this long tradition of cultural protection, one major group of cultural workers has remained largely invisible: comedians.

At CASC's next round of lobbying in Ottawa and with the backing of MP Julie Dabrusin, an e-petition was circulated asking for the federal government to have comedy recognized as an art form. It was tabled in the House of Commons and received a standing ovation. Momentum was building. A spirit of solidarity was beginning to take hold. Then...

A defining crisis!

The fragility of the Canadian comedy ecosystem became starkly visible in 2019 when news surfaced that Just for Laughs would acquire Sirius XM's comedy channel, Canada Laughs (Channel 168). The new station, rebranded as Just for Laughs Radio, would now play content from its archives which included performers from around the world, reducing what had long been the only space for independent Canadian comedians to be heard.



Just for Laughs to air only Canadian comedians after blowback over radio deal

By Staff • The Canadian Press
Posted February 28, 2019 1:01 am • 2 min read



Comedians cried “foul... saying the move would deprive homegrown talent of a vital source of exposure and income.” ([Global News, February 28, 2019](#))

What followed was an extraordinary act of collective mobilization. News of the acquisition circulated rapidly around the world galvanizing performers and allies alike. [UK's Chortle](#) called it the “[Canadian Revolution](#)”. CASC began tense talks with Just for Laughs executives, cautioning President Bruce Hills that the decision would have devastating consequences for Canada's comedy sector. Simultaneously, appeals were made to the Department of Canadian Heritage, and public pressure mounted — including criticism directed at Howie Mandel, a partner in the venture.



CASC President, Cliff Myers, Unifor National Conference.

Then a monumental thing occurred. “Senior officials for the partner companies jointly announced Wednesday that the redubbed Just For Laughs Radio Canada would solely showcase independent Canadian comedians, who will be entitled to the same royalties as under the previous regime.” (Global News, February 28, 2019)

The episode marked more than a temporary controversy; it revealed the fragility of Canadian comedy’s infrastructure and the stakes of media consolidation within a small cultural market. It also demonstrated that comedians—long treated as independent contractors operating in isolation—could mobilize collectively to defend their labour rights and economic survival.

What began as a defensive reaction to a corporate consolidation evolved into a durable assertion of cultural labour power. Against this backdrop, in early 2024, the channel quietly dropped its affiliation with Just for Laughs and rebranded again, this time as SiriusXM Comedy Club, a move welcomed by comedians.

It’s no small miracle that comedians were able to organize in such a meaningful way and at such a pivotal moment. A decade later, they joined Unifor (Canada’s largest private sector union) as a community chapter with local CFU (Canadian Freelance Union), officially bringing them into the labour movement. At their National Council meeting in 2025, the CFU brought forth a resolution demanding the federal government officially recognize comedy as an art form and it passed unanimously. Never before had this occurred with the CFU.

Yet, even as comedians began organizing collectively, they encountered a deeper problem: not merely a lack of funding, but a lack of definition. Within Canada’s cultural policy framework, comedians appear to exist everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

Founding President, Sandra Battaglini, Unifor National Conference, 2024.



4. *The Structural* **CONTRADICTION**

It's all in the definition!

For almost a decade since its founding, CASC has been lobbying the Canada Council for the Arts to have comedy included as a **field of practice**. When they first met with the Council, comedy wasn't considered an art form, which was the reason given to many comedians as to why they were denied funding. Subsequently, the Council started encouraging comedians to apply for funding and simultaneously denying them, on the basis of lacking "recognized" or "legitimate" credits.

In our most recent correspondence, a representative of the Council stated:

*They support comedy through the artistic disciplines of storytelling and theatre. The Canada Council's funding complements other sources of public support that are more appropriately tailored for commercial, for-profit cultural industries and small businesses, or academic and social programs. The Council **does not fund commercial projects** in cultural industries such as comedy, music, film, television, and video games. The Council supports only a limited number of for-profit artistic organizations that are important to the dissemination of the works of artists and authors, such as literary publishers, record labels, and arts management services.*



Founding CASC Executive: Sandra Battaglini, Johanne Britton and Adam Grove with Canada Council for the Arts.

Although the Council acknowledges the creativity inherent in many activities, it is strongly recommended that applicants demonstrate their artistic intent first and foremost when applying for funding and ensure that projects provide professional working conditions for artists and cultural workers.

Unfortunately, it appears the Council supports comedy but **not** when it's performed by comedians.

What defines the Canadian cultural industry?

According to **Culture Works Canada**, cultural activity involves the creation, research, development, production, manufacturing, distribution, presentation, performance, and/or preservation of creative goods and services, including the discovery and preservation of heritage—all with a professional intent. That sounds like what a comedian does.



