



August 15, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Government of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80, Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

As mayors of Canadian cities we are committed to implementing all of the elements that our communities require for harmonious development and for meeting the challenges that globalization imposes upon us each day. We constantly strive to succeed in this effort and we count on our business people and our artists make our cities unique venues, well suited to good living, work, study and entertainment. This effort has been accompanied by many accomplishments to date, particularly in the field of culture. Such success extends to the international scene with the presence abroad of great ambassadors who showcase our cities and our culture around the world.

Announcements in the media over the past few days about certain cuts by your government in the area of culture contrast, however, with the sensitivity and commitment that your government has so far shown and they represent a source of concern to us.

We wonder what effect these announcements may have on Canadian artists and organizations whose excellence extends beyond our borders. Artistic collaboration and international dissemination are prerequisites to remaining a leader in this field and to providing our citizens with a superior creative product. Creative Industries in Canada already face pressure from the sluggish U.S. economy, high dollar and increased oil prices. Decreasing investment at this stage will place barriers on this sector's ability to grow, develop new products and promote Canadian cultural products in international markets. The elimination of programs such as PromArt and Routes commerciales would endanger not just the impact, but the survival of organizations that cannot subsist solely on the basis of the local or even the Canadian market.

The same rule applies to the film, video and new technology hi-tech sectors. Cuts to the Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program, A-V Presentation Trust, Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund, and the National Training Program in Film and Video would, in particular, jeopardize the future of state-of-the-art training in film, independent production and video, as well as artistic and technological research built around new media. These programs assist arts and cultural organizations across the country to gain financial stability, reduce deficits, build working capital reserves, encourage private donations, promote Canadian cultural products in foreign markets and attract foreign investors to Canadian markets.

We are convinced you will agree that theatre, dance, film, digital arts and festivals contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of our cities. The cultural economy represents some \$5 billion annually and 90,000 jobs in Montréal and \$9 billion and 190,000 jobs in Toronto. As mayors of these cities we strongly believe in their future. Over the years, we have collectively supported a vast number of artists, who serve as true ambassadors for us. We could not, for example, imagine the abolition of programs aimed at supporting the export and training of workers in other sectors of the economy—so why should this be the case with culture?

We must continue to remain open and creative while maintaining a broad range of skill sets so that we can find new ways of optimizing our investments and enable our artists to continue to develop and stand out for their abilities here and abroad and at the same time avoid any step backwards.

That is why we remain confident your government remains open to revising its policies and programs so that it can develop new ones that are even better adapted to the needs of today's artists.

We therefore add our voices to other organizations, artists and associations seeking the prompt identification of viable solutions that will meet existing commitments.

Sincerely,



Gérald Tremblay  
Mayor of Montréal



David Miller  
Mayor of Toronto