



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

**Arts Day on the Hill 2014**

**Video Interview conducted by the Independent Media Arts Alliance**

October 21, 2014

The IMAA interviewed Members of Parliament as part of Arts Day on the Hill 2014. Arts supporters from across Canada gathered in Ottawa on Tuesday October 21st to meet with Members of Parliament for the Arts Day on the Hill, organized by The Canadian Arts Coalition: <http://www.canadianartscoalition.com>. The key discussions focused on the role that federal arts investment plays in the economic and social health of Canada. Arts Day on the Hill 2014 saw more than 100 art supporters take part in scheduled meetings with Members of Parliament, senators and senior officials from all parties.

**The Honourable Stéphane Dion**

MP for St-Laurent - Cartierville, Liberal Critic for Heritage

**Transcript**

translation: IMAA

***4% of Canada's workforce is employed in the cultural sector. This sector is growing all the time, and every dollar invested generates large returns into the Canadian economy. Yet levels of public investment have remained stagnant for nearly a decade. Do you support an increase to the Canada Council's operating budget to the level of \$300 million annually?***

I'm not sure of the exact figure, but in 2005 under Mister Martin we had proposed to double the budget for the Canada Council. We reiterated a commitment in this regard before the 2006 elections, then again in 2008 when I was leader, and in 2011. For 2015 we will see but what is certain is that the Canada Council plays an essential role and if we could not only strengthen its budget but also give it the capacity to plan its budget over the long term, so that it isn't in a position of uncertainty every year as to what will happen, this would do a great service to the health of arts and culture in Canada.

***As a Member of Parliament, what actions do you intend to take in support of Canadian artists and arts institutions?***

Here's what I'm doing currently as the Liberal spokesperson on heritage. First of all, we're consulting everybody, we're compiling information which we've collected from the whole arts and culture sector, all over the country. Secondly, we're calling on the government to correct its actions when it commits errors. And thirdly, I'm trying to activate the Standing

Committee on Canadian Heritage, and I'm astounded that the committee still hasn't met properly even though we're now at the end of October, this is inexcusable because it's an important committee.

Last year, we focused our efforts on music, and I'm proposing that this year we concentrate on issues affecting museums. Even though the government seems uninterested in working on cultural policy on a committees basis, at least for us it's an opportunity to hear directly from stakeholders. This will help me advise my party on a solid arts and culture program that we will propose in our next election platform.

***Canadian artists are recognized as leaders on the world stage, and the arts play a fundamental role in cultural diplomacy. How would you support showcasing Canadian arts internationally, notably during Canada's upcoming 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations?***

I have to correct you: this will not be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada, but of Confederation. Because of course Canada has been around for much longer than that. We keep marking anniversaries for Quebec City or Montreal, so it's important to be clear about this. I hope the government will be careful on this point. No country negates its history. The French start theirs with the Gauls, not with the French Revolution. So we must be careful about this.

Several committees have looked at this already, Heritage, Official Languages, they've all devoted time to this question and yet there are still no plans. We don't know what the Minister is planning. Now she's starting to advertise to let Canadians know that this is coming. I'm all for advertising but how can one advertise when we still don't know the plan? We're constantly asking the government, what will we be celebrating? And how? What budgets will be allocated? Will each Ministry have to draw on its existing funds or will new amounts be devoted to the celebration?

And what will be the flagship projects? In 1967 there were major projects which have endured since that time. What will be the major projects around which the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation will be celebrated?

***Canada has unveiled a new digital strategy, Digital Canada 150, and Canadian consumers will benefit from the improved Internet infrastructure that's being rolled out. How can Parliament work to stimulate similar investments into Canadian cultural production online? What's your vision for a Canadian Cultural Digital Strategy?***

The government announced the Digital Canada 150 strategy, and it contains nothing for arts and culture. I told you that last year we spent months consulting with the music sector who told us that this is their

biggest problem right now. Music is more available than ever to the population but the creators, performers and composers are finding it very difficult to earn a living from their work, they're missing out on the revenue.

We have to take a serious look at this. All we've been able to conclude in our work so far is that we need to assist artists to adapt to the situation by building expertise, training, but this is not enough. We have to take a closer look. We can't limit the conversation to the Canadian industry, we must also look at what's happening internationally. Other countries are also making the digital shift, so how can we limit ourselves to Canadian models? What other models exist internationally? The Swedish model for example, hasn't been sufficiently explored. I believe it is very important to see what can be learned from other countries. Everyone is in the same position at the moment, and this directly affects copyright which is the bread and butter for our artists.

And performing rights, composer's copyrights and so on. Here we are with a government that refuses to address this, yet it suddenly decided to address copyright issues when it comes to attack ads against Justin Trudeau. This is an unacceptable double standard.

And finally, arts and culture can't be funded through the Canada Council alone. We need to connect with those people who are having a harder time earning their living because artists' and authors' rights are not being respected. This is detrimental to innovation and creativity. I think it's extremely important to look at this.

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**The Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA)** is a member-driven non-profit national organization working to advance and strengthen the media arts community in Canada. Representing over 90 independent film, video, audio, and new media production, distribution, and exhibition organizations in all parts of the country, the IMAA serves over 16,000 independent media artists and cultural workers.

Media art is understood to apply to all forms of time-related art works which are created by recording sound or visual images. Time-related art works include works in the fields of sound, video and computer art, both installations and internet projects, and single channel works.