



Sent by email

Tuesday, January 10, 2006

Alain Pineau
Executive Director
Canadian Conference of the Arts
804-130 Albert Street
Ottawa ON K1P 5G4

Dear Sir:

Please find enclosed the responses to the questionnaire you sent us for the federal elections 2005-06.

We trust that the answers provided will help you better understand our political action.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dominic Labrie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dominic Labrie
Office of the Leader of the Bloc Québécois
3750 Crémazie East, Suite 307
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Honouring our Commitment to Diversity

a) Will your party ensure that new federal funding for the arts and culture announced on November 23, which included an increase to the budget of the Canada Council for the Arts and other key investments, will be reflected in the 2006 Federal Budget?

Two years ago, the Bloc Québécois supported the proposal by the Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres to increase the budget by \$300 million. This commitment, part of our 2004 election platform, was constantly reiterated by the Bloc Québécois during the last session. We intend to pressure the federal government to ensure that this increase, which is vital for the efficient functioning of the Canada Council, is included in the next budget.

b) Does your party support a review of Canada's new international policy statement to restore arts and culture as a key aspect of public diplomacy? Would your party support increased financing for the Department of Foreign Affairs' cultural programs?

The Bloc Québécois believes that federal cultural programs, including international tours, should come under the Canada Council. The public diplomacy program does not seem appropriate as it serves more to promote Canada than to promote culture. We believe that cultural program funding should be transferred to the Canada Council.

c) Does your party intend to extend the Department of Canadian Heritage's "Tomorrow Starts Today" funding package beyond the current timetable? Would your party increase financial commitments to its component programs?

The Bloc Québécois thinks that the Tomorrow Starts Today initiative should become permanent and that its funding should be indexed yearly.

2) Equitable Treatment for Canadian Artists and Creators

a) Does your party support the objectives of CCA's "Fair Tax Treatment of Professional Artists Campaign", which are:

- To establish a policy that all professional artists will be deemed to be carrying on a business for purposes of their artistic income (independent contractor status) unless in the case where there is no collective bargaining relationship, an engager and the artist enter into a contract of service (employer-employee relationship) that is explicit and unambiguous, or an engager and an association representing a group of artists negotiate a provision that artists governed by a collective agreement are in a contract of service relationship.

- To have a community-agreed test of "professionalism" replace the "reasonable expectation of profit" test now used by the Canada Revenue Agency.

Both in Quebec and in Canada, artists live in a precarious situation, and occasionally receive large lump sum payments for work that extends over a long period of time.

Because the professional status of artists as well as of cultural and communications professionals is so precarious, the Bloc Québécois believes that we must act at once. It therefore calls on the federal government to allow for the averaging of artist income over five years. This measure is already in force in several countries, including Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, etc.

It allows artists to better absorb the fluctuations in their income and to account more efficiently their method of remuneration. The Bloc Québécois will introduce a bill providing for income averaging over five years for artists.

b) Does your party support the development of a program by which self-employed workers, dependent contractors, and Canadians in other non-standard work could access full social benefits without the loss of their self-employment status?

There are two and a half more self-employed workers in the cultural sector than in the rest of the labour force (27.4% vs. 10.4%). Artists are therefore in a very precarious situation. Compare this with the fact that from 1991 to 2001, the cultural work force grew in Quebec by 23.9%, according to a January 2005 study by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Furthermore, as more than a quarter of cultural workers are self-employed, they do not have access to Employment Insurance, which does not apply to non-standard work. The television, film and culture work force has a precarious status and fluctuating income.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on the government to create a framework that will extend Employment Insurance regular and special benefits to self-employed workers, many of whom are cultural workers.

c) Does your party intend to introduce further revisions to the Copyright Act? Will your party commit to enacting legislation that enhances the moral and economic rights of creators and copyright owners?

Following the death on the Order Paper of Bill C-60 amending the Copyright Act, the Bloc Québécois notes that even though Canada ratified over ten years ago World Intellectual Property Organization treaties, it still does not live up to its commitments. Could we expect anything different from a government that abuses copyright in its own election ads?

