



Canadian Conference of the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

CCA Urges Government to Pass the Budget Before an Election

For Immediate Release

See below for CCA's open letter submitted to Canadian political leaders, May 6th 2005.

Ottawa, May 06, 2005

Whether a federal election will begin in a matter of a few weeks or thirty days after the planned conclusion of Justice Gomery's inquiry later this year, it is clear that Canadians will head back to the polls sometime in the next eight months. What is less clear though, at this point, is the future sustainability of Canada's arts, culture, and heritage sector.

When the 2005 Federal Budget was unveiled on February 23, the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) and its hundreds of member organizations were pleased to learn of the announcement of several key funding initiatives for the arts, culture, and heritage sector, namely the substantial extension of the "Tomorrow Starts Today" (TST) program, to the tune of \$860 million over five years. Unfortunately, in the current political environment in Ottawa, and with the increasing likelihood of an early federal election call, the future of this commitment is highly uncertain.

CCA National Director Jean Malavoy says, "This funding envelope serves as the foundation on which a multitude of arts and cultural initiatives, which benefit *all Canadians*, can be built upon and sustained. The budget must pass."

CCA has been told that TST would be in place for the current fiscal year of 2005-06, since it was a pre-budget commitment announced in late 2004. If the budget does not pass before the writ drops, Governor General's warrants would be issued in order to keep the wheels of government turning until an election is over. However, what hangs in the balance then are a variety of programs, including cultural funding for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the transfer of the gas tax to the cities (which could potentially benefit various municipal arts and culture programs), as well as the future of TST beyond March 2006.

On May 6, the CCA sent an "open letter" to all the major political party leaders requesting that the feds work together to ensure that key aspects of the budget, such as TST, are passed in the coming weeks.

CCA has also endorsed the emerging "People Before Politics" campaign. Information about this initiative can be found at www.peoplebeforepolitics.ca. CCA is proud to join other civil society

leadership organizations with the message that, ***“Parliament has work to do. Important action on the environment, equality, childcare, aboriginal issues, social housing, municipal infrastructure, immigration and many other vital issues is at risk. A premature election could end this Parliament just before key decisions are made. We believe that people should be put before politics.”***

Open letter sent by the CCA May 6th, 2005, to Canadian political leaders

Dear Rt. Hon. Paul Martin, Hon. Stephen Harper, Gilles Duceppe, and Hon. Jack Layton

On February 23rd, the 2005 Federal Budget announced a historic funding commitment for Canada's arts, culture, and heritage sector, in the form of the proposed renewal of the "Tomorrow Starts Today" (TST) program through to March 2010.

The renewal of TST is an issue the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), together with its hundreds of arts, culture, and heritage member organizations from all across this country, has been committed to for many years now. Those in the sector worked hard to impress upon their MPs, Ministers, and other decision makers, the profound importance of the TST program as the foundation on which many cultural initiatives, which benefit all Canadians, their sense of identity and their quality of life, can be built upon and sustained.

The TST investment is extremely significant for the sector in a number of ways, including: promoting sustainability and capacity building; adding much needed funding to existing programs, such as those that assist Canada's national training institutions, the book publishing industry, and the Canada Music Fund; providing monies for the Arts Presentation Canada program, which promotes access to and participation in Canada's cultural life and nurtures venues for artists in different regions and traditions; funds to allow arts venues to update their facilities with new technology; and promotion of the Trade Routes program for cultural exports. TST funding has also permitted the development of new programs, such as Cultural Capitals of Canada, an incentive for municipalities to invest in culture in their communities and to develop municipal cultural policies. Furthermore, TST provides much needed increases in funding to key national cultural agencies and institutions, including the Canada Council for the Arts and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

As you might understand, the CCA is distressed that this funding commitment, which would positively impact so many Canadians, could be jeopardized by an early federal election call. CCA appeals to the four of you, as the leaders of Canada's major political parties, to work together to ensure that key aspects of the federal budget, such as TST, are passed in the coming weeks. CCA also wants to respectfully remind you that in the past months, all federal parties have publicly endorsed the need for, and the importance of, stable, multi-year funding for Canada's arts, culture, and heritage sector.

The CCA supports the "People Before Politics" (www.peoplebeforepolitics.ca) campaign and asks you to work collaboratively to ensure that the federal budget that our members and member organizations want, that Canadians want, is passed before another election. The current minority Parliament, in which you all play integral roles, still has much work to do and CCA is eager for you to carry out your duties and to support your efforts.

Sincerely,

Jean Malavoy
National Director, Canadian Conference of the Arts

c.c. Hon. Ralph Goodale, Minister of Finance
Hon. Liza Frulla, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women
Hon. Sarmite Bulte, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage
Marlene Catterall, Chair, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
Bev Oda, Conservative Critic, Canadian Heritage
Maka Kotto, Bloc Quebecois Critic, Canadian Heritage
Charlie Angus, New Democratic Party Critic, Canadian Heritage

The Canadian Conference of the Arts is Canada's national forum for the arts and cultural community. The CCA is a leader in the defence of artists' rights, an authority on public policy in arts and culture, and a catalyst for debate and action within the sector.

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