Culture Works Canada
Empowering Canada's Cultural Workforce



Evan Carter, *The One Show*.

So, what then is a cultural good or service? Formally, it must be the result of a creative, artistic activity and satisfy at least one of the following criteria: it must have the potential of being protected by copyright legislation. Examples include magazine articles, scripts, manuscripts, drawings, choreography, books, newspapers, sculptures, radio programs, films, etc. It enables the creation, production, dissemination, or preservation of culture products, e.g., recording, manufacturing, printing, broadcasting, podcasting, and more.

What is a cultural occupation? It involves the creation, production, and dissemination of cultural goods and services, such as—painters, actors, dancers, writers, and musicians. Technical and operational occupations provide support for cultural goods and services, such as technicians in television, film, or broadcasting. Heritage collection and preservation is a smaller group, including librarians, conservators, archivists, and conservation officers. Cultural management provides managerial support for the creation, production, and dissemination of cultural goods and services.

Comedians are named nowhere in these definitions, despite clearly meeting the criteria.

Material or immaterial?

In September 2017, the Department of Canadian Heritage launched *Creative Canada*, a policy framework that positions the creative industries at the core of Canada's cultural identity and economy. It expressed a mandate to anchor the creative sector at the heart of Canada's immaterial economy.

The irony is that what comedians develop **is** material. Comedians produce the very material—the scripts, performances, and recordings—that flow through the comedy system yet remain largely invisible to it.

If comedy clearly produces cultural goods, participates in cultural industries, and generates intellectual property, the question remains: why are comedians still absent from the frameworks that define and support Canada's cultural workforce?

Behind the spotlight and the global recognition, however, lies a stark reality: Canadian comedians are building this cultural success largely on their own, navigating systemic barriers, precarious work, and minimal institutional support.

That question leads directly to the central issue facing the profession today: **the labour reality of comedy.**

5. *The Labour Reality* **OF COMEDY**

Behind the cultural policy debates lies a simpler reality: comedy is work.

Maybe that's what's been missing from the discourse about Canadian comedy this whole time.

To be clear when we're talking about comedy in this context, we mean **stand-up**, **improv** and **sketch** comedy.

Too often, Canadian comedians donate, barter and even perform their work for free. Without industry standards, negotiating for fair and equitable pay and safe working conditions becomes a precarious endeavour, and the value assigned to comedians remains largely at the whim of clubs, producers, agents, and peers.

This is not to suggest there aren't excellent producers and club owners in Canada who treat comedians fairly, but there is a long history of serious delinquency. For example, if you are on the Yuk Yuk's roster, you are forbidden to perform at other clubs, even when they don't offer full-time employment. This is a decades old practice that was challenged in the 1980s when comedians protested the company's anti-competition policies.

Comedians complained they had to be booked through Funny Business, the talent agency set up by [Mark] Breslin to service his clubs and touring shows. Comics complained that if they found gigs through other agencies or performed at outside venues, they weren't welcomed at Yuk Yuk's. The federal competition bureau stepped in to investigate and concluded that Breslin's empire controlled the supply of stand-up comedy and engaged in anti-competitive acts that could lessen the competition for stand-up comedy services. Breslin somehow claimed "a clear victory for our system" but promised to stop doing the things the comics groused about and thereby avoided a full-blown hearing before the Competition Tribunal which could have resulted in fines or seen his businesses broken up.

- "Nobody's Laughing Now", The Globe and Mail, March 22, 2008

Rohini Kalia, Yuk Yuk's Toronto.



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To this day, comedians still face these challenging conditions.

Canadian comedians have complained our national broadcaster has evaded its responsibility to pay comedians for recordings on CBC Laugh Out Loud. Despite the CBC-ACTRA agreement requiring performance fees for comedians, CBC's *Laugh Out Loud* recordings have routinely only paid comedians if the recording was used. Contracts were often issued after the fact, and copyright considerations were not addressed. Comedians were not included in the most recent negotiations when these terms were re-set between the two parties, despite CASC's request over the last six years.

