

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I announce today my department's support for the extended tour that the National Ballet of Canada is about to make in Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The National Ballet will also travel to Israel for the first time - a fitting symbol of our maturing relations with a region on the brink of real peace.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is contributing \$300 000 towards this tour. This is an investment which recognizes the artistic excellence and the international reputation of your company. I also wish to pay tribute to the Province of Ontario and to Anne Tanenbaum together with Joey and Toby Tanenbaum for their contributions in making this tour possible. This joint action clearly shows what a strong partnership between the arts and various sectors of society can achieve: a climate of confidence in which all can thrive. In this context, I invite other players in the private sector to profit from the remarkable creativity of Canadian artists, and to share the limelight with them on stages around the world.

This grant is a sign of our appreciation for the contribution the National Ballet makes to the cultural life of Canada, as well as to the projection of Canada's culture abroad. In particular, your company has put Toronto on the map as a city where dance flourishes in all its many forms. Toronto is now a centre of artistic excellence in virtually every field. This is why we view this contribution as an investment. The returns will be beneficial to all.

For all these reasons, the Canadian government regards the National Ballet of Canada as a special partner in projecting the unique personality of Canada on the international stage at a time when the international environment is undergoing a profound transformation.

This government has explicitly recognized the importance of a vibrant cultural sector, not only for our sense of belonging as Canadians, but also for Canada's place in the world. As we stated in the Red Book:

Culture is the very essence of national identity, the bedrock of national sovereignty and national pride. At a time when globalization and the information and communications revolution are erasing national borders, Canada needs more than ever to commit itself to cultural development.