



**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.

Dean de Mastro

MP for Petersborough (Former Conservative Independent)

Transcript

Can you talk about a memorable art experience that's affected your life?

Absolutely, I have a great appreciation for music. Physical forms of art obviously, drama or otherwise, I have appreciation for them too but I've got to say I remember once hearing a performance of Andrea Bocelli and Céline Dion together singing "Partirò" and it almost brought me to tears, it was so... like the emotion behind that, the beauty of it was just something... I think of that song and I think that's got to be as close to heaven on earth as you can get... incredible.

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 over a decade. Do you support an increase to the Canada Council's operating budget to the level of \$300 million annually?

So I think the first thing you realize is that arts and culture provide the colour and the warmth to a community. Oftentimes it speaks to the core identity of individual communities. And inasmuch as we also think of artists as being Canadian, national in scope. Oftentimes they really do assist in identifying an area as well and providing that area with a sense of being.

What can we do as parliamentarians, I think first of all you have to recognize the contribution, which I think all parties do and Members do and secondly you have to look at what role you can play in promoting that, and assisting and fostering it and I think typically speaking we've done a good job over our history as Canadians because we do have a very rich environment in the cultural sector.

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

So back in 2008 when I was first named parliamentary secretary to Heritage, myself and Minister Moore went around and win a number of roundtable discussions and we went in to talk to stakeholders broadly across the country. And what we heard time and time again was, broad support for the Canada Council. And we looked at the role of the Canada Council, we strengthened that, and added to their budget which I believe is now around \$181 million. It's probably worth taking a look at that now and adjusting that.

One thing that Canada did do, certainly between 2009 and 2013, was maintain its funding to the Canada Council. They brought in new festivals funding as part of the Economic Action Plan. The only country in the world that actually provided funding as part of its stimulus package for festivals and concerts that I am aware of. So, these things were very positive. So looking forward... and I think that's really what the community is looking for, they're saying well, that's great. What commitment can we make toward the future to strengthen it more? And I think that's appropriate. I think there's plenty of opportunity and I also think that the landscape is changing significantly. So how we are for example consuming the arts? How the people are receiving it? How are they watching it?

How do they viewing it? How are they storing it ? All of these sorts of things have changed so much over the last number of years and I think it's important that as government, we're looking at ways we can support the arts. It does drive a significant economy, it's a big part of the economy in my own riding, so it's something I'm conscious of it all the time.

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?

So I guess this is... and certainly I had recent discussions on this. So I think the big challenge about anything online is how you monetize it and I think that's a discussion we often have, whether with artists or with the cultural sector. Whether it's even news print media, and others, music obviously.

So I think that's an important discussion and the type of infrastructure that we build to support artists, to allow them to reach new audiences, and so forth I think is again it's a discussion we are having. There's certainly no shortage of online broadcasting opportunities and platforms that exist today. The truth is that many of those online broadcast sites, for example Youtube, they're very successful but they're very successful in disseminating items that happen to be free. People have a very difficult time monetizing that unless they use it as an opportunity to promote something else that they are doing for example.

There are certainly an abundance of online platforms available I think what people are discussing today is how do we build an online platform that doesn't just promote artists and provide that opportunity for that global stage but allow

them to monetize. That's obviously very difficult. It's a difficult question because I know a lot of groups are looking at it and are really trying to find a way to build a new market that's online but generates value for groups other than Google, Youtube and Facebook.

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 150th anniversary celebrations?

Let me first start by saying that certainly if I look over the experience of my lifetime, and I'm not that old, I've got to say it is remarkable to see the level of success of Canadian artists in virtually all genres achieving globally today, and I think that speaks to the richness of Canada, the talent of our people and obviously when you start looking at celebrating Canada on our 150th anniversary they obviously have a very important role to play in that. They are our cultural ambassadors, they are also for many people that have never been to Canada, it may be how they identify Canada or certainly what they think of when they think about Canada, or part of.

I think it's an important role, I think we should be clearly taking a look at that, and how we bring the cultural sector in as part of what is a very significant celebration for Canada. You know I think Canada is still a young nation in global terms.

But in many ways we are also a model for other nations in how we live together, how we celebrate each other and frankly how we identify ourselves within our nation. I think it's important that we are out there and we're promoting Canada globally, absolutely.

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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.