



December 18, 2006

Brian Pallister
Chair, Standing Committee on Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON KIA 0A6

Dear Mr. Pallister,

The Canadian Conference of the Arts has participated this year again in the pre-budget consultations convened by the Standing Committee of Finance. When the Standing Committee issued their report on this process, we became aware of a misinterpretation of a key element in the measures necessary to accommodate a labour force which is experiencing a rapid growth in self-employment and would like to correct it for the record.

In its Report "Canada: Competing to Win", the Committee makes the following observation;

"The Canadian Actors Equity Association (CAEA) and the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) urged the Committee to rectify what they believe to be inequitable treatment of self-employed individuals – artists in particular – under the EI program, since self-employed individuals –who are classified as independent contractors – are required to pay both the employer's and employee's share of EI premiums but do not have access to all of the program's benefits."

Self-employed workers neither pay the premiums for the EI program nor do they currently have access to any of the benefits associated with the program. In fact, efforts are ongoing to adapt the EI program so that independent contractors can pay a modified premium to access the so-called soft benefits of the program; namely maternity/paternity benefits, compassionate leave and extended sick leave. Both the CAEA and the CCA will continue to work with other organizations within the cultural sector and beyond to achieve some progress on this issue. The Cultural Human Resource Council is also actively engaged in negotiations with federal officials to this end.

We regret any confusion that may have resulted from our submission, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this and other matters of importance to the changing nature of the Canadian labour force.

Yours sincerely,

Alain Pineau
National Director

cc. Hon. James Flaherty, Minister of Finance
Members of the Finance Committee