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## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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**Wednesday, October 18, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger**

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Wednesday, October 18, 2006

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)):** I'd like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to order, please.

This is meeting number 17, pursuant to standing order 81(4), main estimates of 2006-07.

Just before we ask the minister and our department officials to proceed, it's my understanding that the minister will have one hour with us today. Is this right?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women):** Yes.

**The Chair:** You have no extra time? Are you sure?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Maybe ten minutes, Mr. Chair, but I do have another meeting to be at.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I'd like to put on the record that I find that answer completely unacceptable.

We asked this minister here. We have estimates. This is the serious financial issue of our committee and what the Department of Heritage is doing. The fact that she's booked herself into another meeting is of no consequence to me. I believe she's here to answer our questions, and I think she should stay for the full two hours. Otherwise, we're pretty much wasting our time.

**The Chair:** What I intend to do today, Mr. Angus, is adhere to the five-minute question-and-answer format. I've been very lenient on other occasions. That way we can get through a mound of questions. I will be holding to that.

Afterwards, the ministry officials will stay, but ministry officials will not answer political questions.

Yes, Mr. Belanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I continue to register my protest.

This is the second time we've been told as the meeting starts that the minister's time is one hour, when the meeting itself called for two hours of her presence.

Secondly, I want to know if you're going to impose a time restriction on our principal witness as well as the members of the committee, and what that time restriction will be.

**The Chair:** Yes.

Can we abbreviate the presentation somewhat?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I will do my best.

**The Chair:** Okay, fine then.

Welcome, Minister Oda and Department of Heritage staff. I'm pleased to have you here today.

We'll proceed then with the opening address.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and colleagues.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you again today. And thank you for the work you have been doing over the past nine months on this committee.

The new Government of Canada takes seriously its commitment to the arts, culture and heritage. That is why we have taken a proactive stance in regard to meeting with organizations in the arts and culture sector.

I recognize that the question and answer session to follow my opening comments is very important. So I will allow ample time for discussion.

[English]

In Budget 2006, Canada's new government promised to begin reviewing our programs to ensure that taxpayers' dollars were being well spent. This meant that the new Conservative government was ready to make real choices on behalf of Canadians. We recognize that as a responsible government such choices are necessary to fulfill our commitment of accountability and ensure that Canadians are given value for their tax dollars.

As a result of this review, our government has found savings of \$1 billion. The end result will be more disciplined management of public funds. We promised we would undertake this review, and in less than a year we have delivered.

Some of the choices our government had to make affected the Department of Canadian Heritage. First, we believe that government has an important role to play in preserving Canada's heritage, and we have allocated over \$245 million annually to support museums across Canada. We did, however, find a cost savings in the museums assistance program of \$2.3 million per year over two years. The MAP program will retain an annual budget of \$9.6 million, which will continue to help museums across the country.

• (1540)

**Hon. Bev Oda** In addition to the MAP program, Canadian museums are able to access \$2.21 million a year through Cultural Spaces Canada, which assists in the renovation of buildings to meet modern standards. The arts and heritage sustainability program invests an additional \$1.8 million in improving the business practices of those managing museums.

We believe that after 13 years of neglect, our museums require some support to reflect their real needs. In fact, some of the most basic needs of our museums have been neglected.

I welcome and encourage the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to continue your study of our museums. This will be a concrete contribution to a policy area that has been left untouched for over 13 years.

Ultimately, we want a policy that will benefit Canada's museums, both small and large. A new museums policy will ensure that the money is spent effectively and efficiently, and any information the committee could provide to me and to the department would be more than welcome.

We also found a \$5.6 million savings by eliminating funding to the court challenges program. We believe it is our responsibility as legislators to ensure that the laws that are passed are constitutional, and our government takes this responsibility seriously.

[Translation]

I understand that some of you have concerns about the elimination of the Court Challenges Program, specifically concerns related to the issue of official languages. However, our government is committed to the development of official language minority communities and the promotion of French and English in Canadian society.

[English]

In this regard, we have already delivered for education a \$1-billion four-year agreement, which is 44% over the previous agreement; for services, a \$64-million four-year agreement, up 24.7% over the previous agreement; and for communities, a \$120-million four-year agreement, up 11% over any previous agreement. And along with these measures, our government has announced a strategic plan to foster immigration to francophone minority communities.

This afternoon, since my time is limited, I would also like to discuss a few other important issues related to Canadian culture: the main estimates for the Department of Canadian Heritage and its portfolio; the Copyright Act; and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for its important work on Canada's feature film policy. Your report contains valuable insight and analysis based largely on the extensive consultations that were conducted with stakeholders from across the country. In our response to the report, tabled a few weeks back, we largely agreed with many of your findings. For example, by and large, the Canadian feature film policy has been successful and the existing levels of funding are adequate. It is important to continue to recognize the differences between the English- and French-language film markets in our policy, and that good governance and accountability under the policy are paramount.

I know we all share a common goal, in that we want to build upon the existing Canadian feature film policy. Our government remains committed to assisting the industry in reaching Canadians and international audiences with quality Canadian films.

I have had the opportunity to meet with industry representatives and will continue to do so. These meetings have been beneficial for all involved, and together we will continue to work toward real solutions that will help both French and English film industries within the context of their distinctive industry realities.

