

## **REVITALIZING THE ARTS INDUSTRY - A MODERN MASSEY COMMISSION**

### **Opening Statement**

Artists contribute to Canada's international acclaim. The arts provide economic viability for many. The 1951 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (known as the Massey Commission) provided a foundation for arts and culture to thrive. However, today, the arts and culture industry have been struggling throughout the pandemic, and much of that struggle is due to systemic inequities related to regulations and investments. Canada needs a new commission that will lay a new foundation that will nurture arts and culture in Canada to thrive and grow.

### **Background**

The arts were given a chance to thrive due to the 1951 Massey Commission. Its purpose was to investigate the state of arts and culture in Canada. Vincent Massey chaired the Commission. It issued its landmark report, the Massey Report, on June 1, 1951. The report advocated for the federal funding of a wide range of cultural activities. It also made a series of recommendations that resulted in the founding of the National Library of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada), the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts, federal aid for universities, and the conservation of Canada's historic places, among other initiatives. It warned that Canadian culture had become invisible and indistinguishable from that of the neighbouring United States. The advent of technology has accelerated this diminishing of a distinct Canadian culture.

Since the 1950s, the arts and Canadian culture has transformed and grown past the duality of English and French based ideals that were supported in the report. Digital media, the internet, and technology in general has allowed for the arts to explode in all corners of the world. Cultural policy in Canada must be in line with this growth, and it requires a systemic investigation into what it means to support and grow arts and culture today.

The value to society is broad: art inspires, it entertains, and it often makes us think. The arts are part of Canada's brand, they bring in tourists, and contribute considerably to our GDP. We take pride in the international recognition of our artists, from Céline Dion or Leonard Cohen to pop icons such as Drake or The Weeknd, not forgetting literary stars such as Margaret Atwood or Nobel winner Alice Munro.

What we need now is a new independent commission that will examine the arts as they function within today's society, and what is needed to further grow the industry over the next 50 years. This new commission can go beyond the original Massey Commission by including Indigenous perspectives, how multilingualism and diversity impact arts and culture, and the impact a globalized economy has on the industry.

The findings of the new commission can provide Canada with an understanding of what investments are needed to further grow the creative economy and the arts. Businesses can then advocate for the needed investments, and comment on what investments should be prioritized. Finally, once implementation occurs, businesses can plan for expanding.

### **THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS**

That the Federal Government:

1. Implement a new independent commission led by the private sector with government participation to examine the arts and culture in Canada with the goal to strengthen the industry and ensure that Canada's arts and culture industry can continue to thrive and grow.

**Submitted by the Surrey Board of Trade**