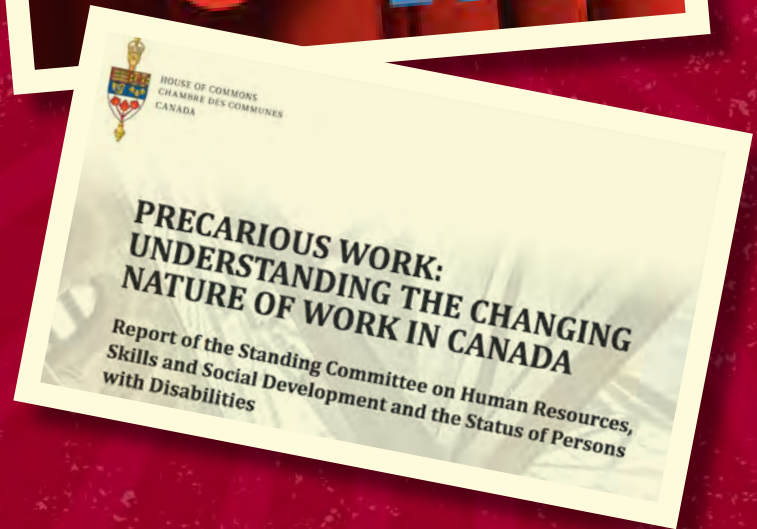
This pattern of exclusion reflects a broader trend in the Canadian comedy sector: while comedians create the material, build audiences, and drive revenue, they remain largely absent from the structures and policies that govern their work.

Kirsten Rasmussen, *Hookup*.



Photo Credit: DJ Tran

Cliff Myers, *Laugh Out Loud*.



Precarious Work

What does it mean then to be a precarious worker?

In a report entitled: "*Precarious Work: Understanding the Changing Nature of Work in Canada*," precarity includes: low-wages, income volatility, insecure working arrangements, unsafe work, lack of access to social protections, lack of opportunities for career advancement and skills training as well as vulnerable workers.

This couldn't be truer for Canadian comedians, which is precisely why CASC joined Unifor as a community chapter - a program created for precarious workers.

6. *Digital Era* **THREATS**

In an urgent letter to Prime Minister Carney, Canadians for Digital Sovereignty—an ad hoc coalition of organizations and citizens—warned of the existential threat posed by American Big Tech to Canada’s digital infrastructure, economy, political life, and culture, arguing that:

Canadian democracy cannot be free if our digital public sphere is overrun by foreign influence and made toxic for profit. Nor will we prosper as a zone of extraction—whether of oil, timber, minerals, or of data, intellectual property, or talent.

We are a sovereign country with one of the world’s largest digital markets, a highly creative and connected population, diverse in its official languages and cultural expressions and values, and yet we are being left no choice but to accept the “unquestioned and unchallenged technological dominance” of the US and all the harms this entails.

(<https://c4ds.ca/>)

Prominent Canadians such as Margaret Atwood, Atom Egoyan, and John Ralston Saul—artists emboldened by Canada’s cultural policy framework—are now among the most vocal proponents calling for the country to reclaim its sovereignty.

If cultural sovereignty is being eroded at the level of infrastructure and policy, it is experienced most acutely at the level of the artist—particularly in sectors like comedy that increasingly rely on digital platforms to reach audiences and generate income.

Unequal Monetization in the Digital Economy

Social media platforms have become essential tools for comedians and other creators to build audiences, distribute work, and develop professional opportunities. However, Canadian creators face structural disadvantages within the monetization systems of several major platforms.

A tiered system of digital monetization is emerging in which creators in some countries are able to earn revenue directly from the performance of their content, while others—including Canadians—remain excluded. One of the most significant examples is the Creator Rewards Program offered by TikTok.

The Creator Rewards Program allows eligible creators to earn revenue directly based on the performance of their video content once certain thresholds are met, including minimum follower counts and viewership levels. Currently, the program is available only to creators in a limited number of countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, South Korea, France, Mexico, and Brazil. Canadian creators are not eligible to participate.



Canadians for
Digital Sovereignty

While creators in participating countries are able to generate direct income from viral content through the Creator Rewards Program, Canadian creators do not have access to the same revenue stream.

Representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage have indicated that the decision not to extend this monetization program to Canadian creators is a corporate decision made by the platform itself rather than the result of Canadian regulatory policy. Regardless of the rationale, the outcome is that Canadian creators operate within the same global digital marketplace as their international peers but without equal access to monetization tools.

Canadian creators do have access to several alternative monetization features on TikTok. These include brand partnerships through **TikTok One for Creators**, which connects advertisers directly with content creators; viewer-based appreciation tools such as **Video Gifts**, which allow audiences to send digital gifts that convert into small payments; and **Subscriptions**, which enable fans to support creators through recurring monthly payments. While these tools provide opportunities for revenue generation, they function differently from the Creator Rewards Program, which compensates creators directly based on the reach and performance of their content.

Illustrative Case Study

Consider two comedians who post similar short stand-up clips on TikTok—one based in the United States and one in Canada. Both creators meet the platform's eligibility thresholds, with more than 10,000 followers and hundreds of thousands of views on their videos. If the American comedian's clip goes viral, they are eligible to receive direct payments through the Creator Rewards Program based on the performance of the video. The Canadian comedian, despite achieving the same level of audience engagement, receives no equivalent direct compensation.

