



BULLETIN

Canadian Conference of the Arts ~ Conférence canadienne des arts

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BILL C-43, AND THE FUTURE OF THE 'TODAY STARTS TODAY' CULTURAL FUNDING PROGRAM, SITS WITH THE FEDERAL FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ottawa, June 1, 2005 - Paul Martin's minority government survived a tense confidence vote on May 19th when Speaker of the House Peter Milliken broke the 152-to-152 tie by voting in favour of *Bill C-48*, the Liberal-NDP amendment to the budget that adds \$4.6 billion in social program spending and delays corporate tax cuts. Earlier, the Conservative Party voted in favour of *Bill C-43*, which implements various measures proposed in the original 2005 Federal Budget Plan, including the Atlantic Accord agreement signed earlier this year that gives Nova Scotia and Newfoundland billions in natural-resources revenues. The Bloc Québécois voted against the motion.

C-43, the budget bill, is of great significance to members of the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) given that the proposed renewal of the *Tomorrow Starts Today* arts, culture, and heritage federal funding program through to March 2010 is contained within it (see CCA Bulletin 22/05 and 23/05 for more information on "TST"). Currently, both budget-related bills – *C-43, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 23, 2005* and *C-48, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments* – have been sent to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

Members of the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois currently possess the majority of seats on the Finance Committee – six out of a possible eleven. Thus, the future of both bills is uncertain given the current political climate in Ottawa. The government would like to pass the budget through the House of Commons by June 23, the last day on the Parliamentary calendar before the summer break, but the Conservatives have stated that they might attempt to block both bills.

To ensure that the bills do pass on time, the May 30 edition of the Hill Times reports that NDP Finance Critic Judy Wasylycia-Leis and other MPs are saying that the House should order the Finance Committee to speed bills along if the Bloc and Tories use delaying tactics. The problem with this move is that it could be perceived as too drastic, and it would also require majority support. Liberal House Leader Tony Valeri told the Hill Times that he believes the best option is to "encourage the Tories and the Bloc to work constructively with [them] in committee." The full story is available here:

http://www.thehilltimes.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full_path=/2005/may/30/legislation/&c=1

Among the many challenges that the Finance Committee will face when they study these bills, include:

- Should the two bills be dealt with together or separately?
- If dealt with separately, when should these hearings be scheduled and should they call certain witnesses?

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25/05

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- Should some provisions on these bills, like the Atlantic Accord, be reintroduced in the House of Commons, as separate pieces of legislation? Could Tomorrow Starts Today funding be dealt with in a similar fashion?
- Should some amendments, like the ones related to the Kyoto protocol proposed in C-43, be sent to other Standing Committees for review?
- Which amendments are still needed to guarantee the support of these bills by certain parties?
- Should the committee call certain witnesses?

Unfortunately, the Hill Times article also mentions that Parliamentary insiders are skeptical that both the House and Senate Chambers will pass both bills before the summer break because over the past five years, it has taken the government about fifty days on average to pass budget implementation bills.

The “good news” for the future of the minority government, at least in the short term, is that the Conservatives and the Bloc are not expected to introduce a non-confidence motion during their opposition days in the House this week. This would be the last chance they get to have a non-confidence vote before the Liberal caucus increases by one member due to the arrival of newly-elected Labrador MP Todd Russell. A May 31st cbc.ca story quotes Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe as saying, "We don't do it [move non-confidence motions] every second day [...] you don't do that now. We'll see next fall."

CCA encourages its members to contact MPs who sit on the Standing Committee on Finance, including Chair Massimo Pacetti, to remind them their December 2004 report on the pre-budget consultations contained *Recommendation 11*, which says that:

The federal government provide stable, long-term funding to the following elements of federal support for arts and culture: the Tomorrow Starts Today program; the Canada Council for the Arts; Telefilm Canada; the Museums Assistance Program; the Community Access Program; the Canadian Television Fund and initiatives designed to promote Canadian culture internationally.

Contact information for the Members of the Federal Finance Committee can be found at: www.parl.gc.ca/committee/CommitteeList.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=381&JNT=0&SELID=e18 &COM=8977

NEW DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF THE ARTS

The CCA is pleased to announce the arrival of new staff member Ms. Laura Coletta. As the most recent addition to our ever-growing team, Laura takes on the role of Director of Communications. Coming to the CCA from the Council of Canadians, Laura worked for several years as a Communications Officer, honing her skills in strategic and project management, events organization, website development, and public relations. In addition to her wealth of culture sector experience, she carries a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics, and she speaks several languages including English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. “It is clear that, with such an array of skill sets, Laura will undoubtedly be an asset to the CCA team,” states CCA National Director Jean Malavoy. “It is a distinct pleasure to welcome her aboard.”