Next, I have a short update on the matter of the Chinese redress, if I may. In that regard, in June the Government of Canada turned a page on this unfortunate period in Canada's history by offering an official apology to Chinese Canadians who were required to pay a head tax as a condition of their immigration. In addition to the apology, we will provide living head tax payers and persons who have been in conjugal relationships with payers who are now deceased with symbolic *ex gratia* payments to acknowledge the difficulties that resulted from the imposition of the head tax. I'm pleased to report that the *ex gratia* payments will begin to be distributed very soon.

We are putting in place the community historical recognition program. It will fund community-based commemorative and education projects that promote the awareness of the head tax, Chinese immigration prohibition, and other discriminatory wartime immigration measures and immigration restrictions related to ethnocultural communities, and it will recognize the contributions of these communities to Canada.

The Prime Minister has also announced the national historical recognition program to be delivered through Canadian Heritage. This program will help to educate young people and all Canadians about discrimination and the hardships faced by the communities impacted.

Without a doubt, the Department of Canadian Heritage's mandate is important and very broad. I am hard-pressed to come up with another department that deals with issues as wide-ranging as sports, official languages, and cultural industries. Of course, I am joined under the ministry's portfolio by Madame Josée Verner as Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages; Minister Michael Chong as Minister for Sport; and Minister David Emerson as Minister for the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics.

The 2006-07 main estimates were tabled in April, the first for this new Conservative government. Resources for the department total \$1.4 billion in 2006-07 and maintain initiatives that were announced in previous budgets and approved by the Treasury Board.

•(1545)

A \$267-million increase over the previous year was provided to the department. The increase can largely be attributed to increases in new funding in several areas, including, for example, \$77.7 million for the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic venues; \$69.5 million for the enhancement of Canadian sports development, excellence, and participation; and \$27.4 million for the aboriginal peoples program.

In 2006 and 2007, resources for the department's portfolio total \$2.16 billion, an increase of \$310 million over the previous year. Increased funding includes \$17.5 million for the Public Service Commission, primarily for program expenditures; \$16.2 million largely for program expenditures at Library and Archives Canada; \$3.6 million for the Canadian Museum of Nature for operating and capital expenditures; and \$50 million over two years for the Canada Council, a concrete display of our new government's support for arts and culture. While none of these were on the list of the new Conservative government's five priorities, these dollars to Canadian Heritage and its portfolio demonstrate once again the government's commitment to Canadian culture and civic life.

As I have stated, the department's mandate is broad. That means we must be extra prudent to ensure that the programs and policies we deliver have the largest possible impact and make a real difference when being delivered in a most efficient manner. We make no mistake that as we set upon our course, we have had to make some very difficult decisions. We recognize that all of our decisions may not be popular, but they are responsible choices, made responsibly and with the goal of meaningful outcomes.

Now I'd like to update you on the issue of copyright. As you are all aware, this is an era of rapid technological change. It is presenting new challenges and opportunities, especially in the broadcasting area, where technology evolves so quickly. That is why I have asked the CRTC to study the future technological environment facing the entire broadcasting industry, and the changes taking place in how Canadians are accessing their information and entertainment. The study, which I have requested for mid-December, will serve as a building block for federal broadcasting policy in the future.

We know technological change has important ramifications on Canada's copyright laws. For example, educators have been calling for amendments to the Copyright Act to facilitate the educational use of Internet material. The federal government understands the need for access to works of educational value and for clear and fair rules for using this material.

I have met with several groups, and I am mindful that not all parties agree on how best to address the issue of copyright. Therefore, we are seeking a balanced approach that ensures that the interests of the rights holders, as well as the interests of the users, will be well served. I will continue to work closely with my colleague Minister Bernier, the Minister of Industry, on amendments to the Copyright Act as we move forward on copyright reform.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on developments regarding the UNESCO convention. Last December, Canada became the first country to formally accept the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of

Cultural Expressions. As of September 20, eleven countries in addition to Canada have ratified the convention, while countries such as Senegal, Peru, France, and Finland are expected to follow shortly.

•(1550)

All indications show that the rate of ratification will accelerate in the coming months. Thirty ratifications are needed for the convention to enter into force. As stated by the Prime Minister at the Francophonie summit in Bucharest, we will be vigorously pursuing ratification of the convention on cultural diversity, and we will use every opportunity to promote its ratification by the largest number of countries possible to ensure that it is an effective international instrument.

[Translation]

In conclusion, let me again thank you for your work on the Canadian Heritage Committee. Your mandate is as broad as that of the department. Together, we want to see culture take its rightful place as a driving force in our society.

We want to use the power of Canadian culture to help build creative and prosperous communities across the country. We want to foster access to our arts and culture for as many Canadians as possible.

We will continue to provide strong and efficient programs and initiatives so Canada's cultural industries can build on their success.

[English]

I know you share my passion for culture in Canada. I'll end my comments now. I'd like to thank you again for the opportunity to discuss Canadian culture and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Chair, with me today are Deputy Minister Judith LaRocque and Bruce Manion, the assistant deputy minister for planning and corporate affairs. They, along with other Canadian Heritage officials, have joined me to help answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

The first question goes to Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think we've gone over twice the time usually allotted to our witnesses, but that just takes away ten minutes. Perhaps we can recover them some other time.