In practice, this means that Canadian creators must rely on indirect revenue sources such as brand partnerships or fan contributions, while creators in eligible countries are able to earn income directly from the success of their content. Over time, these differences compound, creating a structural disadvantage for Canadian comedians working within the same global digital marketplace.

As digital platforms increasingly shape the global comedy industry, unequal access to monetization systems risks placing Canadian creators at a competitive disadvantage. Compounding this, Canadian comedians face significant barriers to performing abroad.



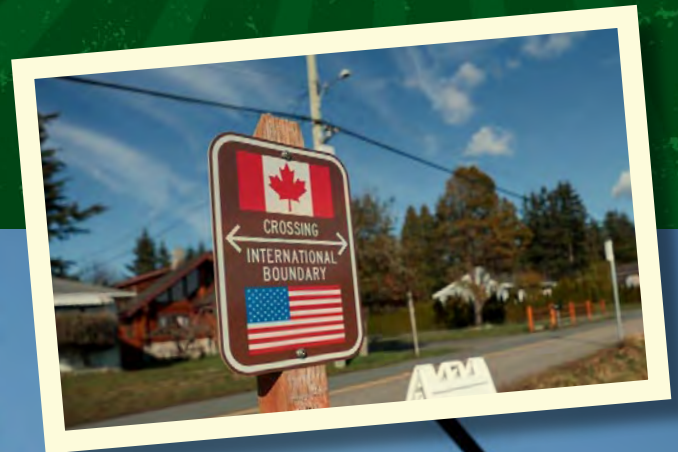
7. *Labour* **MOBILITY**

Canadian comedians seeking to work in the United States face significant financial and bureaucratic barriers, often paying USD\$10,000–\$15,000 for visas and permits. Conversely, Americans face relatively few barriers to work in Canada and may pay a minimal fee of \$45. This cost creates a structural disadvantage, forcing many to invest heavily just to access international opportunities.



Photo credit: Stephan Kazemi
Monty Scott, *The One Show*. CASC President, 2020-2023.

Meanwhile, the lack of domestic pathways for well-compensated, high-profile work exacerbates precarity and limits career growth at home. Reducing these barriers is critical to ensuring Canadian comedy can thrive both domestically and on the global stage.



8. *Digital Platforms* **AND CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY**

The unequal monetization structures of global platforms are not merely a technical or corporate issue; they are increasingly a question of cultural sovereignty. Canadian comedians are participating in the same global attention economy as their peers, yet they do so with fewer economic tools available to convert that attention into sustainable careers.

Over time, this imbalance risks reinforcing a familiar pattern in Canada's cultural sector: creators who achieve significant online audiences often feel pressure to relocate to larger markets, particularly the United States, where industry infrastructure and monetization opportunities are stronger. When digital platforms replicate these disparities, they accelerate the outflow of Canadian creative talent and weaken the domestic ecosystem that supports it. Ensuring that Canadian creators can participate on equal footing in global digital economies should therefore be considered part of Canada's broader cultural policy framework.



9. *Policy Gap:* **WHERE DO COMEDIANS FIT?**

In defence of Canadian Artists!

Canada has a long history of defending artists... at least in proclamation and often in response to America's cultural hegemony.

In 1980, Canada signed the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, which deals with artists' rights of association and working conditions. In 1987, the same policy paper noted earlier, *Vital Links*, asserted that culture in Canada had become active and assertive, but that Canadian cultural industries continued to face challenges in linking creators with their audiences.¹

Subsequently, in a speech he gave defending the free trade agreement, Mulroney challenged critics who claimed it would be a threat to Canada's artistic class:

¹ The North American Free Trade Agreement includes provisions that allow Canada to support its domestic cultural industries, subject to certain limits. The limits of such protection became apparent in 1997, when the World Trade Organization ruled against measures to promote the Canadian magazine industry.
7 (Backgrounder, Federal Government Policy on Arts and Culture)



Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

*Canadian artists, writers and publishers serve unique Canadian needs, with works which capture and express the Canadian identity. But their domestic audience is relatively small. For us in Canada, the assistance of the government is needed to overcome the small-scale economies which are a fact of life. That is why we have taken, and will continue to take steps to strengthen Canadian culture, such as we have done recently for film distribution. In these discussions, **Canadian culture is not on the table.***

Ironically the same proclamation was stated by Justin Trudeau during the NAFTA renegotiations in 2018. Canadian culture would not be at the negotiating table.

