

ACTRA

Mr. TAMURA Norhisa
Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8916
Japan

November 19, 2020

Distinguished Minister,

Re: Desperate state of freelance workers in the arts and entertainment sector in Japan

We are writing to you as we are alarmed by the critical situation performers and other freelance workers in the media and entertainment industry are enduring today as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe measures taken in Japan to contain the spread of the virus.

Whilst we obviously understand these measures are essential to save lives, we are concerned about the far-reaching implications for thousands of independent contractors in our industry who have no access to the wage support schemes and other forms of financial assistance, including sick pay, granted to regular employees in Japan to uphold their income and help them pay their bills.

Freelance actors, musicians and technical crew are paying a heavy price for these measures: thousands of productions have been cancelled, or suspended at best, and the revenues on which these workers dearly counted to make it to their next engagement have vanished. None of these workers have been compensated for this financial loss.

As a result, performers and other freelance workers in the media and entertainment sector are living below the poverty threshold: a large majority of them have seen their income drop by more than 50 per cent since February of this year and an alarming percentage are reporting living on zero income.

With no subsidies or emergency grants available to them, their immediate survival – and that of their families who rely on their already precarious income – is at stake. Those among them who are still fortunate enough to be engaged have no allowances to turn to if they contract the virus or are forced to self-isolate.

Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists

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Many countries around the world, including Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and most EU countries, have taken bold and unprecedented steps to provide comprehensive welfare and revenue protection to all workers during the pandemic, granting independent contractors a similar level of support as they provide to employees. This silver lining has made a huge difference to these workers who, despite the precarious situation, have at least been able to provide for their most immediate needs.

ACTRA, along with FIA, FIM and UNI MEI, stands in solidarity with our sister unions in Japan, respectively JAU, MUJ and MINPO ROREN. We urge the Japanese government to hear their desperate call and promptly extend meaningful support measures to all freelance workers in the media and entertainment sector during this crisis.

Yours truly,



David Sparrow
National President
ACTRA



Marie Kelly
National Executive Director
ACTRA