



April 29, 2009

Hon. John Baird
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

By post and email

Dear Minister Baird,

Re: Cultural infrastructure

On behalf of the President and Board of Governors of the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), I am writing today to bring to your attention the serious situation facing Canada's cultural infrastructure.

As you no doubt know, a 2007 report prepared for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities¹ established at over \$ 40 billion the deficit in the cultural and recreational infrastructure investment. More recently, as a conclusion to a three year project supported by your Department and by Heritage Canada, Simon Fraser University's Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities published a report² which presents a map of current knowledge of our built arts, heritage, and cultural environments.

This latest report outlines some of the key issues related to our aging cultural infrastructure and some of the changes that have made certain facilities almost obsolete. Many of these structures and facilities were built to commemorate Canada's Centennial and are in urgent need of renovation and, in some cases, replacement. The CCA has suggested that further investment by the federal government in the *Cultural Spaces Program* at the Department of Canadian Heritage would be an efficient way to address the challenges of our cultural infrastructure. To this end, we were pleased to see that your government injected an additional \$ 30 million into the program through the provisions of the 2009-2010 federal

¹ Mirza, Saeed; [Danger ahead: The Coming Collapse of Canada's Municipal Infrastructure](#), a report for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, November 2007

² Duxbury, Nancy (ed.), [Under construction: The State of Cultural Infrastructure in Canada](#), August 2008.

budget and, to the extent that the base budget of *Cultural Spaces* is extended beyond March 2010, a similar additional amount for 2010-11.

We also appreciate the fact that due to recent changes to accessibility criteria, cultural infrastructure projects now qualify under your Department's *Building Canada Program*. These are certainly all steps in the right direction, but we submit respectfully that given the important contribution that, amongst many others, the arts and culture sector makes to the Canadian economy, to the quality of life of our communities and to tourism, and given the identified needs for investment in this sector, more governmental investment is justified.

A recent report³ by the Conference Board of Canada indicates that "taking into accounts the substantial direct, indirect and induced contribution of the arts and culture industries, the Conference Board estimates that the culture sector's economic footprint was \$84.6 billion in 2007, constituting 7.4% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). Employment in the cultural sector exceeded one million jobs."

We certainly applaud the fact that your government has decided to include an additional \$ 500 million in the recent economic stimulus budget for recreational infrastructure, but we believe that there exists as strong a rationale to justify more investments in repairing and upgrading our cultural infrastructure across the country.

Given the fact that Canada will celebrate its Sesquicentennial in 2017, it would be timely to develop a comprehensive strategy to redress the current investment deficit and give new life to many facilities that were built by communities across Canada to celebrate the Centennial and the vibrancy and richness of Canadian artistic and cultural expression.

It is our hope that as Minister of Infrastructure and Communities you will see the value in this suggestion and work with your colleagues to enhance the federal investment in our cultural infrastructure.

Yours sincerely,



Alain Pineau
National Director

Cc The Hon. James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage
The Hon. James M. Flaherty, Minister of Finances
Ms. Kathleen Sharpe, President, CCA

³ Conference Board of Canada, [*Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy*](#), August 2008