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AUGUST 2015

God help us, it's Politics....

So, this issue of the News is going to get a little political. We all know that the Federal race is going to start building momentum over the next few weeks, and while we will do a little talking about the Feds in this issue, we would also like to talk Provincial politics for a bit. We have seen some changes in this year, some good, some bad, some "interesting". And while we are not a political organization in any way, politics does affect us all. So as we look to the fall, and while it is still possible not to be "partisan" in most senses, we thought we would share some thoughts. We hope you enjoy. Even if you don't, we hope we have given some things to think on.

Reid Spencer, PAL News Co-Editor



Let's Vote

by Merle Matheson, PAL News Co-Editor

On August 2nd Harper asked the Governor General, David Johnston to dissolve parliament and later that day the election campaign was on. This 11 week campaign is the longest one in 100 years (in our modern Canadian history).

We will go to the polls, October 19, 2015. This will mean a very high cost for our Canadian taxpayers, millions and millions of dollars....and we are in a recession, well not technically according to Harper. We still have to await "officialdom" to verify that information.

Let's be clear – Canadian culture industries contribute more than \$85 billion – or 7.4 per cent – to our GDP and over 1.1 million jobs to our economy. Our vote matters!

Now we know that Art/Culture matters, but do politicians understand? No matter how pro-active we are it does not seem to be on their radar. I haven't heard a single party leader talk about it yet as concerns this election. Here is a brief summation of our main "frontrunners" stand on culture that I have managed to garner off their web-sites and speeches, and I mean brief – there is not too much to be found at this point in time – more reason to go to your candidates' meetings and ask them pointed questions about what concerns you regarding your future in the arts.

GREEN PARTY



Increase funding to all Canada's arts and cultural organizations including the Canada Council, orchestras, theatre and publishers.

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- Provide stable base funding for the CBC.
- Restore CBC international short-wave service.
- Seek greater support and adequate resources for arts grants programs.
- Seek increased funding for touring in Canada.

See The Green Party of Canada website, 4.16 ARTS & CULTURE: Beauty and Integrity



New Democrats are committed to stable long term funding for the CBC to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same excellent productions to which we are accustomed, so , we seek to revitalize infrastructure rural service and regional programming so that the CBC remains accessible to Canadians from coast to coast.

- Better support for artists ensuring copyright laws are fair to artists, and implementing an Artist Resale Right for visual artists.
- Better protection for people working as artists, who are often in more precarious forms of work. Including those working freelance, contract-to-contract, or mutiple part-time jobs, with no access to benefits, no pension and no job security.

The NDP would also explore the benefits of income averaging artists whose income can vary wildly from year to year.



- We will promote and disseminate our cultural works in Canada and abroad. Arts and culture enrich communities and broadens people's horizons. Better promotion and dissemination of our cultural works leads to wealth creation and social development. The Canadian government should support initiatives for the international spreading of our work and artists.
- We will provide substantial new funding to support First Nations ability of indigenous communities to promote, preserve and enhance indigenous languages and cultures.



The Conservatives announced that they would extend the term of copyright for sound recordings from 50-70 years under the Budget Implementation Act.

ACTRA will launch a **federal pre-election campaign web page** available September 8th. Go to actra.ca

Suggested reading: ACTRA magazine Summer 2015: Your Chance to Cast A New Government; Federal Government History/ Behind the Scenes by Jacob Leibovitch

Party websites:

- www.ndp.ca
- www.greenparty.ca
- www.liberal.ca
- www.conservative.ca



Alberta and Ontario without Conservatives

by Reid Spencer, PAL News Co-Editor

It is no secret that the Ontario Liberals did not run the last election on an arts platform. Nor, for that matter, did the NDP in Alberta. This should not come as a surprise to those of us in the arts. We are a small segment of the populace, and our contributions to the fiscal bottom line is usually undervalued, in spite of all those studies that have shown that every dollar invested in the arts pays back more than an equal investment in industry. In Ontario the Jobs and Prosperity Fund proposes support for the recommendations of the Jobs and Prosperity Council to bolster innovation, increase productivity and increase Ontario's reach in the global market. But the support and potential growth will target advanced manufacturing, agri-food and agri-products and information and communications technology. Not arts. Alberta promises a job creation tax credit system to help businesses who invest in job creation, but we all know that that the performing and visual arts do not generate the numbers of jobs that would qualify under the plan. The best Albertans can look for under the NDP platform is a set of "fair royalties" for Alberta's energy resources, something which everyone but the oil producers will approve of. But the funds generated will go to rebuild the Alberta Heritage Fund. Yes, this may be a needed first step in Alberta, but it does nothing for the arts organisations in the province, at least so far as we can see.

Now none of this means that there will be no investment in our industry. Nor does it mean that there are no plans to help folks like us. Premier Wynn has promised an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, recognising that only about 35% of workers in Ontario pay into a company based pension plan. Certainly this is an initiative that will help many, should it be introduced as planned in 2017, with full implementation by about 2020. Like the Canada Pension Plan the new plan would be funded by both the employer and the employee. In this area we performers are ahead of the curve: CAEA, ACTRA, IATSE and the musician's union all have pension plans for the benefit of their members, though how many of us earn enough in our lifetimes to adequately fund a retirement is a real question. Since we tend to work in "filler" jobs in the off times, this may just help many of us—assuming that Harper's Conservatives do not kill it off as promised. But if you are reading this article you may just be past the point where this can do you any good. I know I am.