In 1995, the Status of the Artist Act came into force. It established a framework for professional relations between independent professional artists and producers working in fields under federal jurisdiction. In addition, it created the Canadian Artists and Producers Professional Relations Tribunal to administer those relations which has since been abolished



and is now under the jurisdiction of the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

In 1999, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage released a report entitled, *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Being*, which called for a continued and enhanced federal role in support of culture. The goal of the report was to “ensure that Canadians have Canadian choices and to connect Canadians to the wide-ranging Canadian experience” through wide-ranging content, creativity, innovation, and capacity building.

Taken together, these milestone reports suggest a country deeply committed—at least rhetorically—to the protection and promotion of its artists. Yet the question remains: what has materially changed?

In a follow up to the (UNESCO) Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist in 2023, the Report highlighted the following stark realities:

The cultural and creative economy fuels growth and innovation around the world. It is at the heart of our societies and represents 3.1 per cent of global GDP. But we often forget the very people who make this possible – the artists who bring cultural diversity to life and inspire our societies. With the exception of a fortunate minority, artists and cultural

professionals often live precariously and face significant obstacles to the full enjoyment of their social and economic rights. The sector is highly informal, and many workers do not have access to decent working conditions, are paid unfairly, or lack adequate social protection. The COVID-19 pandemic brought these issues to a crisis point. Many venues shut down, resulting in significant financial losses across the cultural industries. The first people to suffer were the artists. While the sector is slowly recovering ... enormous challenges are emerging.

For example, the digital age gives artists new connections to the world, access to broader markets and new tools for creativity. But it also exposes them to the increased risk of plagiarism, intellectual property rights infringement, income, and employment loss. The uncharted waters of artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on the creative process and artists’ livelihoods represent a source of growing concern.
– (*Empowering Creativity: Implementing the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist, UNESCO*)

Then the report makes its most salient point:

In a highly competitive sector, artists often lack the leverage needed to influence policy compared to corporate players.



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Without that leverage, it's easy to understand why artists remain peripheral and are often treated more like hobbyists than professionals. And when you stack it up against the overwhelming power and resources of Big Tech, where will our creative assets end up and who will protect and defend our status, if not us?

While our elected leaders have so far failed to rise to the challenge, most recently, Mark Carney's [speech](#) at Davos seemed to offer some hope.

But I'd also say that great powers can afford for now to go it alone. They have the market size, the military capacity and the leverage to dictate terms. Middle powers do not. But when we only negotiate bilaterally with a hegemon, we negotiate from weakness. We accept what's offered. We compete with each other to be the most accommodating. This is not sovereignty. It's the performance of sovereignty while accepting subordination. In a world of great power rivalry, the countries in between have a choice – compete with each other for favour, or to combine to create a third path with impact.

Less than a year before the Davos speech, Carney had already dropped the digital service tax in an attempt to show good will during ongoing tariff negotiations. This tax (a 3% levy on revenues generated from Canadian



Tricia Black, Colin Mochrie, Ajahnis Charley, Andrew Phung, Liz Johnston. *Theatresports*.

operations) was meant to recoup tax on digital transactions and earnings from large foreign tech companies that operate online marketplaces, advertising services and social media platforms that sell access to user data. (["What is Canada's Digital Services Tax", Forbes, June 30, 2025](#))

Despite Carney's tough talk at Davos, it appears that U.S. interests still hold sway. In an op-ed in the *Globe and Mail* about the DST walk back, Taylor C. Noakes stated: "Let's be clear. We're subsidizing American tech giants that have been undermining Canada's economy as much as our sovereignty for many years." ([The Globe and Mail, July 3, 2025](#))

If these examples are not yet enough proof of just how much damage the American Hegemon has inflicted, let's consider Richard Stursberg's potent and chilling analysis in his new book, *Lament for a Literature*, where he argues that the Trudeau Liberals, "took over a badly weakened cultural sector from the Harper Conservatives and threw money at it without addressing the difficult structural issues affecting it, only making things worse." (["Book Excerpt: How Trudeau Liberals' DEI obsession helped kill Canadian culture", National Post, Jan 27, 2026](#))

CASC Board members Sandra Battaglini, Adam Growe, Johanne Britton and Senator Dennis Dawson.



He asserts that what the government did not take into consideration was:

That as Canadian media eroded and Canadians embraced the new foreign digital platforms, they walked away from Canada itself. They no longer consumed Canadian news, laughed at Canadian comedies, read Canadian books, watched Canadian documentaries, or heard the opinions of Canadian experts on domestic social, cultural, political, economic, or historical issues. They effectively left the national conversation and moved to another amorphous, filter-bubbling virtual country.

