

*Government Orders*

Restore that northern tax credit and allow them to at least retain some of the money they work so hard for, and give their children a benefit in that area.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport.

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## STATUS OF THE ARTIST ACT

### MEASURE TO ENACT

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (for the Minister of Communications)** moved that Bill C-7, an act respecting the status of the artist and professional relations between artists and producers in Canada, be read the second time and referred to Legislative Committee G.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say how delighted I am to rise on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Communications, to begin debate on this extremely important piece of legislation.

There is an urgent need to recognize the status of artists in Canada. The status of the artist's legislation has been discussed by commissions, committees, standing committees and task forces for the last 15 years. The principles which lie behind it have been debated for at least the past 40 years. All parties represented on the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture have urged the government to act on the status of the artist. The arts constituency is urging the government to act on this bill and the public at large is equally supportive. Our homework has been done, thoughtful discussion and consideration have been given, and the time for action has now come.

• (1720)

Canadian artists need Bill C-7 because it enunciates the principles through which the federal government will act on their behalf. It will provide the leadership combined with the actions of Quebec, which has its own status of the artist bill, to encourage other provinces to provide similar legislation at the provincial level.

[Translation]

I am thinking of a province like New Brunswick, where our Acadian artists are working very hard to make a name for themselves. I think the Province of New Brunswick would do well to follow the lead of the Parliament of Canada and adopt its own legislation on the status of the artist, as Quebec already has.

[English]

Because, the Lord knows that artists deserve it. Their contribution to our society is invaluable and their creations give an expression and human dimension to our deeply held convictions. Sometimes some people say that subsidies for artists are sufficient and ask why we need to do more. Well, a closer look at the facts tells a very different story.

There are approximately 30,000 artists in this country and the Canada Council provides 15 per cent of its funding, or roughly \$15 million, in the form of direct grants to artists. It does not take a genius to figure it out. That is not very much money per person. In fact, it is about \$500 per person.

[Translation]

Professional groups working in the performing arts in Canada today have a total budget of \$350 million, but only one third of that amount comes from our three levels of government. The remaining two thirds comes from box office receipts or private sector funding.

As you can see, the community's financial contribution, although essential, is not really substantial while the artist's contribution can be quite substantial.

Generally speaking, in Canada artists have a university education—an average of 17 years of schooling during which they developed their skills. However, at the peak of their careers, most artists can expect to earn less than a garbage collector.

People sometimes ask me, and I am sure other members in this House have been asked the same question: Why do we need special legislation for artists and not for engineers, lawyers or plumbers? The answer is quite simple: an artist's life is unlike that of any other worker in this country. Take, for instance, an actor who plays a role in a current play, say for four weeks. In the morning, he might have a workshop or a rehearsal for another play; that afternoon, he might work at McDonald's to earn some extra money, and the same evening he is on the stage.