

Speaking Notes – Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage **September 2008**

(These notes were prepared for an appearance of the CCA in front of the Standing Committee on Heritage which was supposed to take place in the week of September 1, 2008 but was postponed and then cancelled because of the election.)

(Ces notes avaient été préparées en vue d'une comparution devant le Comité permanent du Patrimoine qui devait avoir lieu dans le semaine du premier septembre dernier. La réunion ayant été annulée, le document n'est malheureusement disponible qu'en anglais.)

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the President and the Board of Governors of the Canadian Conference of the Arts, I would like to express our appreciation for this opportunity to discuss the recent spate of spending cuts, program and service eliminations that have been important to the arts and culture sector.

Earlier this year, the CCA shared with you a paper on the [Creative Economy](#) – a new economic force which is both growing rapidly and making an impressive contribution to the Canadian economy. This new factor in our national economic life did not appear without a sustained and targeted series of investments in the development of Canadian artists, creators and arts and culture professionals. The recent cuts to these investments jeopardize the continued development of the creative economy in Canada.

The CCA agrees that the regular assessment of programs and services is essential to ensure that the federal government can adapt to changing opportunities and challenges within the arts and culture sector. It is through such reviews that we can collectively work towards a more robust creative economy, by fortifying domestic conditions and ensuring that international markets and audiences continue to expand through this partnership of public funding and the arts and culture sector.

Since news of the cuts began to be known, the CCA has received many expressions of dismay from organizations and individuals who have made judicious use of these programs and services to develop their skills, audiences, and their international profile. Many have had to revisit their multi-year plans in light of the elimination of programs such as *Trade Routes* and *PromArt*. The abolition of these programs affect our writers, dancers, film makers, musicians, and many others in the Canadian cultural sector and industries. Cuts in the adaptation to new technologies, whether through training or archiving, seem to run contrary to the government's recognition of the importance of investing in innovation and creativity if Canada is to succeed in the globalized economy.

To give one example, as the Canadian Independent Record Producers Association has stated, more and more Canadian musicians and music companies are depending on export revenues through sales and live

performances to survive. Direct access to foreign markets is critical to stimulate new sales outside of Canada. “Last year, the Canadian Independent Record Production Association successfully lead 21 companies to Japan on a single trip that resulted in 1.4 million dollars in export business immediately for Canadian firms. This is money that will be reinvested in developing new young talent in Canada. Funding for that trip was provided by two levels of government, and logistical support provided by the Canadian Embassy. We need to make more of these ventures abroad, into new markets like China, South Asia and India.”.

Another area of concern comes from the announcement last week that the *Canada New Media Fund* would be cancelled. This follows the announcement that the *National Training Program for the Film and Video Sector* had also been cancelled. With these recent cuts, it would appear that the federal government has decided to leave training up to the private sector and to the provinces. That might mean 10 or more competing jurisdictions setting up training institutions for film and television. It means that establishing standards or even commonalities will be time-consuming, complex, and expensive. It will mean that when we engage in co-productions with other countries, the competencies of film crew will be uneven and unclear. It means that we don't have centres of excellence for film directors, producers etc. to aspire to.

Without a national vision for a training infrastructure in the film industry (which is a national industry) and in any cultural industry, Canadian culture may be hobbled by the cobbling together of 10 competing provincial visions. Is this a wise policy in this day and age of globalization, where more and more countries are investing in the creative economy?

While it may be easy to dismiss these programs and services as boondoggles – the Conference Board of Canada has recently released a report demonstrating the tremendous economic contribution that the arts and culture sector represents. The return to Canada in terms of taxes, increased exports, revenue and profile generated by festivals such as the Banff Television Festival are beyond dispute.

Mr. Chairman, the CCA is in the process of assembling a number of similar impacts statements and we will be pleased to make them available to all Standing Committee members.

It was the hope of the CCA and many other organizations across Canada that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and her senior officials would seize the opportunity to share with you the longer-term vision for the programs and services essential to maintain and expand the contribution that the arts and culture sector makes to our economy, our sense of shared identity, and the diversity for which Canada is known and respected around the world.

It would be our hope that the arts and culture sector would be an important participant in the development of these longer-term plans. Such clarification from the Minister would do much to assuage the growing sense of dismay that these cuts and eliminations have triggered throughout the cultural sector. As people who live in the creative economy everyday, artists, creators and arts and culture professionals would be eager to ensure that the programs and services provided by the federal government meet in a realistic manner the current opportunities and challenges in Canada and around the world.

It now appears that this will have to take place during the forthcoming federal election campaign – which as we know is no place to discuss serious policy issues. The timing may be inopportune for a full examination of these issues by your Committee. Nonetheless, the CCA and many other organizations stand ready to assist the Minister, her officials, this Committee and other bodies in the development of clear, sustainable plan for federal investment in the arts and culture.

Once again Mr. Chairman and Committee members, let me express the gratitude of the CCA and the arts and culture sector for the leadership and commitment that you have shown by convening these hearings. For the sake of everyone who earns a living or supports the arts and culture I wish you every success in your task.