- *Lament for a Literature*, 2026

The Revolving Door of Canadian Culture

When you factor in the latest appointment of Marc Miller as the new Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture (formerly Heritage)—the 7th Minister in a decade—you wonder what commitment does the Canadian government have to Canadian culture?

The Globe and Mail's deputy arts and film editor Barry Hertz describes the role as a revolving door. "When you have a constant reshuffling of a position like this it points to a deeper problem. You would never see the position of Finance Minister rotate like this."

Colin Mochrie and Naomi Snieckus.



He then goes on to reference a warning issued by one of his colleagues in 2019 when Steven Guilbeault was Minister. Kate Taylor highlighted the challenges he would face: "Canadian broadcasters and producers being steamrolled by untaxed U.S. tech giants; domestic media being slaughtered by algorithmic social media; copyright infringements pinching the few pennies that musicians and authors had left."

Hertz concluded:

Now, more than ever, the Canadian arts community needs a trusted, experienced and dedicated advocate. Instead, Carney shuffled in another Trudeau loyalist without a particularly strong history of cultural advocacy, or really a history on that front at all. Out with the old, in with the even older. Formerly, Miller was the minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.
- *Globe and Mail*, December 2, 2025

In March 2026, the Canada Council for the Arts invited the arts community in an online forum to Help Shape their Next Strategic Plan to 2031. In their introductory remarks they proclaimed Canadian artists live in "chronic precarity." For Canadian comedians—excluded entirely from recognition by the federal funding agency—precarity is not a condition; it is policy.



If the Heritage/Culture and Identity portfolio lacks permanence, it suggests our culture itself is treated as provisional and therefore hangs in the balance.

And when Canadian comedians aren't even acknowledged by the Canada Council for the Arts or by the Status of the Artist—an **international principle** that recognizes the vital role professional artists play in society and seeks to improve their social and economic conditions—we have a fundamental problem. Comedians meet every criterion in that definition, yet remain excluded. This is not just a Canadian issue—it is an international one.

The Status of the Artist defines an Artist as: *as independent contractors determined to be professionals based on the following categories:*

- authors of artistic, dramatic, literary or musical works within the meaning of the Copyright Act, or directors responsible for the overall direction of audiovisual works;
- artists who perform, sing, recite, direct or act, in any manner, in a musical, literary or dramatic work, or in a circus, variety, mime or puppet show; or
- artists who contribute to the creation of any production in the performing arts, music, dance and variety entertainment, film, radio and television, video, sound-recording, dubbing or the recording of commercials, arts and crafts, or visual arts, and fall within a professional category prescribed by regulation.

In practice, comedians are performing the very work that defines the artist—yet the system refuses to recognize them both domestically and internationally.

The Global Fight to Recognize Comedy

The agitation over lack of support is growing. Consider that currently in the United Kingdom, comedians are asking the federal government to support the comedy industry.

Leading figures from the world of comedy have met the government to make the case for comedy, including that it be recognised as an art form in its own right to improve funding access and policy development. Further talks are expected and Culture Minister Ian Murray has said he is “entirely behind” a proposal to work with comedy to “better understand the opportunities for government intervention. And while government agencies say they support comedy, Arts Council England (ACE) has insisted it does offer support for comedy but has no plans to change how it organises its funding.
- “Comedians tell ministers lack of funding is no laughing matter”, BBC, April 4, 2026)

Here, too, there is a familiar pattern: expressions of support from government, coupled with institutional inertia when it comes to meaningful structural change.

Clare McConnell, Franco Nguyen, Connor Low, Alastair Forbes and Tyra Banda. Theatresports.

Photo Credit: DJ Tran



It seems both the Canada Council for the Arts and Arts Council England offer up the same dull responses—acknowledging the value of the work in principle, while sidestepping the deeper policy shifts required to sustain it in practice.

Labour MP Dr. Simon Opher, who is interested in using comedy to “make people better” said:

One of the problems with the structure of comedy is that the big comics are on loads of money and they're all fine and the small comics are playing to 20 in a shed and not getting paid for it all and it's a bit like music in that way.

This omission is not just symbolic; it has material consequences. Comedians are excluded from institutional protections, federal funding, and professional advocacy that other artists receive. Their work is essential, their output measurable, and their cultural impact undeniable—but their formal recognition remains absent.

In 2024, the UK Live Comedy Association (one of the groups behind this initiative) met with CASC to better understand the grassroots movement that emerged in Canada and what actions they could take to have comedy recognized as an art form. Canada is inspiring the world to see comedy for what it truly is: a mirror, a rebellion, and an art form in its own right.