Alberta wants to diversify the economy. Good news, if like me you think that a one-product economy is a recipe for disaster. Let us be brutally honest: Alberta is founded on oil. So opening up new industry is a very good thing, and the range of industries named in the NDP gives us all hope: including alternative energy (including our proposed building retrofit loan fund), high tech, advanced research, knowledge industries, film and television production, small Alberta brewing, wind power, forestry, value-added agriculture, food processing and tourism. There it is, right smack in the middle! Film and Television production as a goal for growth in Alberta. At the same time there is promise for support of education, though how this may impact studies in the performing arts remains to be seen. We have certainly not seen a reparation of the places lost in the 2013 budget in any area of instruction, and the arts were particularly affected by those cuts. The emphasis is rather now on professional schools, which means things like medicine and business. The simple fact that a BFA is in fact a professional degree seems not to have been noticed, at least as yet.

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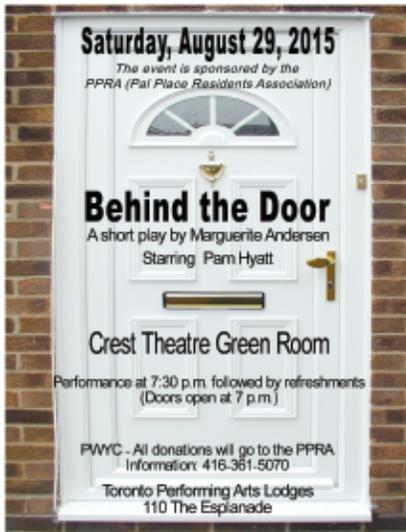
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Ontario is following much the same path, concentrating on repairs to existing structures, which are certainly needed. But in my own community—Waterloo—the University of Waterloo is in a huge building phase, with new construction for an engineering building, a science building and a new applied health sciences complex. Not much in music and theatre there. Wilfrid Laurier University, in spite its excellent school of music, is investing in business: a new Global Innovation Exchange building. The University of Toronto is investing in a new building for the Law School, a new Environmental Science and Chemistry Building. Only UWO seems to be committing monies to the performing arts in a new Music Building, but that is in large part dictated by the simple fact that the old building is in poor condition, and if you search for building projects at UWO you get an immediate hit on the much larger project, the new Richard Ivey School of Business.

Why am I going on about all of this? We are moving toward a new federal election in the coming months, and heaven forbid I should promote one party over another. But we have seen the Ontario government go to the Liberals. Okay, that is perhaps not earth shaking news, since it has certainly happened before. But the Albertans voted in the NDP!! With a majority!!! In both cases there are far-reaching plans in place for change, and while not everyone is going to see those changes as positive, change is happening. But support for the arts, or rather the usual lack of support for the arts limps along as before. Facing a challenge in education? Cut the arts. Facing a challenge in the economy? Throw money at industry, in spite of the demonstrated return on investing in the arts. I am cautiously thrilled that the film and television industry in Alberta is being recognised as a proposed growth area, and I shall watch developments there with great interest, should anything develop. But another article in this issue points to the rapidity with which a vibrant arts industry can receive a virtual death blow because the politicians simply do not understand our contribution. Can we change this? Frankly, I do not know. But I do know that traditionally only about 60% of registered voters actually vote in the Federal elections. I also know that the percentage of CAEA members who voted on the last round of contracts was significantly lower than that. I expect that, as a group, we are not as active as we could be. Can we change opinions in government? I do not know, as I said. But I do know that we cannot affect anything should we choose to abdicate our right to choose.



Behind the Door

How a short story written in French became a short play in English...

It happened at PAL, the Performing Arts Lodge in Toronto (110 The Esplanade), when two artists, **Pam Hyatt** and **Marguerite Andersen**, got together to create a short play about an actor reflecting on her past glories, age and consequent lack of roles.

Pam Hyatt, the actor, has entertained Canadians from coast to coast since 1958. Trained classically at RADA in her youth, LAMDA in her mid-century, Hyatt's talents have graced stages at Stratford, the Royal Alex, cabarets, clubs, film and television. Her 2012 CD, PAMALOT! is a favourite of JAZZ-FM's Jaymz Bee. You can catch her act at local clubs when she's not engaged in theatrical motifs.

Marguerite Andersen, the writer, has published twenty books, written mostly in French. *Le figuier sur le toit* (2009) and *La mauvaise mère* (2014) were awarded Trillium Book awards. Translated into English, *La mauvaise mère* will in

2016 be published by Second House Press. *Behind the Door* was included as "Derrière la porte" in *Les crus de l'Esplanade* (1998), a short story collection. A play, "Christiane: Stations in a Painter's Life", was performed in 1996, at the Factory Studio Café as part of the Women's Theatre Festival, The Gathering.

