



SERVING AUTHORS WORLDWIDE
AU SERVICE DES AUTEURS DANS LE MONDE
AL SERVICIO DE LOS AUTORES EN EL MUNDO

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Opening address by Björn Ulvaeus at the National Summit on AI and Culture

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you all today at this National Summit on AI and Culture.

I'm sorry I can't be with you in Banff, but I wanted to speak to you because the work you're doing right now in Canada and the choices you will make are so vitally important.

I am speaking today not just as an artist and a songwriter, but as president of CISAC, the largest global network of creators, and as an avid Technology enthusiast.

Many of you will know ABBA songs, perhaps from the radio, from Mamma Mia, or from maybe experiencing ABBA Voyage in London.

Those songs travel the world because copyright travelled with them.

The royalties that flowed back to Sweden allowed us to keep writing, to keep recording and to invest in new ideas.

Now, I am very conscious that my experience reflects a system working as it should.

For most creators, royalties mean stability, the ability to pay rent, support families and continue making art.

So why am I here speaking to you today?

Because Canada stands at the defining moment.

The choices made here in legislation, in regulation, in the frameworks you design for artificial intelligence will ultimately shape how human creativity is valued in the age of machines.

We have already seen how consequential these policy choices can be.

In Australia, lawmakers considered a text and data mining exception that would have permitted AI developers to use creative works without permission or payment.

The response from creators and rights organisations was swift and united.

Progress cannot depend on the uncompensated use of human creativity.

Canada now faces similar questions.

In November, I had a meeting with Prime Minister Carney.

I shared with him my own experiences and how copyright protections have enabled my career.

I also let him know that creators are not afraid of AI.

In fact, like me, many are working right now with the different forms of this technology and are embracing the possibilities it brings.

But they are afraid, and quite rightly so, of losing their rights and losing their income through the unauthorised use of their works.

I'm delighted to see that SOCAN's recent campaign, Say No to AI Training or Unlicensed Music, has over 6000 signatures from a raft of songwriters and composers.

These are 6000 artists who are speaking for many thousands more, who all refuse to let AI companies use their works for free and without permission.

They are right, there's a lot at stake.

CISAC's global economic study on AI that I helped launch a year ago showed that in just two years time, up to 24% of music creators revenues could be at risk.

24% is a lot.

It means a loss of billions of dollars.

But these are not just abstract numbers.

They represent livelihoods, careers, and the future of our creative industries.

They mean a lot to our culture, our cultural heritage, the heritage that the existing generation of creators are creating now for our future.

If we want human creativity to thrive in the age of artificial intelligence, we must ensure strong protections for creators.

Strong protections mean not only making sure that rights are in place, but also resisting broad text and data mining exceptions that allow works to be used without permission or payment.

When creators are protected, they can continue producing the amusing and cultural works for which Canada is respected around the world.

The alternative is a dangerous path.

It removes the creator's fundamental right to negotiate for the use of their work.

It weakens their ability to earn a living from their talent.

And it places at risk the rich diversity of cultural expression that defines this country, from Indigenous traditions to many languages and stories that form Canada's national heritage.

The narrative driven by profit seeking tech companies that innovation and copyright cannot coexist, is simply untrue.

We've heard this argument many times before with previous technologies.

Protecting creators rights in no way means trying to stop the advance of technology.

On the contrary, it means embracing and licencing AI tools in a safe legal environment that removes ambiguity.

To do this, we have 3 asks, specifically that:

1. AI training must be subject to clear transparency rules

2. creators must be able to licence their own works
3. and that remuneration of those creators must be guaranteed.

This is not just about well-known artists, songwriters and composers such as myself.

It's about protecting the next generation of songwriters and composers who will take on the mantle of representing Canada's voice on the global stage.

It's about protecting the vast majority of creators who rely on the lifeblood of royalties that support their careers in sustained cultural output.

And it's about protecting cultural identity that remains at the heart of the creative sector.

But also this is not just a cultural decision, it's an economic one as well.

Canada's creative industries are a major economic driver.

In 2024, Canada's cultural sector contributed 65 billion in direct GDP.

This discussion extends beyond established artists like me.

It also concerns emerging Canadian creators, songwriters, screenwriters, composers and visual artist who will shape the country's cultural identity in the decades ahead.

They deserve an environment in which technological innovation and artistic creation develop together.

Canada has the opportunity to shape a framework grounded in fairness, partnership and respect for creative work.

Copyright has long provided a structure that enables creators to build lasting careers, to contribute to culture, and to be at the heart of a successful creative economy.

With careful policy design, it will continue to do so in the age of artificial intelligence.

Thank you so much for listening.