CASC has not only fostered a collaborative network within the country they have been exploring partnerships globally. When Melanie Joly was Heritage Minister back in 2015 the department changed its focus from promoting Canadian culture domestically to developing an explicit export strategy. CASC believed there was no greater way or cheaper way to export Canadian culture than through comedy. CASC presented the department with a trade mission—tell the world Canada is a comedy nation, through a series of exchange tours. The department loved it and CASC began talks with comedians in Sweden, France and South Africa. Unfortunately, this was just before 2020 and the efforts halted.

The next section presents some comprehensive evidence and data on Canadian comedy, showing how these policy gaps translate into real-world barriers for artists, creators, and the industry as a whole.

CASC Board and the Department of Canadian Heritage.



10. *Evidence, Data, and* **IMMEDIATE NEEDS**

Currently, there is no federal economic impact data for the comedy industry in Canada, however the first ever analysis was conducted in Ontario through Ontario Creates. It identified the top three barriers to comedians' success: lack of public investment or government support, insufficient high-profile or well-paying gigs at festivals and venues, and pressure to accept low pay. The study also found that limited performance spaces and scarce opportunities in content development and production make it difficult for Ontario creators to compete in the global digital media market.

A major step forward in infrastructure support has been the establishment of **The Foundation for Canadian Comedy (CANCOM)**—a federally registered nonprofit dedicated to supporting Canadian comedy artists.

Their Comedy Symposium - the first national initiative to provide independent artists and technical workers with professional development, networking, and feedback opportunities was a major development. For the first time, federal funding was directed toward a national comedy program designed, managed, and delivered by comedy artists, for comedy artists, offering crucial support for content creation, career advancement, and sustainable professional development.



Photo Credit: Stephan Kazemi
Simon Rakoff, Jewish Comedy Festival.

CANCOM has distributed roughly \$322,000 in grants and contracts to support 25 projects, with 15 more slated for funding this year. These efforts have been crucial and precedent setting, but roundtable discussions with comedians across the country for this paper revealed that significant structural gaps remain.

Roundtable Findings: Immediate Needs of the Canadian Comedy Sector

In February 2026, a group of comedy sector participants made up of comedians, writers, agents and club owners, convened at a roundtable to discuss the state of comedy in Canada. The group highlighted several consistent themes regarding the most immediate needs facing the Canadian comedy industry. Their perspectives converged around a shared set of structural challenges affecting the sustainability of comedy as a profession in Canada.



Expanded Opportunities for Live Performance

Participants emphasized that the growth of comedy audiences in Canada has not been matched by a corresponding expansion in professional opportunities for performers. Geographic limitations, venue capacity, financial constraints, and regulatory barriers—particularly those affecting Canadian comedians seeking to work in the United States—continue to restrict career development. Participants noted that increasing opportunities to perform live remains one of the most direct ways to strengthen the sector. More stages mean more artists developing their craft, more audiences discovering Canadian comedians, and ultimately a stronger comedy ecosystem.

At the same time, participants expressed concern that many existing opportunities are driven primarily by commercial viability. While financially successful productions are important, comedians also require spaces where they can experiment, develop new material, and refine their voices. These developmental spaces—historically central to comedy’s evolution—are limited in many parts of the country, partially due to the lingering effects of pandemic-era lockdowns.

When you consider that many weekend slots in Canadian comedy clubs and venues are increasingly being taken up by American comedians, Canadian comedians continue to be marginalized on their very own turf. And when comedy brands such as Don’t Tell

Comedy (who create pop-up comedy shows in unique, non-traditional locations in over 250 cities worldwide, and films select shows to release stand-up comedy video content online) operate freely in Canada, offer low paid work to comedians... profits flow south and the cycle continues.

Education, Mentorship, and Professional Development

A recurring theme was the need for greater access to industry education and mentorship. Many emerging comedians lack information about the business aspects of the profession, including contract negotiation, production pathways, self-producing shows, and navigating digital platforms. Participants noted this knowledge gap often leads to undercutting, exploitative working conditions, and missed opportunities for artists to create sustainable careers.

Several participants suggested that a centralized educational resource—potentially developed through the CASC—could provide open-access training, webinars, and mentorship opportunities for comedians across the country. Such initiatives could help professionalize the industry while empowering artists to create and manage their own opportunities.

Economic Sustainability and Precarious Labour Conditions

Participants consistently described the financial instability faced by working comedians. Many performers fund their creative work through multiple unrelated jobs

while developing material, producing shows, and building audiences. In many cases, artists invest years of unpaid labour into their careers before reaching a level of visibility that attracts industry investment.

