



August 19, 2008

The Honourable Josée Verner
Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages
and Minister for La Francophonie
15 Eddy Street, 12th floor
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0M5

Dear Minister Verner,

I am writing to you with ACTRA's concern about the funding cuts your department is making to a number of cultural programs.

ACTRA adds our voice to the chorus of arts organizations that are shocked and surprised by the news of these cuts. Federal government support for Canada's arts and cultural sector is essential and makes good business sense.

As many organizations have already pointed out, in August 2008, the Conference Board of Canada issued a report noting that the cultural sector's contribution to Canada's total GDP has increased to 7.4%. While arts funding is crucial for maintaining Canada's cultural sovereignty, it is also a solid investment. Cultural funding triggers other investments and contributions to Canada's economy.

ACTRA is concerned about all the cultural programming cuts we've learned of in the past two weeks. These cuts were discovered through postings on various government websites and from calls to the organizations affected. There was no notice or warning and the news trickled out just one week before the submissions deadline for the federal government's pre-budget consultations.

In particular, ACTRA objects to the cuts that affect the film and television industry including PromArt (under the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade), the Trade Routes Program, the Audio-Visual Preservation Trust, the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund and the National Training Schools Program.

For some organizations, these cuts jeopardize more than just the programs directly affected. As a board member of the AV Preservation Trust, I know that the trust is concerned that these cuts will also affect its operations. The AV Trust has played an important role in helping to preserve Canada's film and music heritage. The AV Trust's programs have helped restore and archive Canadian movies and musical recordings so that they can be preserved for study and enjoyment.

At the time of writing this letter, there are still no news releases on the Department's website or any comment from you explaining these significant cuts to cultural funding. .../2

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These programs are the stepping stones and building blocks for our future filmmakers. It's essential that we promote our artists to the world while also protecting and preserving our cultural heritage. Canada's cultural programs are already woefully underfunded. These cuts will further reduce our ability to foster our vibrant cultural identity here at home and share it with the world.

ACTRA joins in calls that these funding cuts be reconsidered.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Waddell', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Stephen Waddell
National Executive Director

c.c. Judith LaRocque, Deputy Minister, Canadian Heritage
Jean-Pierre Blais, Assistant Deputy Minister, Cultural Industries
Members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
Claude DeBellefeuille, Bloc Québécois Heritage Critic
Denis Coderre, Liberal Heritage Critic
Bill Siksay, NDP Heritage Critic