

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you here at the start of a fall season that promises to generate a great deal of artistic activity. I consider Canadian artists to be Canada's foremost ambassadors. All Canadians can take pride in their accomplishments in their individual disciplines and I wish every one of them all possible success in their endeavours.

The new Government of Canada attaches great importance to our International Cultural Relations Program, which helps Canadian artists present themselves on the international stage. As the Government's Red Book states: "Culture is the very essence of national identity, the bedrock of national sovereignty and national pride. It gives meaning to the lives of every Canadian and enriches the country socially, politically and economically."

We believe the Program acts as a catalyst for creating partnerships among the federal and provincial governments, and I welcome the close co-operation with our provincial and also municipal colleagues when it comes to jointly finding the means to showcase Canada's artistic achievements abroad.

I believe we must encourage the private sector to join us in these efforts. There is a great deal of benefit to be derived from the publicity and excitement which surround Canadian cultural events abroad. I am pleased that a number of companies have become our partners in supporting international touring by Canadian artistic companies, but I am convinced that there is still more that could be done.

This is why I have instructed my department to conduct a review of the International Cultural Relations Program and have encouraged the special joint parliamentary committee reviewing Canada's Foreign Policy also to examine this issue. I look forward to seeing the results of these reviews and to acting on their recommendations.

I would like now to proceed with several cheque presentations.

Ballet B.C./Karen Jamieson Dance Company

Vancouver is a Pacific city, and it is therefore appropriate that two of Vancouver's major dance companies will be performing across the Pacific in Tokyo this fall. I know that a great deal of planning has gone into these projects, and that their success depends on input from many quarters. Your performances will provide Japanese audiences with an opportunity to experience the creativity and the variety of Canadian dance from the West Coast, and I am certain that you will add an important strand to our bilateral relationship. I am pleased to present cheques to Mr. Howard Jang, General Manager, Ballet B.C., and Mr. Jay Rankin, General Manager, Karen Jamieson Dance Company.