Several participants reflected on the shift over time: “There was a time when no one paid you for anything—someone gave you a drink ticket and that was considered a great gig.” Many attribute the growing recognition of this issue to the work of CASC and their #PayComics campaign, which has helped push for fair compensation and professionalization within the sector.

This dynamic creates a system in which the early stages of creative development are largely self-funded by artists themselves. Participants expressed concern that once comedians achieve commercial viability, the value generated by their work is often captured by larger media platforms and production companies rather than by the creators who developed the material.

Monetization and the Digital Economy

Digital platforms were identified as both an opportunity and a challenge for Canadian comedians. While online visibility can dramatically expand audiences, monetization remains uneven and difficult to access.

Participants highlighted examples in which short viral comedy clips generated measurable revenue for performers abroad, while Canadian creators face barriers to similar monetization opportunities.

This imbalance raises broader questions about how revenue generated by Canadian comedic content—particularly through large global streaming platforms—can more effectively support the creators who produce it.

Data, Infrastructure, and Industry Recognition

Finally, participants noted that comedy remains under-researched as a cultural and economic sector in Canada. Reliable data on employment, production, and economic contribution is limited, making it difficult for policymakers to fully understand the scale and impact of the industry.

Roundtable participants emphasized that stronger infrastructure—including mentorship networks, development opportunities, and better data collection—would help comedians move from early experimentation to sustainable professional careers.

Taken together, the Ontario economic analysis, CANCOM initiatives, and roundtable findings show that Canadian comedy does not lack talent, audiences, or creativity. What it lacks are **institutional recognition, policy support, and economic systems** that allow it to thrive as a fully professionalized cultural industry.

Matt Baram, Naomi Snieckus, Raoul Bhaneja, Ron Pederson.
Photo Credit: Skye Reagan



11.

Policy

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the structural exclusion of comedy from Canada's cultural policy framework, the following actions are recommended:

Formal Recognition of Comedy as an Artistic Discipline

The federal government should formally recognize comedy—including stand-up, sketch, and improvisational performance—as an eligible artistic discipline within the funding structures of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Establish Dedicated Funding Streams for Comedy

Create targeted grant programs that support the creation, development, and touring of Canadian comedic work, similar to programs currently available to theatre, music, and literary artists.

Improve Cross-Border Labour Mobility for Comedians

Work with cultural and immigration authorities in both Canada and the United States to reduce barriers that prevent Canadian comedians from accessing the American live performance market while ensuring fair reciprocity for Canadian artists.



Sandra Battaglini, Windsor Laughs.

Support Digital Monetization and Discoverability

Develop cultural policy strategies that address the growing importance of digital platforms—such as TikTok and YouTube—including fair monetization opportunities for Canadian creators and improved discoverability for Canadian comedic content.

Reinvigorate International Cultural Exchange and Trade Missions for Comedy

Re-establish and expand international trade missions focused on comedy as a cultural export, building on earlier efforts to position Canada as a global comedy leader. Support exchange tours, partnerships, and co-productions with international markets to promote Canadian talent abroad while fostering reciprocal artistic collaboration.

Comedy has been a profound force in shaping the ways Canadians understand themselves. Through humour, satire and storytelling, comedians reflect the country's regional identities, social challenges and political tensions, and everyday life in real time. Their work travels across borders and platforms, shaping how Canada is perceived both at home and abroad.



12. Conclusion

Canada has long understood that cultural policy is essential to protecting national identity in the shadow of a much larger neighbour. From broadcasting regulations to public arts funding, successive governments have recognized that Canadian stories require deliberate support in order to flourish. Comedy is one of the most immediate and powerful ways those stories are told. It reflects the everyday realities of Canadian life, translating regional voices, political tensions, and social change into a form that audiences understand instantly. Yet the artists who create this work continue to operate largely outside the systems designed to sustain Canadian culture.

Recognizing comedy as a legitimate artistic discipline would not only correct a longstanding policy oversight—it would affirm the value of a uniquely vital form of Canadian storytelling. In a moment when the global cultural landscape is increasingly shaped by digital platforms and international media giants, supporting Canadian comedians is not simply an act of fairness. It is an investment in the continued vitality of Canada's cultural voice.

Canada built a global music powerhouse through deliberate policy by investing in its artists. There is no reason Canadian comedy cannot do the same. The talent already exists. What is missing is the recognition that comedy is not peripheral to Canadian culture—it is one of its most vital expressions.



Callum Wratten, Ghazal Ghiami, Brandon Hackett, Kyah Green, Paloma Nunez and Stephanie Malek. *Our Flag Means Blank*. Photo Credit: DJ Tran.



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