Madame Minister, is it still your intention to introduce legislation on copyrights this fall, or are we now looking at 2007?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Monsieur Bélanger, we are sticking with our plan and we are working very aggressively. I know both Minister Bernier and I have made reference to the fall, and that is our intent and plan so far.

•(1555)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

Is it still your intention to proceed with a review of the mandate of CBC? If so, when? If so, will you adhere to the resolution that this committee adopted, and which was subsequently adopted unanimously in the House, that this committee be consulted on the terms of reference of whatever reviewed mechanism you choose?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Yes. As you know, I've given direction to the CRTC to give us a report on the environment and the technological changes, and also the utilization of those new technologies by Canadians. That report should be delivered by the middle of December, at which time the government will receive the report and of course absorb it. We will then proceed with the next logical step.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Which is the review of the mandate?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Consequently, we will honour the commitment made. We know that and are very aware of the request.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

Minister, when you came here last time, for an hour again, you responded to a question that I asked on the court challenges program, a prophetic question. We were discussing the 2007-08 horizon, and I'll quote you:

I'm not prepared to make a commitment beyond that horizon, only because we have not undertaken any review of this program. Again, this government was elected to ensure that all public funds are being used accountably and effectively, which is not to say that this program isn't valuable, but that we have not received a report on the review of the program.

Minister, this afternoon the House will vote on a motion adopted by this committee to continue the court challenges program. In the hope of helping the debate along, would you be prepared to table the review that you didn't have back then, but which you surely to God must have received in order to cut the program?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Monsieur Bélanger is quite correct. We have a review of the program, and I would suggest that if the member so wishes, Mr. Chair, we would certainly provide for the committee the review report as we have it.

I would also point out that the court challenges program undertook the same review as all programs throughout the government, in every department of this government. As the government announced when it announced the expenditure review, there were criteria upon which those decisions were made, which were efficiency, adherence to core activities and programs of the federal government, and to avoid duplication in streamlining.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** When can we expect a copy of that document, Madam Minister?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I'll ask the deputy to respond to that.

**Mrs. Judith LaRocque (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage):** I'll see if someone has it with them. I think it was publicly posted on our website as well. We can have copies made, and we can provide it to the clerk.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

Since we're talking about these cuts, Minister, there's another one listed under the non-core-programs category, which was the elimination of support for the Canada volunteerism initiative. Was there a review to arrive at the decision to designate it non-core and to eliminate it?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I'm sure the member recognizes that there are various kinds of reviews that the government and various departments undertake. There are normal required reviews that, when a program is in place, take place shortly after the term of the program. Those requirements, in most cases, are articulated when a program is set up. In the case of the volunteer program, there was no official review process being undertaken or planned to be undertaken; however, again, I refer you to the fact that the expenditure review process had clear criteria, and each one of the decisions that were made was tested against the government's criteria.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up.

Go ahead, please, Mr. Kotto.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I would just inform you that there was an evaluation, however—and this is what I referred to, a summative review—done in 2005.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For some time now, I've been desperately searching for a Minister of Heritage prepared to defend culture. Unfortunately, all I've found is a Minister of Heritage prepared to defend budget cuts.

How has the cultural community reacted to the drastic cuts and announcements that you've just made?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Not all sectors of Canada's cultural communities or the responsibilities that come under the Department of Heritage were affected.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** I'm talking about agencies.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Consequently, I would suggest that many of the initiatives that we've undertaken... A \$50 million contribution to Canada Council is very welcomed, and we are now looking at and discussing with them how that will bring a positive impact to the arts and cultural communities. An increase of \$375,000 to the operating budget of Confederation Centre in Prince Edward Island is very well appreciated in order to let that centre continue to play an important role.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Have there been any positive reactions other than the ones you mentioned?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** You've asked if there were positive reactions throughout the arts community. I would suggest to you that we'll be pleased to provide to you, to the extent possible, information about positive reactions to the actions of this government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I will refrain from asking the Minister any questions about the Main Estimates, given that the following is stated in a news release, and I quote:

The 2006-2007 Main Estimates reflect decisions taken by the previous government rather than the current government.

The news release goes on to say this:

This government's decisions will be announced in Budget 2006 and will be reflected in the Supplementary Estimates to be tabled in the fall.

Nevertheless, I do have a series of questions about the Minister's policy directions. Since my questions will be brief, I hope the Minister will keep her answers brief as well.

First of all, when can we expect a new museum policy that provides for stable, adequate funding? The Canadian Museums Association had asked for \$75 million. Can you refresh my memory as to what the government promised to do for museums in the last elections?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Yes, this government intends to proceed and is proceeding with a review of the museums policy. I also, again, suggest that we welcome your input as a committee. I understand that you've decided to do some work in the area of museums. The commitment of the government still stands. We know that the museums are important to us. The museums association is willing to work with us in that process, and they recognize that like all of the museums, all of the organizations, they're going to be coming forward with a clear identification of their needs, their business plans, etc., and we will respond to those.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Are you aware of the motion adopted by this committee, as well by Members affected by the recent drastic cuts to museum budgets? The motion called for MAP funding to be restored until such time as a new museum policy was in place.

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Monsieur Kotto, if you could, I would suggest, we had a reviewing to try to find.... We know there is the money, and we are trying to proceed judiciously so there is the least amount of impact possible.

