



BULLETIN

Canadian Conference of the Arts ~ Conférence canadienne des arts

"It's Time" to Fund Culture in Canada

Ottawa, February 17, 2005 - As Finance Minister Ralph Goodale unveils his first federal budget since the June 2004 election, there's plenty of movement on all fronts to influence how the minority Paul Martin government can spend the billions in surpluses that have accumulated over the past decade. As the cultural sector has spent much of that same decade waiting with baited breath for the ruling Liberals (past and present) to show us something more visionary than cautious and unstable funding programs, next Wednesday's budget bears particular scrutiny for the Canadian Conference of the Arts and its members.

As always, the CCA will send members a Bulletin following the reading of the budget in the House at 4 pm on **Wednesday, February 23, 2005**, with an immediate reaction to the federal budget and how it affects the cultural sector. This will be followed by a more thorough analysis of the budget later in the spring.

Alternative Federal Budget - "It's Time"

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) released their annual Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) this morning in Ottawa, calling on the federal government to begin redistributing some of the \$45 billion in surplus they estimate that the feds will collect over the next three years.

"It's time to address crumbling federal-provincial-territorial relations and long-neglected social programs," says Ellen Russell, a senior economist for the CCPA.

Titled **"It's Time"**, this year's AFB features a detailed chapter on the cultural sector, to which the Canadian Conference of the Arts contributed significant time and expertise. The key recommendations made for culture include:

- ⇒ A five-year, \$1 billion extension of Tomorrow Starts Today funding, at \$200 million per year
- ⇒ A \$250 million increase in funding to the CBC over four years, conditional on the CBC's presentation of a clear plan to use the funding in the following ways:
 - To produce, commission and purchase more TV drama and documentaries
 - To significantly increase regional production
 - To support the work of independent Canadian creators
 - To engage diverse communities
 - To bring Canadian creators to the Canadian audience in new and innovative ways.
- ⇒ Tax relief for artists, including a tax exemption of up to \$30,000 on copyright income and income averaging over five years to a maximum of \$50,000
- ⇒ Reform of the EI system to reflect the particular needs of self-employed artists, modeled on the system of benefits currently offered to fishers.
- ⇒ The appointment of a task force to address media concentration, foreign ownership of Canadian cultural industries, the balance of trade in the cultural sector and Canadian content regulation.

"I am very pleased to see the importance of culture in the Alternative Federal Budget," noted CCA National Director Jean Malavoy. **"We fully support these recommendations and believe it is critical that the government responds accordingly."**

The full text of the AFB can be found on the CCPA's website at www.policyalternatives.ca

Quebec arts groups pitch a funding increase for the Canada Council

At a news conference in Ottawa today, Bloc Québécois Canadian Heritage critic Maka Kotto

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and le Mouvement pour les Arts et les lettres (MAL), an umbrella group that represents 20 provincial and regional cultural organizations and 15,000 artists, called on the federal government to use a portion of the multiple billion dollar surplus to double the Canada Council for the Arts' annual operating budget to \$300 million. In their press release, MAL noted that were it not for the additional \$25 million given to the Canada Council through *Tomorrow Starts Today* funding, its base budget has been stagnant since 2001.

"Without a substantial increase of the Canada Council's budget," the MAL press release notes, **"the financial burden in the cultural sector will once again be assumed by the creators."** CCA applauds MAL's advocacy on this issue, which was part of le Bloc's June 2004 election platform.

BC gets the ball rolling on increased cultural spending

Perhaps Mr. Goodale could take a page from his new colleague in British Columbia, Colin Hansen, who unveiled a pre-election budget titled "Balanced Budget 2005" on Tuesday. The BC government announced their intention to increase the British Columbia Arts Council budget by \$3 million, and revealed plans for a \$25 million Arts and Culture Endowment Fund. This fund will distribute money to arts groups to help them, "leverage private sector support to build endowments for arts and culture organizations". The timeline and details for the distribution of these funds are still unclear, but it is encouraging when some governments make increased levels of cultural spending a priority, even in times of fiscal belt-tightening.

Roster changes for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

It's time to update your Parliamentary scorecards. In order to accommodate shifting schedules of some MPs, the Liberal caucus has reportedly made a two-for-two swap of members in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. The new members will be Liberals **David Smith**, MP for Pontiac (Quebec), and **Mario Silva**, MP for Davenport (Ontario). They replace Liberals **Wajid Khan**, MP for Mississauga-Streetsville, and **Pablo Rodriguez**, MP for Honoré-Mercier. Mr. Smith and Mr. Silva have a steep learning curve ahead of them, as the Session's current agenda—which includes cross-country feature film industry hearings, impending copyright reform legislation, the government's new response to the 2003 Lincoln report on broadcasting, among many other issues—is one of the most ambitious of all House of Commons committees.

Elections continue for the CCA Board of Governors

The board of governors elections continue online at the CCA's election website (www.ccarts.ca/vote). Voting is open to CCA members, and the polls will stay open until February 25, 2005.

Biographies and statements of intent from the 16 candidates appear in the current issue of Blizzart, as well as on the election website. An instruction sheet with your username and password that allow you to log into the election site was also sent along with your copy of Blizzart. If you require any additional assistance with the voting process, please contact Julie Cayouette at the CCA by email at julie.cayouette@ccarts.ca or by phone at (613) 238-3561 ext. 20.

If you are not a CCA member but would like to vote in the board of governors elections, we encourage you to join the CCA. For more information on CCA membership please visit the membership page at the CCA website (www.ccarts.ca/en/members/join/), or contact Jessica Pancoe, CCA Membership Coordinator by email at jessica.pancoe@ccarts.ca or by phone at (613) 238-3561 ext. 10.