For its part, the Bloc Québécois intends to bring up as soon as possible the issue of an in-depth reform of the Act by ensuring that it is done for the benefit rather than at the expense of creators.

3) Canada's Broadcasting and Communications Systems in the 21st Century

a) Does your party support CBC's request for new monies for regional and local

services and for Canadian television drama? Would your party provide long term, stable funding for the CBC?

We consider it appropriate to provide for stable funding.

The Bloc Québécois reminds all parties that the CBC is independent from government as far as programming is concerned. Only the CRTC can, upon license renewal, impose conditions regarding regional and local services. It has the authority to do so, although it does not use it.

That is why the Bloc Québécois would be amenable to a possible reopening of the Broadcasting Act to include increased regional representation in the public broadcaster's mandate.

b) Will your party ensure that the cultural objectives of the *Broadcasting Act* are respected in the face of challenges posed by new communications technologies, such as: Internet, satellite radio, pod-casting, and television-enabled cellular phones?

The emergence of satellite radio has been a blow for Canadian, and therefore Quebec cultural sovereignty. The Bloc Québécois has denounced in the House, outside the House, in the media and before the CRTC this decision that recognizes a mere 10% of French channels against 90% American content.

Unfortunately, technology appears to drive policy rather than the other way around. The Bloc Québécois considers it essential to revise the Broadcasting Act in order to reflect that principles enshrined in the Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

c) What are your party's plans to ensure a more transparent and guaranteed revenue flow from all media, but particularly from digital media, to the owners and licensees of copyright materials?

The Bloc Québécois intends to introduce amendments to the Copyright Act to adequately protect creators.

4) Sustaining Distinctive Canadian Cultural Industries

a) Will your party commit to maintain the current level of 53 % Canadian ownership rules in our media, broadcasting, and telecommunications systems, and ensure that Canadians will always own our own airwaves?

The elimination of foreign ownership restrictions in the telecommunications and broadcasting systems poses a real threat to Quebec culture. Because of technological changes in these areas, telecommunications carriers have become involved in content distribution. Therefore, an increase to more than 46.7% of foreign capital in telecommunications carriers will necessarily have an impact on television, radio and newspaper content. In other words, a removal of foreign ownership restrictions in

telecommunications amounts to not less than a sell-out of our culture! With its commitment to preserve, enrich and develop our cultural heritage, the Bloc Québécois is firmly opposed to it and will always work to defend that position.

b) What is your party's position on the concentration of ownership in Canada's cultural industries? What quantifiable limits to the concentration of ownership and vertical integration within the various cultural industries will your party propose?

Bloc Québécois supports the principles of cultural diversity and information diversity. The Bloc Québécois does not want to specify limits with regards to media concentration, but wants to ensure compliance with the aforementioned principles, while respecting of course Quebec's jurisdiction.

c) Given that Canada recently ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, will your party develop policies to encourage more domestic investment in our cultural industries? What would those be?

The Bloc Quebecois policies for art and culture which form part of its election platform can be found on its website www.bloc.org.

5) Honouring Canada's Past, Looking to Our Future

a) Does your party support the development of a new Canadian museums policy, which would include the investment of new monies in sustained, multi-year, predictable programs?

The Bloc Québécois considers the development of cultural policies a matter for the government of Quebec and the provinces rather than the government of Canada. The Canadian constitution is quite clear in this regard, and Quebec has historically voiced many demands in this area.

However, until Quebec repatriates all of its constitutionally exclusive powers, the Bloc Québécois considers the museum policy in effect since 1972 totally obsolete, and calls on the government to update it.

As soon as the House of Commons reconvenes, the Bloc Québécois intends to call for a review of the museum policy, and to demand that the Heritage Committee submits recommendations to this effect to the Minister. Nonetheless, it appears premature to cost out this new policy.

b) What are your party's specific plans to provide incentives and opportunities for young Canadians to become more active in the arts and culture?

Solving the fiscal imbalance will allow Quebec to provide incentives for young people to get involved in the arts and culture through education and through the Cultural Affairs Department.

c) Would your party commit to a national mentorship strategy to facilitate skills development for Canadians who want to pursue careers in the arts and cultural labour force?

In our view, this is strictly a matter for the National Assembly.