BEHIND THE DOOR will be shown on Saturday, August 29, 2015, at 7:30 pm in PAL's Crest Theatre Green Room, followed by a discussion of the play and its subject. Refreshments will be served. The performance is sponsored by the Pal Place Residents Association. Admittance is free, donations to the PPRA are invited. For more information, contact Marguerite Andersen at 416-361-5070 or marguerite.andersen@sympatico.ca

Clips from the Cutting Room Floor

by Dan MacDonald, PAL Halifax

Without consultation, and singularly lacking in logic, the Nova Scotia Government's budget of April 9th ripped the carpet from under the feet of our film industry. Producers immediately cancelled productions and artists scrambled to create enough work to remain in the province. Crews and technical workers spoke of moving elsewhere, young families were left wondering how to cope with the sudden loss of expected gigs, even some home-grown production companies questioned remaining here and all were left scratching their heads at the stunning and obvious stupidity of destroying a growing and successful industry that had been contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to the Provincial Treasury, and incomes and spin-off benefits to citizens throughout Nova Scotia. The refundable tax credit cost the government \$24 Million in 2013-14, but contributed about \$155 Million and supported 2,700 needed jobs.

The NS Government continued shouting their mantra about cutting spending, refusing to understand how immediate and devastating their action was, even quoting incorrect and biased information to justify it. The arrogance of their position and the public eruption of support for our industry throughout the province -regular citizens as well as outraged artists- failed to elicit a review of the act's damages or consideration of a number of amendments put forward in Legislature sessions by the opposition. Instead, government held fast to their position that all spending must be trimmed, indiscriminately, and the film industry was probably one of those areas able to be slashed without too much backtalk. Boy, were they wrong!

The industry immediately organized to demonstrate the strength, support and financial benefits of its presence in the province, especially by mounting a record-breaking, day-long protest of 5,000 people circling the Legislative Assembly block, peacefully but loudly disrupting political dialogue with slogans, music, excellent speeches, plenty of emotion -and NOISE, lots of noise- and with well organized, disciplined and involved participants. The governing Liberals were forced to see they had attacked a hornets' nest of anger and frustration.

Screen Nova Scotia, an all-disciplines advocacy group quickly emerged to spearhead the defence of the industry. Talks were eventually forced and Government came to the table, though still led by a recalcitrant finance minister, Hon. Diana Whelan, and backed by a bobble-headed caucus.

A new programme, the cumbersomely worded *Nova Scotia Film and Television Production Incentive Fund*, was proposed to keep Nova Scotia's screen industry competitive. Unfortunately, it was modelled on a not-too successful incentive programme from elsewhere and contained many provisions deemed by much of the film industry to be unworkable, if not ridiculously disruptive, only serving to further demonstrate the government's lack of understanding of the basic practicalities of film production. Sections of the industry were ignored and the arts community quickly zeroed in on missing funding for developing filmmakers and digital media support. And, there was a rumoured "cap" on the Fund amount which, at approximately \$10 Million, would not go far to support the quality of feature filming being created in the province and could lead to early funding exhaustion and possible squabbles amongst producers for any workable financial involvement. Of course, there was the major question of stability of the industry. Despite the government's apparent opinion on the subject, films are not slapped together over a few beers in a bar à la Mickey Rooney's, "We have a barn, let's do a show".

Ongoing during these discussions were myriad administrative problems caused by the government's lack of foresight in closing the efficient and knowledgeable *Film and Creative Industries Nova Scotia* office and turning the whole mess over to the completely unprepared Nova Scotia Business Inc. NSBizInc had to rehire many of the just-fired Film and Creative personnel because they were unable to answer producers' questions. Not surprising considering there was no film production expertise in their ranks and items as basic as application forms and new regulations were unavailable. In fact, regulations regarding the new Incentive Fund were still being argued over. Producers were finding it impossible to consider working in Nova Scotia and fled to friendlier places.

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Meanwhile, Premier Stephen McNeil ignored the problems, insisting he would pay no heed to objections from opposition parties, the industry nor the growing howls of protest in the province. Not to worry though, we were assured a “critical priorities” list was being developed (didn’t happen!) and when the Incentive Fund came into play on July 1st all would fall smartly into place (didn’t happen!).

Today the number and value of productions falls far short of previous summers with many cancellations and delays recorded, and almost each day we hear about another film family considering moving away. Some hope the move is temporary, others, however, have thrown in the towel and are lost to Nova Scotia permanently.

It is interesting to note that, short days ago, a Liberal cabinet shuffle relieved the Hon. Diana Whelan of the Finance portfolio. This suggests the blustering Premier was not pleased with her handling of the film crisis after all. Unfortunately, it also suggests that McNeil and his cowed caucus were willing to destroy a successful industry rather than admit to having moved too precipitously on a film tax programme which had been improving each year, profiting Nova Scotia financially, culturally, physically and touristically, while spin-off benefits were shared by areas throughout the province.

Well, we had a good year for lobster, and we do live in paradise when the sun’s out. We’ll survive! A pity we have to start rebuilding a 20-year success story, but we will. Things will be better next year!



Help us take the next steps in our story with a financial contribution. Help us help others!

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