

## 3.4 Celebrating Canadian Culture

### Overview

Over the past year, the federal government undertook a series of measures that have strengthened the arts and culture sector in Canada, but have weakened its voice on the world stage.

It has added \$30 million to the base budget of the Canada Council for the Arts; created a new \$30 million funding program, *Building Communities Through the Arts and Heritage*, \$7 million of which is dedicated to professional arts activities; affirmed its commitment to the Canadian Television Fund by engaging to maintain its contribution for the current and next years at the 1996 level of \$100 million; invested almost \$100 million in the infrastructure of several national cultural institutions such as the National Arts Centre, the National Gallery, and the Museum of Nature; and created a \$5 million dollar summer internship program for museums.

At the same time, the billion-dollar reallocation program has seriously eroded Canada's cultural presence abroad by eliminating supplemental funding for artists and arts organizations working abroad, as well as Canadian officials supporting them in our missions around the world.

This repositioning of the third pillar of Canadian foreign policy, begun under the previous Liberal government, has now been completed under the Conservatives. While celebrating the UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity and investing in its promotion, the federal government continues to pursue a disjointed path in sharing Canada's rich cultural diversity with the world.

The arts and culture sector continues to diversify as interactive media grow in importance. Canada is now home to over 45 companies developing interactive games, which rely heavily on the talents of artists, composers, and designers. Last year, these firms recorded over \$ 1.6 billion in revenues. The new applications for delivery of content such as music, film, television, and made-for-the-net programming represents significant increases to Canada's GDP.

The arts and culture sector, like other segments of the Canadian labour force, is facing a major challenge as the baby boomer generation prepares to retire. The challenges of attracting new talent, retaining them, and transferring knowledge to them is one that cuts across all disciplinary and industrial divides. The federal

government has not acknowledged this reality in a substantive or material way. Continued success in celebrating the richness of Canadian artistic and cultural expression is reliant on finding a comprehensive and effective solution to these challenges.

### Stoking the momentum

Canada's economy is undergoing a radical change. We are witnessing the emergence of an information or creative economy. While the manufacturing base continues to falter, the information/creative economy shows signs of growth and diversity. Securing government support for this sector of our economy is critical.

The federal government faces several important decisions that can support the momentum in the arts and culture sector or hobble it by inaction or retrograde decisions.

- The billion-dollar reallocation program has specifically targeted the Department of Canadian Heritage and several of its portfolio agencies for the 2007–08 fiscal year. While specific cuts have not yet been announced, AFB 2008–09 will redress any harmful measures that may result from this reallocation exercise and reaffirm the importance of the arts and culture sector to the creative economy.
- The not-yet-proposed reforms to the Copyright Act provide the federal government with a unique opportunity to foster and reward creativity and innovation. These reforms should reflect the balance of interest approach traditionally taken by government to meet the needs of creators, copyright owners, licensees, and other user communities.
- AFB support for the independent audio-visual media sector will embrace the new forms of production and distribution for television, and webcasting. Success

### GENDER ANALYSIS Arts and Culture

Increasing access and coverage of Employment Insurance Benefits will advance the economic security of self-employed, independent contractors.

Only one in three unemployed women collects EI benefits, down from 70% in 1990.<sup>1</sup>

In 2003, more than one woman in ten was considered self-employed and was not eligible for EI benefits.<sup>2</sup>

in these areas can mean important new international markets for Canadian cultural materials.

- The AFB will put forward a comprehensive federal museum policy, bringing an end to ad-hockery as reflected in the scramble of Canadian cities to host the National Portrait Gallery. It will protect the legacy of Canadians from an inadequate and patchwork approach to our museums. As estimated by the Canadian Museums Association, the AFB will allocate an additional \$75 million per year for this policy.
- The AFB will introduce measures to improve the access of self-employed Canadians to national social benefit programs. Income tax policies must also ensure that artists and other Canadians are not unduly penalized for fluctuating income levels. The AFB also will modify the rules of Registered Retirement Saving Plans to ensure that self-employed Canadians will have a reasonable retirement income.
- The federal government is considering removing foreign ownership restrictions in the arts and culture sector. It has introduced measures that seek to minimize regulation in the telecommunications sector, and there are indications these

may well extend into the audio-visual/ broadcasting sector. The wholesale removal of such restrictions will weaken the ability of Canadians to see and hear their own stories and experiences at home and to share them with the world. The AFB will reverse such measures and ensure that private equity firms don't become a vehicle for circumventing foreign ownership rules.

- Canada's artists, creators, and arts professionals have engaged world audiences for decades. Current federal support programs for these efforts lack coherence or coordination. The AFB will bring coherence to these programs and increase its support by \$25 million per year.

- The AFB will allocate \$500,000/yr to a knowledge transfer program for the arts and culture sector.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, Submission by the Canadian Labour Congress to the Canada Employment Insurance Commission regarding the 2007 Employment Insurance (EI) Premium Rate Setting, (2003) 3 (1-11). found at [http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Unemployment\\_Insuran/1045](http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Unemployment_Insuran/1045)
- <sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. 2004