We have not implemented those cuts. We have until the end of the year to identify those cuts and which museums will be negatively affected. There's a lot of misinformation out there. I know we have inquiries as to particular applications that are in, but as to which museums have been cut.... I would ask the department to give us the names of those museums, and we will look into it as soon as possible for you.

•(1605)

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** I see. I'll move on to another point.

What is a reasonable amount of time for reviewing funding requests? Is twelve months considered reasonable?

[English]

**The Chair:** Last question.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Each of the programs has a process and deadlines. Depending on the program, they have assessment processes, etc.

As I say, we are working with the department to look at how we can achieve the cuts to have the least amount of impact.

I've received dialogue from the head of the Museums Association, who was very enthusiastic about working with us to ensure that in the future we have a strong and meaningful museums policy.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to ask a couple of questions about direction and where we're going with our cultural sectors.

With respect to the Canadian Television Fund, we've talked about governance change. Is there a commitment for stable funding, increased funding, a move to A-base funding for the Canadian Television Fund?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Angus, I know you have a great interest in this area.

As you know, the Canadian Television Fund has just established, and it is operating now under a new government's format. This is a format that has been worked on for a number of months—I would think over a year—as to what would satisfy the needs of not only the communities and the producers, but also to do it in a responsible and accountable way. We are looking now at monitoring that. The reports so far are that the new system is working very well.

As far as the future needs of the producers, we're going to be working with them. At this point in time, I cannot say whether changes to the fund will become A-base or not. It has not been deliberated or decided upon.

Certainly, as I'm listening to you, I will give consideration to what you may be asking for as a pre-budget consultation suggestion.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** The postal assistance program that Canada Post has announced they're walking away from will have a devastating impact on our magazine sector. Has the Department of Heritage looked at this, and will Heritage be able to step into the breach to deal with this serious shortfall that magazines will be facing?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** We are very concerned with the actions and decisions of Canada Post. As you know, Canada Post is a crown corporation that has its own board, etc. We have been in discussions with them.

I would express to you that we are committed to the importance of supporting our Canadian publications. Not only will this minister and this department be working on it, but this is something we take seriously as a government.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Canada is the lead requester nation on the GATT in terms of telecom deregulation. Maxime Bernier, the minister, has pushed for the stripping of the telecom regulations. My concern is that telecom is how we're delivering culture right now. That is the vehicle, and it will increasingly become the vehicle.

In light of our commitments to UNESCO, what clear steps will your ministry take to ensure there are rules for telecom in a deregulated environment and to ensure Canadian content standards, Canadian ownership standards, and language requirements?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** First, the fundamental positive is that within the new Conservative government, you have two ministers who are willing to work together cooperatively in the interests of Canadians and the industries in question. Number two, I would suggest to you also that Mr. Bernier understands, and we work together, because of the impact.

This is a challenge that not only Canadians are facing; this is a challenge being faced by every country around this world. The new technologies are changing the way information, entertainment, and audio-visual works are being distributed. I know what my responsibilities are. We are committed to Canadian creators, Canadian productions, Canadian works, and because we have a cooperative relationship, I'm confident we can get the best for the industry and for the creators.

●(1610)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Minister, we have heard from Mr. Bernier. He has set out very clear rules in terms of where he is coming from. We have heard nothing from you. Will you make a clear public commitment to the CRTC about what you expect from them in terms of Canadian content with telecom? The other minister has, but you haven't.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** The other minister has indicated publicly where he would like to see the telecommunications industry going. The only other public pronouncement as far as direction to the CRTC that the Minister of Industry has made is a direction to consider making decisions in light of a more marketplace-driven approach to it.

I understand. I know the full implications of the impact of any decisions or moves that may be made on broadcasting, on our content providers, and our content creators in the future. Without being overly reactive before we see actual changes or legislation being proposed, I will ensure, not only publicly, but in working together with the Minister of Industry, that any actions to be taken by the government and any legislation will also ensure the continuity you're asking for.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Boucher.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for joining us, Ms. Oda. As a Quebecker and a francophone, I'm proud to note that since taking office, our government has made cultural diversity one of its priorities.

Our government has worked closely on this issue with the Quebec government. On May 5 last, it signed the UNESCO agreement with Quebec, thereby giving the province an official status, something that is very important to francophones. I support cultural diversity, but I also support French, my mother tongue.

The signing ceremony was held in the Red Room, with representatives of all Quebec parties on hand, along with all of

Quebec's francophone MPs. It was indeed a magical moment worthy of note.

Canada was the first country to ratify the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity in November of 2005. Closer to home, the Francophone Summit was held and Mr. Harper spoke again about La Francophonie and cultural diversity.

Thank you, Ms. Oda. A great deal of hard work is being done in this front.

Recently, you have publicly reaffirmed our government's commitment to implementing quickly the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and to ensuring the Convention's widespread ratification, so that it becomes a credible international legal instrument.

Can you elaborate further on the importance of the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in terms of culture in Canada?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Thank you for your question.

[English]

I clearly understand how important this is, not only to all Canadians, but particularly to the francophone community. That's why it was important for the Prime Minister. He wanted to take the opportunity when he was at La Francophonie in Bucharest to declare Canada's commitment to the statement and the declaration.

We are supporting work by organizations to promote this cause as they travel around the country. I've been in meetings with foreign ministers from other countries, encouraging them and asking how they're progressing with the ratification within their countries. I'm happy to announce that representatives of countries with an interest in the matter told me that it's working its way through their legislation as well.

