

For Immediate Release: April 29, 2026

## HOT DOCS FORUM 2026 WRAPS WITH \$48,000 IN PRIZES AWARDED TO THREE PITCH TEAMS

**EXCODED** PROJECT AWARDED TWO PRIZES TOTALLING \$25,000, WILD CARD PITCH **THE FOREVER CHORUS** – SELECTED ONSITE AS FINAL PITCH OF THE EVENT – AWARDED TWO PRIZES TOTALLING \$13,000

**Toronto, ON** – Hot Docs is pleased to announce the winners of \$48,000 in pitch prizes at this year’s **Hot Docs Forum**, the Festival’s live project pitching event designed to facilitate meaningful connections that build relationships and open doors to collaboration, funding and distribution opportunities. Prizes awarded today include \$33,000 in *first look* Pitch Prizes; the \$10,000 CMF-Hot Docs Forum Canadian Pitch Prize, presented in partnership with the Canada Media Fund; and the \$5000 Hot Docs–Chicken & Egg Films Special Pitch Forum Prize, presented in partnership with Chicken & Egg Films. The Hot Docs Forum is generously supported by Presenting Forum Partner the Canada Media Fund.

“Today we close out a successful two-day Hot Docs Forum event with the awarding of \$48,000 to some exceptional projects that pitched live on stage at our cinema as part of the return of this vital Hot Docs industry event,” said **Diana Sanchez**, Executive Director, Hot Docs. “I’m thrilled that we’ve been able to bring back the Hot Docs Forum this year and am grateful to the 16 projects that have taken part, as well as the Canadian and international decision makers that participated. The marketplace for documentary is challenging and ever-changing and I am endlessly grateful to our prize funders for making a financial impact on these projects to help them move forward with increased stability.”

Financed by participants of Hot Docs’ *first look*, a curated access program for philanthropic supporters of and investors in documentary film, **first look Pitch Prizes** are decided on by participants after viewing all pitches. Awarded directly to the filmmakers, the prizes take them one step closer to completing their film and creating lasting social impact for the causes associated with their work. The first prize of **\$15,000** was awarded to **ExCoded** (Director: Javier Lovera | Producers: Hannah Donegan (Producer), Marc Serpa Francoeur (Producer), Ina Fichman (Executive Producer) | Production companies: Airplane Mode Productions Inc. (Canada), Better Together Films Inc. (Canada)), a film about the steady creep of facial recognition technology into policing, immigration and even schools, and how people harmed by AI—aka the “excoded”—are taking on a system that’s rapidly rewriting the rules of public life. The second prize of **\$10,000** was awarded to **What You Remember** (Director: Pauline Blanchet | Producers: Ljubomir Stefanov (Producer), Pauline Blanchet (Producer) | Production companies: Apolo Creative Solutions (North Macedonia), Aral Sea Productions LTD. (UK)), a film about one man’s idea to rebuild a capital on the foundations of an unfinished city erased a collective memory, casting a dark shadow over Skopje’s future identity. The third prize of **\$8,000** was awarded to Wild Card pitch **The Forever Chorus**

(Co-Director & DP: Ree Wright | Director: Meaghan Wright | Producer: Melanie Wood | Production Company: Mirror Image Media (Canada)), a documentary about a non-traditional queer chorus in Nova Scotia who must confront personal change and societal resistance in order to find their collective voice. As the Wild Card pitch, this project was selected live during the Forum to pitch as the final pitch of the event. The team pulled their pitch together in less than 24 hours and presented this morning live onstage at Hot Docs Cinema.

The **CMF-Hot Docs Forum Canadian Pitch Prize**, presented in partnership with the Canada Media Fund, is a **\$10,000** cash prize that is awarded to the best Canadian pitch and is intended to go towards the production and completion of the winning project. The 2026 CMF-Hot Docs Forum Canadian Pitch Prize was awarded to **ExCoded** (Director: Javier Lovera | Producers: Hannah Donegan (Producer), Marc Serpa Francoeur (Producer), Ina Fichman (Executive Producer) | Production companies: Airplane Mode Productions Inc. (Canada), Better Together Films Inc. (Canada)), a film about the steady creep of facial recognition technology into policing, immigration and even schools, and how people harmed by AI—aka the “excoded”—are taking on a system that’s rapidly rewriting the rules of public life.

The **Hot Docs–Chicken & Egg Films Special Pitch Forum Prize**, presented in partnership with Chicken & Egg Films, is a **\$5,000** cash prize awarded to a top Forum pitch team representing an outstanding documentary project directed by a woman or gender-expansive filmmaker. The Prize was awarded to Wild Card pitch **The Forever Chorus** (Co-Director & DP: Ree Wright | Director: Meaghan Wright | Producer: Melanie Wood | Production Company: Mirror Image Media (Canada)), a documentary about a non-traditional queer chorus in Nova Scotia who must confront personal change and societal resistance in order to find their collective voice. As the Wild Card pitch, this project was selected live during the Forum to pitch as the final pitch of the event. The team pulled their pitch together in less than 24 hours and presented this morning live onstage at Hot Docs Cinema.

The Hot Docs Forum wishes to thank Presenting Forum Partner the Canada Media Fund. The Hot Docs Industry Conference receives additional support from Telefilm Canada, Ontario Creates, Blue Ice Docs, Indigenous Screen Office, City of Toronto, Rogers, Gardiner Roberts LLP, Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television, Canadian Media Producers Association, CBC, Creative BC, DGC National, DGC Ontario, DOC, El Mocambo, Front Row Insurance Brokers, Italian Trade Commission, Paramount +, Picture NL, Story Money Impact, National Film Board of Canada, Netflix, TELUS originals, TVO, and Vistek.

###

Hot Docs ([hotdocs.ca](http://hotdocs.ca)) is North America’s leading documentary festival, conference and market. A not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers, Hot Docs will present its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual edition in Toronto from April 23 to May 3, 2026. Hot Docs will also mount a dynamic series of knowledge sessions, networking opportunities and market programs for documentary practitioners and industry delegates, including the renowned Hot Docs Forum and Hot Docs Deal Maker. Since its inception in 1993, Hot Docs has supported the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs, production fund portfolio, and valuable professional development programs. The organization fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program

Hot Docs is a charitable, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the art of documentary and supporting opportunities for independent filmmakers.

Docs For Schools. Hot Docs also operates the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood and the world's first and largest documentary cinema.

Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and used [online](#) at [www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca) or in person at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Box Office, located at 506 Bloor Street West (hours vary daily in accordance with cinema screenings). Single tickets are \$22 (\$20 member) for regular screenings, and \$27 (\$24 member) for Opening Night and Big Ideas screenings. A Festival 12-Pack is \$228 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$340 (\$216 and \$320 members). Hot Docs offers free tickets for regular screenings before 4:00 p.m. to patrons 60+ and students with valid photo I.D., available in-person at the venue on the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Hot Docs is proud to include Rogers as its Founding Partner and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters.

**FILM STILLS AVAILABLE**

Media Download Site: <https://downloads.hotdocs.ca/login>

Username: media

Password: HD26Media

**Media Contact**

Bill Alexander

[balexander@hotdocs.ca](mailto:balexander@hotdocs.ca)