

## CHAPTER TWO: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS

In Chapter Two, we affirm that, despite the fact that the Fathers of Confederation were silent about culture and communications in the 1867 *Constitution Act*, these matters are indeed legitimate and essential areas of responsibility for all levels of government. In fact, in the context of the current constitutional debate, we believe the case has been demonstrated beyond doubt that culture and communications are compelling issues of government jurisdiction, equal to more conventional areas such as economic development, social policy, education and protection of the environment.

In our view, all governments — municipal, provincial and federal — have vital roles to play in nurturing cultural development and fostering preservation of our heritage. As well, the federal government has a particular responsibility to ensure the continuing development and regulation of comprehensive communications systems so that Canadians may truly know and understand themselves and the world around them.

While the moral and political mandates for culture and communications seem clear, the jurisdictional mandate remains complex, if not obscure. For example, the area of *culture* is primarily within *provincial legislative jurisdiction*, although the *federal spending power* has been a primary moving force in Canada's cultural development. In the area of *communications*, of course, the *federal authority* has been well established, both by legislation and by recent court decisions with respect to broadcasting and telecommunications.

Our Committee believes the federal role in both culture and communications must be maintained and, indeed, strengthened. Through its national institutions such as the Canada Council and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to name but two, the federal government makes an irreplaceable contribution to the cultural life of Canada. Through its taxing authority and spending power, the federal government is able to promote continuing initiatives to help build our cultural industries and to preserve our heritage. Through its primacy in communications, the federal government provides for comprehensive and viable national networks through an efficient single-tier regulatory system.

We trace the history of federal involvement in these matters beginning in the late 19th century, and including the origins of the CBC in 1936 and the creation of the Canada Council in 1957. It would be difficult to imagine the state of culture and communications in Canada today if those two institutions had never been established.

The full extent of federal government involvement in culture and communications can also be measured by its annual expenditure in these sectors, which is now approaching \$3 billion. Clearly, and particularly in these times of constitutional distress, the federal mandate for culture and communications must continue to be at the leading edge of a new movement towards renewal and unification in Canada.

The provinces and municipalities have long been active in heritage preservation and library development in Canada. More recently, especially since the 1960s, an increasing number of provinces have established cultural ministries and have taken on increased