So we are continuing the hard work and support, and we take every opportunity to promote and encourage other countries.

●(1615)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Scarpaleggia.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Thank you, Minister, for being here.

One gets the sense that this government is shedding responsibility for culture left, right, and centre. First we were witness to the cuts to the museum envelope. John McAvity, of the Canadian Museums Association, was all over the press, saying how disappointed he was. The portrait museum seems to be doomed, to the chagrin, among others, of the *Globe and Mail* editorial board. The film community in Quebec is not particularly happy. You haven't been proactive in buttressing the publications assistance program, and there are rumours that Canada Post doesn't want to support the distribution of Canadian magazines any more.



There is a palpable fear, justified or not, in the cultural industries and the culture and arts community that this government, if given a chance, would privatize the CBC. I would like an assurance from you. I'd like to give you the opportunity to assure us, for the record, that no Conservative government would take a step in that direction, so that we can put these fears, whether they're justified or not, to bed.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** First of all, let me say that this government is not only about announcing dollar figures. This government is not only about announcements that get into the press. This government is not about making decisions on programs, grants and contributions, or other activities because of what an editorial board or the headlines might say.

This government is about supporting arts, culture, and Canada's heritage. It's about supporting the citizenship and citizenship participation of all Canadians. It's about doing things, not just about making announcements.

Consequently, I have met with Quebec filmmakers. I've asked them to come up with proposals that will really help them on a long-term basis, on a stable basis. I'm looking forward to my next meeting with them, towards the end of this month.

I am supportive of our community newspapers and our publications, because they are important. Owing to the size of Canada's land mass—

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Minister, with all due respect—

**Hon. Bev Oda:** —we need to support the subsidy that they get.

This is not only a responsibility of one minister. Previous ministers had to get very emotional to get the attention of their colleagues. I do not have to do that. I have support, and you will see this government working on the PAP program.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Minister, with all due respect, on this side of the committee we feel we're getting many platitudes today. We're being stonewalled, and the clock is running down. I asked a simple question. Could you tell this committee and the people of Canada that under no circumstances will the Conservative government, now or in the future, privatize the CBC?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** There is no intent, and I will make a commitment that the government that I am part of today has no intention or plans to do so. I cannot speak for a government of 10 to 20 years from now. I cannot say “ever”, nor could any member here for any party or any government that they are part of—on a going-forward basis. I will be very realistic—and that's the difference with this government. We will not say words just to satisfy. I will be very realistic and tell you that there are no plans by this current government to privatize the CBC.

• (1620)

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** There are no plans by the current government. But we know that we're in a minority Parliament. We know there could be an election around the corner. Will you tell us that you will not be in a Conservative caucus, now or in the future, that privatizes the CBC?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I think I've responded to the question in a responsible manner.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kotto, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Why did you ask that certain agencies apply for multi-year funding and then subsequently reverse your position?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** The parameters of certain programs that were established under a previous government did allow for multi-year funding. We were very clear when this government took office that we intended to review all programs. That is the reason, Monsieur Kotto, we are saying that while we're undertaking the reviews of the programs, the commitment is for one year so we can do the review in a responsible way.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Who wanted the decision to have these agencies apply for multi-year funding reversed?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I don't quite understand your question. I would suggest that the direction of the government—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Let me be more specific.

Some agencies were asked to present requests for multi-year funding. They spent weeks working on their applications and you reversed your decision. I want to know who is responsible for this change of heart.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I would suggest to you that this government very clearly indicated it was going to review all the programs. In order to do that, the government decided, and I as a representative of this particular department decided, that we would restrict funding to one year for many of the multi-year funded programs. That's not to say there is not going to be funding for future years, but in order to give this government the ability and the flexibility to address any improvements and to introduce any improvements as it chooses to, that's what is happening.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** I understand what you're saying, Madam Minister. Do you realize that while we wait, cultural groups and organizations are struggling to hang on? Horror stories abound. We hear about board members who are forced to use their own credit card or of others who end up borrowing money to keep their organization afloat. I'm sure you've heard similar tales.

Funding was abruptly cut off and these organizations were not given any time to adjust to the new situation. Quite simply, the government swung the axe. At least that's how people perceived the situation. I'm just relaying to you what I'm hearing from people everywhere.

Do you realize that all of these organizations being given the runaround are currently in dire straits?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** No, I'm not aware, because I meet with many organizations that are very satisfied and are doing quite well and in fact being very successful. So I would say not every organization is suffering this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** That's not what I'm hearing.

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I don't quite understand. Certainly those that have been approved, that qualified and met the criteria for the first year of commitment have their commitment. If it's a multi-year funding question, I don't understand why, when that first year hasn't been completed yet, they would be short or having to use their credit cards. I guess maybe I'm not understanding the question here.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Some organizations were asked to prepare multi-year funding proposals and subsequently, this decision was reversed. I would simply like to know who made this decision and why.

Moving on to the film industry, when do are you plan to update Telefilm Canada's operating regulations in order to secure a quorum on the board of directors? Since March of 2005, they haven't had a quorum.

• (1625)

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** They have had quorum. In eight meetings they've been able to conduct their business with a quorum.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** I was unaware of that, but I'll check into it.

**Mrs. Judith LaRocque:** There are four board members, and four members are required for a quorum.

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Two members were excluded, in light of Bill C-18. Were you aware of that fact?

