

October 6, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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Fax: (613) 941-6900
EMail: Harper.S@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

RE: Support for Canada's Arts and Culture

As mentors to young developing artists acquiring their individual voices, the Canadian Association of Fine Arts Deans/L'association canadienne des doyennes et doyens des beaux-arts expresses its deep concern over the recent program funding cuts implemented by our federal government. The cuts to programs such as Trade Routes and Prom-Art, among others, constitute a serious threat to the expressive culture of our country, to the artists and cultural workers who are stewards of this culture, and to the buoyant economy which has emerged around the cultural industries during the last decade.

At no time has national support for artists been more important. The arts are a critical vehicle for cross-cultural engagement - the very dialogue we need to encourage justice and understanding across the rich diversity of contemporary Canadian society. The world envies our diversity; this is our brand. This country's unique success as an innovative and multicultural society, for which we are so proud, is nowhere manifested more compellingly than in the work of our artists. The abolition of these programs will silence Canada's voice on the world stage.

Artists, far from being elitists, play a fundamental role in the consciousness of a nation as they speak to the questions which are faced daily by every Canadian. Artists are our neighbours, our co-workers, our family, our friends, ourselves. They are also our eyes, our ears, our collective curiosity and our common voice in representing to ourselves and to the world the richness of twenty-first century Canada.

It is our deep belief that the role of the arts and culture will be key in defining the future wealth of our country. We urge you to invest even further in the artistic and cultural explorations that will position Canada as a leader on the international economic, social and cultural stages.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Sheila Petty
Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts
University of Regina, and
Chair, Canadian Association of Fine Arts Deans/L'association canadienne
des doyennes et doyens des beaux-arts
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cc. Hon. Josée Verner, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women and
Minister for La Francophonie

Hon. Stéphane Dion, Leader of the Official Opposition

Hon. Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party

Hon. Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Ms. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada