



Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council

8 September 2008

Honourable David Emerson
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Honourable Josée Verner
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers Emerson and Verner:

On behalf of The Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, I wish to express our deep concern over the recent cuts and reductions to several arts and culture programs of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

PromArt, Trade Routes, the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund, the Book Publishing Industry Development Program, and the many other worthwhile programs due to be cut play a vital role in the development of our arts and culture. They provided necessary support for artists and groups to create new work, develop and reach new audiences, access international markets and represent Canada internationally. The loss of these programs will have a devastating effect on Canadian artists. We urge you to reconsider the vital role these programs play.

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador many artists and arts organizations have benefitted directly or indirectly from several of these programs. Trade Routes has supported Rattling Books, the St. John's International Women's Film Festival, Miller Studios, Blue Drop Music, Atlantic Presenters Association, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Publishers Association. It has also provided crucial funding to the Atlantic Film Festival for its strategic partners program which has benefitted many local filmmakers including Barbara Doran, Lynn Wilson, and Jennice Ripley. Trade Routes, along with PromArt, has funded the East Coast Music Association in support of its international program which has benefitted many Newfoundland and Labrador musicians including Ron Hynes, Mark Bragg, and Duane Andrews. Thanks to support from PromArt, artists and groups including Jim Payne and Duo Concertante have toured the world, sharing Newfoundland

and Labrador's unique talents, charm and cultural identity. In 2007 writer and actor Andy Jones was funded \$9000 through PromArt as a travel subsidy to take his show *To the Wall* to Australia and Tasmania:

“The people in Tasmania were fascinated with the success of the arts in Newfoundland. They are a similar sized jurisdiction and yet they still hunger for an indigenous 'local' arts scene like we have here. Let's face it, the arts is one of the great success stories of the Canadian people. Our artists are highly respected the world over and stand shoulder to shoulder with the world's best. It's sad to see any attempt to cut off this life line to the international community. I'm sure no advertising company or government agency could ever do a better job promoting this country.”

Andy Jones, writer and actor

“I truly feel these programs are invaluable. I've been supported by both PromArt (for an Australian tour) and Trade Routes (for a U.S. tour based around a performance at the Newport Folk Festival). Both these programs are key to the ECMA international program which has been a tremendous boost to my professional growth and international profile. Without these subsidies the economic difficulties of trying to tour internationally, while based in Newfoundland, may be insurmountable. These cuts raise the question of what value is placed on the arts, something I believe is fundamental to the balance of a nation.”

Duane Andrews, musician

We urge you and your colleagues to reverse this decision and make a pre-election commitment to reinstate this funding as soon as possible. It is a vital investment that supports Canada's international reputation as a progressive nation and acknowledges the critical role Canada's arts and culture play in our evolving international policy. We hope you will choose to support Canadian artists as they proudly represent our country on the world stage.

We look forward to hearing your decision.

Sincerely,

Carmelita McGrath
Chair

c.c. The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Loyola Hearn, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
The Honourable Gerry Byrne, Member of Parliament
Mr. Norman Doyle, Member of Parliament
Mr. Fabian Manning, Member of Parliament
Mr. Bill Mathews, Member of Parliament
Mr. Todd Russell, Member of Parliament
Mr. Scott Simms, Member of Parliament

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