When the updating...

[English]

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. Kotto. Your time is up.

Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Thank you, Minister, for being here this afternoon. I appreciate your willingness to meet with us again. You've been here before, and you'll see a theme in my question today.

Last time we talked about new technologies and their effect on culture. Since then you've announced a section 15 review of these new technologies. Canadians have been inundated, as have other countries, with new technologies like high-definition televisions, computers, and the Internet. We're accessing cultural types of media from other places. We have MP3 players, satellite radio, and the list goes on and on. You just have to go to any big-box retail store and find that we have just unlimited possibilities in accessing culture. There's no question that these new types of technologies are bringing

in Canadian-based media, but they're also bringing in media that aren't necessarily Canadian-based.

I'm looking for specifics about the review and what types of technologies are being looked at. Are we only looking at technologies on the market today, or are we looking into the future at what might be coming on stream? I guess none of us can tell the future; if we could we'd maybe be in a different business. But we certainly have to look at what might be coming on stream in the future to ensure that we, as a society, protect the culture here in Canada.

So I'm wondering if you could elaborate a bit on the review and give us some specifics on the technologies that have been looked at.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Thank you for the question. In fact, I had breakfast this morning with the chair of the CRTC and was able to ask how the review was coming along. We didn't actually talk about the content of the information, but he reported back that he has received a very good response from all sectors of the industry. He started demonstrating the volume of it at the breakfast table.

That led us into a discussion, because the digital world is a technology that enables so many people to be able to develop new ways. We just heard about a major transaction including YouTube. Well, it's two young men in a garage, etc. So it's very hard to forecast future technologies, services, packaging, and how it will be delivered.

We then talked about the difficulty, when you're in an Internet age and a digital world, of ensuring Canadian content. How do you ensure a space and a place for Canadian creators? Those are the kinds of questions I'm committed to being concerned about, as is the chair. That's the environment we're talking about.

It's also a conversation, I'm happy to report, that actually happens at cabinet with my cabinet colleagues themselves, not only Minister Bernier, but Minister Flaherty, the finance minister. We had a dinner last night with heads of universities and colleges in the GTA. The head of Ryerson asked a very insightful question: Did we recognize the potential of Canada and Canadians in this new digital world and the place we could play? We have the talent and we certainly have the training. Now where are the jobs and the placements, etc.? So this is a discussion we are constantly having.

• (1630)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Are there any general themes that might be coming out of the review so far that might give us some direction as to where we might have to look in the future to protect our cultural sovereignty?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** As you know, the direction outlined the very areas that we wanted the commission to look at, and we tried to encapsulate them in broad areas. The chair reported back to me this morning that this is one of the major tasks, how to group the themes, that information, which is very diverse, very interesting, very intricate, into pieces that make sense, pieces that would be helpful to the government in its future work. They are struggling with that right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Madam Minister, perhaps we're not looking at the right spot, because you mentioned that there was a program review or an evaluation on the court challenges program on the website, and we can't find it. I look forward to receiving it.

But I do want to talk about a program evaluation. I understand the internal reviews you might have made, but a formal program evaluation is what I'm looking for, if there's been one.

Can you please give us the department's plans, intentions, vis-à-vis the portrait gallery or the portrait museum—whatever you may wish to call it. You know what I'm referring to.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I do.

There was no final decision made on the portrait gallery. As you know, we are looking at various options. As you know, this is a collection that has been stored for decades, but we want to make sure this collection is made accessible to as many Canadians as possible and in a responsible manner.

Consequently, using the criteria of valuing our collections, making sure they can be preserved, making sure we do it in an efficient and responsible manner, and making sure it's accessible to Canadians rather than being kept in storage, we are looking at it and deliberating. So I cannot report that a final decision has been made.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Does that mean that the possibility of its being located in the old American embassy on Wellington Street has been eliminated?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Bélanger, as I said, no final decision has been made.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Changing the subject, I'd like to come back to Ms. Boucher's remarks. She congratulated, quite inadvertently I would imagine, the previous government, since it was the previous government that was the first to ratify the UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity.

Thank you, Ms. Boucher.

I'd also like to thank you, Madam Minister, for underscoring the previous government's initiatives in the area of official languages. The three initiatives of which you are so proud are, if I'm not mistaken, initiatives launched by the previous government as well.

I have a question about the boards of directors of the CRTC and the CBC. Even though it wasn't always successful, the previous government always tried to ensure that all regions of the country were represented on these boards, including minority linguistic communities. Positions will soon be vacant on the boards of the CRTC, the CBC, the NFB, and Telefilm Canada, among others.

Does your government intend to ensure that the makeup of these boards accurately reflects Canada's demographics?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** First of all, let me say, Monsieur Bélanger, as you know, when it's the right thing to do, we've always worked together. As I said, all of us—and you, particularly—who sit on this committee have a commitment to the arts, to culture, to diversity, and I was always very pleased to work with the former minister on advocating for the declaration and the UNESCO statement.

We recognize the work that has been done, and we are certainly going to build on that work in many areas.

Regarding your question about appointments, certainly we will make sure...because I think historically, Canada has always understood—because of the geography, because of the nature, because of the diversity of our country—that we are best served with the most representative kind of board in this governance.

