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HERITAGE

**Support for the Arts—
Funding for Summer Festivals**

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, May 31, 2007

THE SENATE

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SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS— FUNDING FOR SUMMER FESTIVALS

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Could the Leader of the Government explain how she could say to Senator Lapointe on May 8, and I quote:

We have been in government for over one year, and in that time our government has dramatically proven how committed we are to art and culture across the country.

Since the beginning of the week, the newspapers have been full of articles on the concerns of people running major festivals, such as the Montreal International Jazz Festival and the Just for Laughs Festival, about the lack of funding from the federal government.

My question is simple: If you are as dramatically committed to the arts and culture as you pride yourself on being, how will you deal with this problem and help our artists and culture get exposure and make themselves known this summer?

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Secretary of State (Seniors)): I thank the honourable senator for her question. Heritage Canada, through its Arts Presentation program, will continue to spend more than \$20 million this year to support many of these local events.

In Budget 2007, we committed to set up a new program — and this may be where the confusion comes from — to assist local events celebrating arts, culture and heritage, with funding of \$60 million over a period of two years. This funding is new. It

does not in any way affect the existing funding of \$20 million, as I mentioned, and will not, therefore, affect existing programs.

[Translation]

Senator Tardif: This week once again, Quebec's tourism minister, Raymond Bachand, told the National Assembly that he had spoken with Minister Oda, and he added the following:

And I call on Maxime Bernier, Michael Fortier, Josée Verner for the Quebec City area, and Lawrence Cannon to intervene, as ministers responsible for Quebec, to defend the festivals.

What does Minister Oda not understand, that makes it necessary for the Quebec government to call on almost all its federal ministers from Quebec to help the industry?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: I thank the honourable senator for her question. The minister has perhaps misunderstood what we are talking about here. As I mentioned in my first answer, the \$20 million that has been in place to support programs this year continues to be in place, and many of these festivals will be supported out of these funds. Nothing has changed there. In Budget 2007, we have brought in a new program, an additional \$60 million. This money is new, therefore, for a new program. However, I do not think I need to remind honourable senators opposite or on this side or, in fact, any parliamentarian, that with this new money, given the problems with the sponsorship program, the government wants to be judicious in how this money is spent. We are working on a program of applications so that this money is put into the hands of deserving festivals and cultural events, and is fully accountable to the Canadian taxpayer.