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Government involvement in cultural field to be reviewed

The first major review in almost 30 years of federal involvement in support of the arts was announced by Minister of Communications Francis Fox in Ottawa, August 28. Excerpts from Mr. Fox's address, made at a luncheon at the National Arts Centre, follow:

Throughout the ages and still today in every part of the world, artistic activity has required and obtained important funding from the public purse. Some forms of cultural or artistic expression do not lend themselves as naturally to commercial practices as others.

On the other hand, many sectors of the cultural media operate in a commercial and industrialized setting. I'm referring to such things as film, broadcasting, periodicals, videotext, recording or book publishing. These areas of cultural activity are of enormous importance because of their large share of public attention, because of the support they provide for creators and performers and because of their direct and indirect impact on the economy. Therefore, it would be shortsighted on our part to limit our policy concerns to those areas of cultural expression which rely mainly on government support.

In order for our country to create a vigorous cultural activity we must make sure:

- that there is sufficient interest on the part of the Canadian public;
- that there is sufficient reward for creators;
- that we succeed in stimulating greater interest on the part of business;
- that we succeed in obtaining sufficient public funds at all levels of government;
- that federal and provincial governments work together and manage to combine federal and provincial expertise and powers to produce the most conducive, encouraging environment; and
- that the environment we create is successful in making business a strong partner.

There is yet another condition for a healthy cultural climate which must be emphasized with particular insistence when one deals with government cultural policy. It is that culture can only flourish

in an atmosphere of freedom. It is fortunate that this principle has presided over the creation of Canadian cultural institutions over the years. We must preserve this principle with great care. A government cultural policy does not mean a government inspired culture. It means a framework that is conducive to free expression....

Review committee

Two years ago, my colleague John Roberts, during his tenure as Secretary of State, committed the government to a comprehensive review of federal cultural policies. A general election was called shortly thereafter and pursuing this objective, my immediate predecessor, David MacDonald, appointed an advisory committee of distinguished Canadians to help with the review. This was in November 1979. A few weeks later this process was interrupted by the call of another federal election. In the meantime members of the cultural community have kept urging the government to proceed with a thorough review.

I am therefore pleased to announce, that on my recommendation, the federal Cabinet has now decided to authorize the creation of a federal cultural policy review committee....

There is among those interested in culture a basic concern about the need and the importance of such a review and about the essential need of a national public consultation. This concern, which my predecessors have recognized, and which I share, is based on a number of factors:

— In the last two decades Canada has gone through important political tensions. There is a feeling shared by many that culture has a role to play towards a greater and deeper understanding and cohesion in the country and that role must be reassessed;

Eighteen years ago this week...

The potash mine at Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, was officially opened, inaugurating production from the world's largest known reserves of potash.