I know personally that representation does have its benefit when it is diverse, when we make sure we have regional representation, large communities, small communities, minority communities; when we have the official languages represented. So certainly we will be attempting to respect those criteria, those guidelines that have been used historically.

• (1635)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The clock is fast, Mr. Chairman. That's it?

**The Chair:** Yes, but I'm going to ask if the minister could stay for two more questions. That would even things out. If you could do that, Minister, I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate your indulgence. I'm being told I can make my next meeting if I stay till a quarter to.

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask Mr. Fast for a question, and then I'd like Mr. Angus to have one more.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Minister and your staff, for appearing before us.

First of all, I want to commend you for the job you're doing, especially for taking action on the Chinese head tax. That was a horrific stain on the nation's conscience. I believe the steps that you have taken and that we as a Parliament have taken go a long way towards bringing closure to this sad chapter of our history.

I'd like to address the MAP funding. Maybe your staff has answers at their fingertips.

There has been a suggestion that we've virtually decimated the museum funding. I believe it was Mr. Kotto who referred to various associations scrambling to try to recoup the funds they felt they lost.

Do you have any idea how much of the total budget amount was actually spent in the last five years? Do you have a spreadsheet that would show that? I have one available, but I'm not sure it's accurate.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I'm going to ask Bruce Manion. I believe he has those numbers with him. He has a lot of charts and numbers.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** I understand that the initial budget amount was \$11.8 million per year, and this was cut back by about \$2.3 million per year, leaving around \$9.6 million available.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** You're correct.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** My question is, of the \$11.8 million, how much was spent every year? How many requests for grants under this program were actually approved? What was the total dollar amount of those grants?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I'm going to ask the deputy, who should be able to give you that.

**Mrs. Judith LaRocque:** It's my recollection—though I would have to check with Bruce—that this program actually started a few years ago at quite a lower level. It was around \$7 million a year, and it was progressively added to over time.

As to how much was accessed, we try to maximize the potential for museums to draw on. But it would be fair to say that every now and again there might have been a fluctuation, maybe at the end of the year. There could have been instances of their not drawing on the whole amount, maybe a 10% figure.

**Mr. Bruce Manion (Assistant Deputy Minister, Planning and Corporate Management, Department of Canadian Heritage):** I have more information.

Over the last three fiscal years—2003-04 to 2005-06—the budget was approximately \$12 million. There were some fluctuations up and down. The total expenditures against the MAP were \$8.9 million, \$8.5 million, and \$8.3 million. If you like, I can explain why those expenditures were slightly lower.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** I think you understand where I'm going with this.

We have a budget of \$11.8 million, and the spreadsheet I have goes back to 1995-96 under the previous government. Starting in 1995-96, the expenditures were \$8 million, \$7.9 million, \$8.3 million, \$7.2 million, \$8.5 million, \$9.6 million, \$7.7 million, \$7.4 million, \$8.2 million, and \$8.1 million. These expenditures do not get close to the \$11.8 million that was actually budgeted. So I'm a little skeptical about the claims that museums are being short-changed, when in fact the total funding on an annual basis was significantly less than what was actually budgeted.

Could give us a comment on your commitment to the long-term viability of museums in Canada, especially the smaller museums?

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Just a short answer.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I certainly can make that commitment. We conducted a review of the overall approach to museums, and we are as concerned about the small and local regional museums as we are about our national institutions.

You make a good point that even with the reductions the full amount for the MAP of \$9 million has historically not been accessed. But in fairness, we also have to understand that because of the nature of museum projects, they are not all completed within the designated fiscal year. Some of them carry over. We are now looking at ways to make sure the cuts have a minimal impact. That's why I'm comfortable to say that I think we can minimize the impact on the museums.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Angus, keep it short please, if you can.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Should I keep it to a short five minutes?

Thank you. I'll start to speak immediately.

I didn't get an answer about when we're getting a commitment to the Canadian Television Fund because it's under review. You remember very clearly the bizarre situation in March 2005 when the heritage minister at the time refused to make a commitment to

“Tomorrow Starts Today” until it was time to announce it in a budget, and yet our arts sector was in chaos because they couldn't make any commitments to projects.

Television needs to know there is money on the table if they're going to get financing. When will you be able to make a commitment one way or the other to the CTF?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I would suggest to you that there is a proper government process. And certainly one thing, Mr. Angus, I can share with you is that it's very different when you're in government and you have to really try—not just try—to understand government process, and you also have to understand government budgeting.

As far as a commitment to certain projects and to certain areas of activity, what I learned was that your best indication is in the main estimates, budgets, and supplementary estimates. That's where the real commitment is, once those are passed. And we are going to need your support in passing some of those when they include moneys and support and resources for the areas you have a concern about.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** When I was at the event where Mr. Baird announced the cuts, he was very clear. He said that they had chosen a path to go after the programs that were wasteful, inefficient, and out of touch with average Canadians. You had said that you had criteria and that you had to make clear choices.

I'd like to follow up on the question my colleague, Mr. Fast, asked. If \$3 million a year was not being spent in that program—if that's what I'm looking at in a snapshot year after year, that all the money was not going out—was it that the museums were wasteful and inefficient and weren't eligible, or was it that Canadian Heritage was not supplying the money that was needed out in the field?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** I think I'm going to ask Mr. Manion, because Mr. Manion actually worked with the Treasury Board on this.

