



For a Better Ontario. Leadership Matters.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario
401-19 Duncan Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 3H1

To: Susan Swan
Chair
The Writers' Union of Canada
200-90 Richmond Street East
Toronto, ON M5C 1P1

From: PC Party of Ontario

Re: The Writers' Union of Canada Survey Response

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns about the issues that matter to the arts community. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to share our own beliefs in and passion for the arts and cultural sector in Ontario.

The month of July saw the passing of Honest Ed Mirvish and Bluma Appel, two of Ontario's cultural pioneers. In August, we lost Richard Bradshaw, general director and visionary leader of the Canadian Opera Company.

All three of these cultural icons were passionate in their commitment to arts and culture and were an inspiration to others – encouraging us to appreciate the important role that arts and culture play in our province.

The Ontario PC Party recognizes that arts and culture are vital to a strong Ontario. The arts inspire us, help us to celebrate our diversity, let us dream out loud, and reflect upon the kind of province we can be. They are also essential parts of the dynamic and innovative economy that we need to foster in our province.

From our local festivals in towns and villages across our province, to our large cultural institutions, our arts and culture help make Ontario a more rich and fulfilling place to live and to visit. To build on this foundation, we must nurture the creative spirit that exists in our province. It is with this in mind that we wrote: *A Time for Action*, the Ontario PC Party plan for Ontario arts and culture.

Our plan is based upon three basic insights:

First, and foremost, that government must act as an effective partner, working closely with artists and cultural organizations to shape Ontario's cultural policy. A John Tory PC Government will establish a **Premier's Council on Arts, Culture and Creative Cities and Towns** to create a stronger, more direct



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link between government and the creative community. Government cannot and should not create culture. It must, however, help to build the cultural infrastructure and provide the support and encouragement that enables our artists to thrive.

Second, we must do more to recognize the importance of arts and culture in Ontario. With this goal in mind, a John Tory PC Government would work to expand the audience for the arts – reaching out to those who were previously unaware, or those who take the arts for granted. In particular, we must do more to reach our young people as they are our next generation of both great audiences and great artists.

We will, for a start, create an **Ontario Youth and Culture Passport that will enable youth under the age of 20 to have access to cultural institutions across the province for free.** This will give them the opportunity to experience the full breadth of their province's artistic talent and cultural resources.

And third, we must recognize that our artists, our festivals, and our cultural institutions face serious financial challenges and agree that we must do more to help.

Our government will provide **income averaging for artists**, recognizing that this will require the support of the Federal Government. We will enhance funding to the Ontario Arts Council to improve support to individual artists. In addition, **we will award film and media tax credits for film production from the beginning of the project and through the course of production** – not at the end as is currently the case. This policy will increase the competitiveness of our creative industries while freeing up money that can be invested in additional projects. And we will provide a multi-year commitment to support proven cultural and artistic events and institutions across the province.

These priorities are founded on a single belief – that arts and culture are vital to a strong Ontario.

If we are to hold on to who we are today, and to build on the cultural legacy that came before us, the arts and culture matter, and investment in the arts and culture matters. They matter for our communities and our economy today, and for the kind of province that we want our children and grandchildren to grow up in. They matter to us as we strive to be balanced, thoughtful citizens.

For a stronger, better Ontario that is well-endowed with arts and culture: Leadership Matters.

Important Cultural Initiatives included in our plan:

Income averaging

The cyclical and sporadic nature of the artistic business model is prevalent across the sector and creates further financial barriers to the sustainability of the artistic economy. To relieve artists in this situation, a John Tory PC Government would work to implement an income-averaging or averaging tax credit regime. The goal of this program is to smooth out the tax burden of the artist between years of wildly fluctuating income. Several jurisdictions, both within Canada and internationally, have experience with such programs. We will work with the Federal Government to provide tax relief to full-time artists. Failing federal support to implement income averaging, a John Tory government will work with artists



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and their representative organizations to develop a credit program to address the unique income flows of their profession.

Changing the timing of the film and media tax credits and review credits

We propose the implementation of procedures that would offer the tax credit in advance of and through the course of production. The province of Quebec has instituted such a policy of advancing tax credits to great effect. Our initiative would advance 50% of the tax credit before and during production. Both the OFTTC and PSTC currently have robust due-diligence and application procedures. We would work to enhance these procedures by observing the Quebec experience and consulting with industry financial experts. Through this policy, we would increase the competitiveness of our creative industries while freeing up capital, allowing for increased production frequency.

Ontario Arts Council (OAC) funding

Since its inception in 1963 under Premier Robarts, The Ontario Arts Council has been the primary funding body for professional arts and culture activity in the Province. In 2005-2006, OAC funded 1,268 individual artists and 836 organizations for a total of \$35.7 million. Across a variety of service areas, including touring strategies, arts education, aboriginal and Franco-Ontarian support and direct funding to artists and service organizations, the OAC is the lead provincial organization fostering and supporting arts and culture with demonstrably impressive economic and artistic results. To support and grow the work of the OAC, we would protect the current and future funding commitments (increased funding by \$15 million by 2009-10). We will also ensure the OAC receives three-year tranche commitments from the government. Such an investment and funding pledge will ensure the Council has the ability to continue its valued programs, and position the Council for sustained growth and influence.

Three-year commitment funding for arts institutions and major attractions

Major cultural and artistic attractions such as Caribana, Stratford and Shaw festivals, Sunfest in London, the Ottawa Jazz Festival, the new Luminato arts festival in Toronto and institutions like the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario and others in the province consistently receive annual funding from the Ontario government through several different ministries. Libraries and small community museums also receive annual funding commitments.

We believe that such festivals, cultural attractions and institutions would benefit from multi-year core funding commitments. Such multi-year funding commitments would improve the ability of these proven cultural and artistic events to plan strategic programming and growth. This would maximize their programming effect, in both cultural and economic terms. To this end, a John Tory PC Government will immediately review current funding processes and (following appropriate funding consultations with those affected) will implement measures to provide a three-year commitment to core funding so these organizations can plan and operate more securely and effectively. Our consultations would take into consideration various cost pressures, including increased attendance and floor-space.



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Ontario Youth and Culture Passport

The Ontario Youth and Culture Passport Program would enable any youth under the age of 20 to access cultural institutions such as: the Royal Ontario Museum, The Art Gallery of Ontario, Royal Botanical Gardens, Science North, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Ontario Science Centre, the Grand Theatre in London, the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, and other important regional arts and cultural institutions around the province.

We will consult selected institutions about how best to implement such an initiative in advance. In addition to providing free access to institutions, the program will also create a Youth and Culture Ticket Clearing House. In supportive urban centres across the province, we will establish clearing houses to distribute donated tickets to youth who would not otherwise have access to cultural events. Modeled after a suggestion in the City of Toronto's 2003 *Culture Plan for a Creative City*, we realize there are several cities across Ontario with the cultural density to support such an initiative.

The guiding principles for youth and culture must be: exposure and accessibility. The Youth and Culture Passport Program has been crafted with these principles as guides. Such initiatives mark the necessary direction we must travel to instill and awaken the creative capacity of our youth.

For more information on our policies, we have attached a copy of our platform, entitled; "For a Better Ontario – Leadership Matters." This document is the product of two years of public policy consultations across the Province, and provides greater detail than we are able to provide in this forum. The platform is also available online at www.ontariopc.com.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our plan for the arts and culture in Ontario and our passion for this important sector. We hope that we can count on your support on October 10th, 2007.