



**Independent
Media Arts Alliance**
Alliance des arts
médiatiques indépendants

Montreal, September 12th, 2008,

The Honourable Josée Verner
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Verner,

The Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA), along with the various arts and culture stakeholders and the wider Canadian public, was shocked at the news that surfaced at the end of the summer regarding a series of cuts made by the federal government to several key programs administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage. The IMAA, a member-driven non-profit national organization working to advance and strengthen the media arts community in Canada, wants to denounce this deliberate and highly regrettable attack on the arts and culture in our country.

In the past, while similar exercise have tended to focus on specific and sometimes marginalized programs, this time the impact has been felt across the board in the cultural sector, from larger institutions to smaller not-for-profit centres working at all levels of development, production, dissemination and promotion. These cuts are especially unfortunate for the Canadian public because the artists and organizations supported by the programs targeted are directly contributing to the strategic objectives of the Department of Canadian Heritage by offering Canadians a way to *"express and share their diverse cultural experiences with each other and the world"* and *"to live in an inclusive society built on intercultural understanding and citizen participation"*.¹

A key issue for the arts and culture is sustainability and it was with great pleasure that the sector acknowledged the extension in 2005 of the multi-year investment initiative Tomorrow Starts Today. This initiative, combined with the programs about to be terminated is providing vital support for numerous arts organizations working hard to develop of their capacity while maintaining a high level of artistic quality and accessibility. For the independent media arts sector, some of these programs are even more than "much needed": they are essential. Without the Canadian Independent Film & Video Fund and the National Training Program for the Film and Video Sector, an entire section of our cultural production and national identity will vanish.

Despite what has been implied in the few public interventions made by government officials in relations to the recent cuts, there was no reviewing process held to justify the sunseting of these programs. Our members are directly affected by their demise and none of them has been consulted in order to evaluate their performance level. This is in blatant contradiction with the basic principles of sound management and accountability held forth by this government. The IMAA deplores that these have not been respected and would like to witness a real consultation involving ALL the stakeholders before these programs get definitely terminated.

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Culture, by being a fundamental instrument of personal and national identity building and by enhancing our quality of life, also acts as an instrument of social cohesion while playing an essential structuring function in today's creative economy. The Department of Canadian Heritage has already implemented several programs that are starting to address the pressing needs of Canadian artists and arts organizations working in film, video, audio and new media. The IMAA is pledging the support and collaboration of its 80 member organizations serving over 12,000 independent media artists and cultural workers in order to help the Department of Canadian Heritage maintain and improve all of its current programs.

We are looking forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'François-Xavier Tremblay', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

François-Xavier Tremblay
Interim National Director

1. http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/org/mission/index_e.cfm (Consulted on September 12, 2008)