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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

NOTES FOR REMARKS

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Good afternoon. I'm David Baile, General Manager of Opera Atelier, Canada's Baroque theatre company, and the Secretary-Treasurer of Opera.ca, the national voice for opera in Canada.

I'm very pleased to be able to address the Standing Committee on Finance. Opera.ca believes the arts play a vital role in the prosperity of our country's economy and we value the opportunity to engage with you in this dialogue.

In the budget presented last May, the federal government acknowledged the contribution of the arts to our economy. With this recognition they addressed the urgent need for arts investment by providing the Canada Council for the Arts with \$50 million over the next two years.

This is an excellent first step and is welcomed by the opera sector and indeed the entire arts community. We'd like to thank the government and all parties for this clear demonstration of support.

I'd also like to echo the recommendations of others and stress the importance of securing **stable and predictable long-term funding for the arts, through the Canada Council**. It is critical to the stability and potential of the sector that this welcome infusion be made permanent.

Opera.ca also urges members of this committee to further invest in the stable long term funding of the Canada Council. Specifically we are calling for an additional investment of \$100 million, over time.

The reasons for stable public investment in the arts are two-fold:

- First, a federal investment provides the foundation and leadership to lever other funding from the private sector, other levels of government, patrons, and foundations. It is the lynchpin in effective business planning and management of our volunteer-driven not for profit companies.

- Second, it allows for the inherent risk of creating and showcasing new Canadian talent. Risk is central to artistic innovation, much the same way as it is in business or science. The need for working capital and research development activity is key to the advancement of all industries.

As members consider these recommendations, I wish to stress that I and my colleagues across Canada appreciate and recognize that the federal investment in the arts is only part of a healthy mix of revenue sources.

For my own company, federal contributions represent less than 8% of our gross revenues. Earned and other contributed income are by far the most significant sources for us. However the federal investment is critical and as a result, for each production we engage in excess of 100 professional artists and technicians including 10 principal

singers, 12 dancers, 20 chorus members, 30 musicians and another 40 behind the scenes workers!

The Committee has asked us to address very specific questions about the role we play in the economic health and prosperity of Canadian citizens and businesses.

Arts are central to the vibrancy of a rich and engaging way of life. The arts, like opera, are not an elite activity. The arts are a key part of creating vibrant communities that attract investment, business and competition.

Canada's future rests in the hands of its children and youth – cliché perhaps, but unquestionably true. With the erosion of arts education in schools, there is huge demand on arts organizations to fill in the gap. Communities that offer artistic opportunities, like Opera Atelier's The Making of an Opera, for youth enable them to learn discipline, good values, teamwork and leadership and in turn creates healthy communities. With this programme in particular

we are now in the position that we turn away literally hundreds of kids due to a lack of resources.

Training in the cultural sector also affects Canada's prosperity. Artists and other professionals working in the field are not typical employees. Opportunities for professional development and training are sporadic and scattered, at best. It is for this reason that Opera.ca urges the government to move forward on the implementation of the *Labour Markets Partnership Agreement*, a Canada-Ontario initiative that for the first time holds the potential to support the cultural sector in developing a comprehensive training framework.

Another of the Committee's questions asks about securing Canada's competitive place in the world. My position at Opera Atelier has provided a unique window for me to see first hand, how the arts can open doors to business opportunities for Canada. Opera Atelier has toured internationally for years now, and in the past few years,

primarily to Asia. Two years ago, performing at the Seoul Arts Centre, Opera Atelier set a record for single ticket sales. We have been invited back this year but still do not have confirmation of support from the Canadian Government. It is a paradox that the Canadian government is contemplating cuts to our foreign cultural diplomacy programmes when recently the United States announced an infusion of resources, tripling their commitment to these initiatives.

It is with this experience at hand that Opera.ca urges the Government of Canada to ensure that it continues to sustain its DFAIT investment in ensuring arts organizations, like Opera Atelier, have the opportunity to hold Canada's flag high in other parts of the world.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me to be here today. I look forward to discussing our recommendations with you in more detail.

Thank you.