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INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, MOVING PICTURE TECHNICIANS,
ARTISTS AND ALLIED CRAFTS OF THE UNITED STATES, ITS TERRITORIES AND CANADA

March 13, 2020

Open Letter to the Prime Minister, Premiers, Federal and Provincial Ministries of Labour, Ministry of Canadian Heritage and Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada:

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Motion Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada ("IATSE") is an international trade union, which, together with its 40 affiliated Canadian locals, represents over 25,000 behind the scenes workers in the entertainment industry in Canada (150,000 total in North America). The workers represented include those who work in the motion picture, live event and trade show production industry.

The IATSE understands and appreciates that emergency measures to address the spread of the COVID-19 virus in Canada and around the world will give rise to prohibitions on large gatherings of all kinds as well as the cancellation of live event and motion picture production. These measures will, however, also give rise to a sudden and dramatic loss of income for entertainment industry workers the likes of which has not been seen since the SARS outbreak in 2003. Without appropriate support from federal and provincial governments, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic will have devastating economic and social consequences on workers in this industry, whether they work in a traditional employment type setting or as a "gig economy" freelancer.

The IATSE calls on the federal and provincial governments to adopt exceptional emergency measures that will adequately support all of the behind the scenes workers suffering sudden and dramatic income loss, including freelance workers, by expanding the class of persons entitled to employment insurance benefits and any other proposed COVID-19 support spending initiatives. The IATSE also requests that the federal government waive the one-week waiting period for entitlement to EI benefits to all workers who are the subject of lay-offs directly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and not just for those workers who are the subject of a quarantine. The IATSE also urges federal and provincial governments to consider and put in place measures now that will stimulate and revitalize the entertainment industry once the COVID-19 crisis has passed.

The IATSE welcomes the opportunity to further discuss and partner with all levels of government in devising measures that will adequately protect entertainment industry workers in these rapidly changing and unanticipated times.

Sincerely,

John Morgan Lewis
Director of Canadian Affairs
International Vice President