

Adjournment Debate

have several comments to make on this subject in addition to those I made on May 5. I can assure the Hon. Member that the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) has been advised of the Sherbrooke incident and of the circumstances under which the Canada Council grant was provided.

As Hon. Members know, the Canada Council is an agency which makes its artistic decisions independent of Government. It has a mandate to help reflect and develop all types of artistic expression. This mandate includes funding of experimental works in the various art forms, some of which occasionally will be controversial, and sometimes, even offensive to certain people. As with most Canada Council grants to artists, the grant application for this series of "performance" events was reviewed by an independent jury of visual arts experts. For the information of the Hon. Member, \$9,500 not \$12,000 was awarded for 14 events of which this was one—the only controversial one. The organization receiving the grant is co-directed by the director of the art gallery of the University of Sherbrooke. The artists involved included some of Canada's most reputable and experienced performance artists.

The Hon. Member, in this question of May 5, qualified the Sherbrooke event as a "bizarre and grotesque initiative"

undertaken by the Canada Council. Given my earlier comments, it is clear that the performance was not an "initiative" of the council. Rather, the Council simply responded to a grant application in the normal manner. The Council regrets that this activity may have violated the municipal law against setting a fire without a permit. Obviously, when the Council provides a grant for an activity it does not intend that a law be broken. Given the large number, and the wide range of activities which the Council funds, the resulting number of abuses of the freedom of artistic expression is very small, but they do tend to draw extensive press reaction, as this particular one has, and thereby call into question the broad range of worthwhile activities funded by the council which are of undoubted value.

Given this fact, Mr. Speaker, and the concern of the Hon. Member, I would recommend that this particular question be further answered by the Canada council before the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock.

At 6.25 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.