**Mr. Bruce Manion:** The basic issue here is one of the size and sophistication of some of the groups. When we fund some of these projects, we have to do due diligence on them. But there is a certain amount of flexibility in terms of their ability to actually initiate the projects—in some cases we may not be the only funders of these projects—and what winds up happening is that these are based on projections, and the actuals don't always pan out.

So what we find in this program—and we have a number of other programs that are capital-based—when we talk about small organizations is that they don't have the capacity and critical mass unless they generate really strong cash flows. So we wind up at the end of the year seeing a fair amount of money coming back to us that does not cash out in the projects, and under the terms and conditions of our programs and Treasury Board rules and the basic appropriations acts, we can't spend—

•(1645)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Yes, but this goes on year after year. You're telling me that 25% of the money comes back because the groups aren't sophisticated enough to spend it. Should you not have changed the criteria to make small groups eligible or just cut the program, then? It seems to me crazy that 25% of that budget isn't spent when our museums across the country are telling us that they've tried and tried and they can't get money for anything.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Angus, that is why I would suggest that we're undertaking a review of our approach and our program regarding museums, and that's why I've also indicated that I really welcome the work you will be doing in your discussions with the museum sector, just as in my discussions we hope we'll be able to bring back some very good, valid information with some strong, firm recommendations.

Right now we take into consideration not only what we hear from the museums and the museums associations, but I know that each member has a local museum, and they talk to the directors of their museums, who know from the reality of the day-to-day operations what the needs are going to be.

The other thing I would suggest is that we've looked at the Auditor General's reports and recommendations as well. So I really am very sincere; I do welcome input from this committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that wonderful indulgence of that extra five minutes. You will some day be rewarded in the other kingdom, and I will speak for you if I get there.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Angus. I hope we're in the same kingdom.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I don't know about the rest of them, but you and I can get along.

**The Chair:** I must thank you, Minister Oda, for coming today.

I know it's a little shorter than everyone wished, but it is a little longer than was projected. So thank you for being frank with us, and your responses. I appreciate that, and I'm sure the committee does.

We can carry on now with our deputy minister and assistant deputy minister, with any questions.

Mr. Bélanger doesn't want to do that today?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No. I don't think it's fair to the administration to have to respond to questions that are inherently political, Mr. Chairman, without the minister being present.

**The Chair:** Would you move adjournment?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No. I want to discuss.... You have a notice of motion from me.

If I may, if I have the floor, it's on this museum issue. I'm one of those who believe that if there's information to be had in order to shape future policy, that information should be had. I'm getting some conflicting messages here.

It would be useful, either from the department or from a third party—perhaps the Auditor General of Canada or a forensic accounting firm of some sort—to have a clear picture, going back

a few years, in terms of what was spent for whom, whether there were any lapsed funds, and whether these were accounted for in subsequent years. Are we talking about apples and apples, or apples and oranges, in the sense of support money going to administrations and money going to programs in the museums themselves? That is quite confusing. If indeed the situation is that money was not flowing sufficiently, let's have that out and correct the problems that may have existed. But to try to use that to argue there have been no cuts, I'm off that wagon.

I gave a notice of motion last Monday. It's quite straightforward, if I may explain it.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** In our continuing preparation for copyright legislation—whenever we get it—I'm suggesting that this committee might want to hear from the Copyright Board. That is one of the institutions we've never met with, as far as I know, and they certainly have a role to play in terms of applying the copyright legislation. One of the groups we might want to hear, before there is copyright legislation, would be the Copyright Board, in order to know exactly what they do, what challenges they face, and what perhaps they may wish us to address. If we want to include that into a subsequent schedule, it might be useful.

It's a suggestion, Mr. Chairman, that I don't think needs to be a formal motion. It's fairly innocuous.

•(1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Chair, I don't have a copy of the motion.

**The Chair:** It's not a motion, it's just a suggestion.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Well, he talked about a notice of motion having been served.

**The Chair:** After the last meeting it was suggested that it might be a notice of motion. And I think that probably.... I know we're looking for witnesses and for various things. Anyone who feels that certain groups or organizations should be witnesses before us, on any issue, please make that known to the clerk and to me. We'll try to entertain that. I think you did give me a bit of latitude to make sure we have some of the right people at some of our future meetings, and I will do that.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Fair enough.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, you referred to "latitude".

We had a discussion at the last committee meeting where it was agreed—it was a consensus around the table—that if we are going to have witnesses on the court challenges program, this determination will be made by the committee.

**The Chair:** That's right.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Okay. And if we have any suggestions, we're expected to bring them to the clerk by close of business Friday.

**The Chair:** Correct.

Yes, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** As far as the follow-up in terms of our drawing up....

Excuse me, I have the floor.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, just for a second.

Yes, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I want to speak to that. There are two issues here.

Number one, I'm amenable to having the Copyright Board come, because it's a technical board that will aid us. I do believe, however, in terms of other witnesses on copyright that we have to wait until the legislation, because many will come then.

Also, I certainly do not like my colleague's change of rules here, where we are looking at who's coming and who's not, and all of us agreeing. It came out of that one motion. It was fairly controversial, and that agreement was made. In future, if legislation is brought forward, we have to have the freedom to bring forward a long list of however many witnesses each of us sees is appropriate. I just want that on the record, that we'll maintain standard practice here.

**The Chair:** Correct.

The meeting is adjourned.

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