

August 12, 2011

Dear Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

The Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada is grateful that you have asked Canadians for input as you prepare for the upcoming 2012 budget.

ARPA Canada is a non-profit and non-partisan organization that strives to equip members of Canada's Reformed churches to be active participants in public life. In the last four years we have grown to engage political action in over 130 church congregations. Eighteen local ARPA groups are located in towns and cities across the country, promoting a similar goal through grassroots and volunteer efforts. In this submission we aim to represent the faith-based perspective that is held to by these, and many more, Canadians.

Why should a Christian organization be addressing Canada's budget? We recognize that the budget is a moral document, a testimony to what our nation values. All policy decisions are based on a worldview that gives direction and guidance. The budget is no different. It is impossible to make decisions about where our finances go without a broader understanding of what the role of the state is, also in relation to the other institutions that function in society. Our recommendations flow from a belief that the state, family, business, science, and the arts are distinct spheres within society, accountable directly to God. The state is not sovereign over all spheres and should not assume responsibility over all spheres.

Executive Summary

In this report, ARPA Canada makes three recommendations. The first recommendation is to retire the Canadian Human Rights Commission and Tribunal. Reasons are given for the necessity of such a move on public policy and legal grounds. The fiscal benefit is an annual savings for Canadians of \$26,944,000. The second recommendation focuses on special funding in arts and culture. Although ARPA Canada would like to draw attention to the funding of many types of special interest groups, we are limited to focusing on one type. We recommend a cut to the unnecessary, irresponsible and offensive funding of certain "arts" projects. As proposed, the fiscal benefit is an annual savings for Canadians of \$183,328,000 in 2012. The third recommendation is to adopt a policy of promoting civic responsibility in order to alleviate the financial burden on the federal budget. The government has a long history of taking over roles and responsibilities that do not fall within the role and jurisdiction of governments. A policy of returning the responsibility of certain issues to the civic core could save billions of dollars.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Cut Funding to the Canadian Human Rights Commission

The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) and Tribunal (CHRT) have become a national and international embarrassment. Instead of protecting human rights they have become a means to intimidate and encroach on the freedom of speech and the freedom of

religion of Canadians. New rights are created and defended, such as a right for select individuals to not be offended. These so-called rights are enforced at the expense of our fundamental freedoms, enshrined in section 2 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which are rooted in a long Common Law tradition reaching back to the *Magna Carta* of 1215 and are foundational to a free democracy.ⁱ

"As long as the commissions exist, even in skeletal form, the temptation to rebuild them as agencies of social control will remain and will almost certainly be too much for some government to resist."ⁱⁱ Other commissions, laws, and codes already exist to address genuine violations of human rights. These institutions include labour relations boards, other agencies, boards, commissions and tribunals, and, of course the Criminal Code and the real court system. The CHRC and CHRT are an unnecessary expense in today's society; the modern Canadian human rights regime has become a totalitarian tool and should be done away with.ⁱⁱⁱ

It should suffice to mention the opinion of the leading scholar and academic in human rights law, the giant in the civil liberties movement, Mr. Alan Borovoy. Canada's legendary civil libertarian was General Counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association for many years, and is an Officer of the Order of Canada. Borovoy, who helped establish the commissions in the 1960s to stop discrimination, has been particularly vocal in denouncing what he views as misuse of the country's Human Rights Commissions. "We never envisioned that these laws would be used as an instrument of censorship... This trend... is a very backward and disquieting step," he said. "When you look at how broad the law potentially can be in this area, they could wind up censoring all kinds of material."^{iv}

One more reason that the CHRC and the CHRT should be done away with is the fact that the commissioners and investigators simply do not know the law or, if they do, they show a total disregard for the highest law in the land, the Constitution and the *Charter*. One of the lead investigators for the CHRC has been infamously quoted for answering the following question thus: when asked by lawyer Beverley Kulaszka, "What value do you give freedom of speech when you investigate one of these [hate speech] complaints?" the investigator Dean Steacy replied, "Freedom of speech is an American concept, so I don't give it any value. It's not my job to give value to an American concept."^v The reality is that freedom of speech is enshrined in section 2 of the *Charter*, and is vigorously defended by the courts.

What amount of money will disbanding the CHRC and the CHRT save Canadians? The latest numbers from Public Accounts shows that the CHRC receives a budgeted amount of \$22,629,000 to investigate and mediate complaints and conduct human rights awareness campaigns. The CHRT receives \$4,315,000. Removing both organizations could save the Canadian people a total of \$26,944,000 in 2012.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Cut Funding to Special Arts and Culture Groups

The budget gives a good glimpse into what Canada's government sees as its role. Token spending is provided to appease interest groups, at the expense of the public good. We look to you to change this. The government's role does not include creating or sustaining a Canadian culture – that is a nebulous reality that remains and changes with the people.

There are many examples in which the federal government provides funding to organizations and agencies that have narrow ideological agendas that run counter to a large number of

Canadians or whose goals should be carried out by the general population rather than by our government. Our parents and teachers have taught us that in order to properly save thousands of dollars in our personal budgets, we need to account for the pennies. For our federal government, the same rule applies. Finance Minister Flaherty has been speaking of ways to save \$4 billion a year. It seems very clear to us that there is a huge amount of saving to be found in the Heritage Ministry portfolio especially.

Grants are handed out time and time again in amounts of thousands and millions of dollars to fund projects that most Canadians would find offensive at best. This past year, one particularly offensive project was an album titled "Holy Shit" with cover art that replicates the Bible. The inner notes are titled "a poo testament" and has an image of Jesus ascending to heaven as a piece of feces. This is objectionable to most Canadians regardless of one's religious views, particularly when we consider the Canadian taxpayer helped fund the project.

Telefilm receives \$105,667,000 of taxpayer's money to fund a wide variety of projects.^{vi} Many of the projects that Telefilm funded have never been heard of. A number of the projects are highly controversial, offensive and may even contain images of child pornography. In 2009, a movie called "The Year of the *CARNIVORE*" was funded to the tune of 1.2 million dollars. At one point in the film the main character uses a vibrator to masturbate in the presence of children. Performing a sexual act when in the presence of children and recording that act may fall under the definition Child Pornography under section 163.1 of the Criminal Code and such an act certainly offends section 173.(2) of the Code. Other examples of funding from Telefilm are movies such as "Young people F#%ing", "Suck" and "Masturbators", and a website called "Bitching Lifestyle".

Telefilm not only funds objectionable projects but also projects that do not need extra funds at all. An example of this is a science fiction movie called "Splice". This movie was the top grossing Canadian film in 2010. It grossed \$26.9 million worldwide. Despite these profits, Telefilm used tax dollars to award the director \$40,000 for being the top grossing film. This organization needs to have its budget cut in half from \$105,667,000 to \$50,000,000 in 2012 and further reduced by 20% in the two subsequent years. This will force the organization to be properly selective in its funding decisions and will help prevent the funding of lewd and crude material.^{vii}

The Canadian Council for the Arts receives \$183,116,000 and the National Film Board receives \$69,545,000 a year. Both of these organizations should have their budgets cut in half in 2012 to \$90,000,000 and \$35,000,000 and further reduced by 20% a year in the two subsequent years.

The free market is the best arbiter of which music groups or works of art should succeed: If no one wants to purchase the art or listen to the music, then it is not worthy of public support either. The arts industry should be self-sustaining, just like any other trade. ARPA Canada, a strong defender of the freedom of expression, requests this government to immediately stop the practice of forcing taxpayers to pay for "art" that they find distasteful and offensive. This amounts to cultural coercion.

The National Film Board, Canadian Council for the Arts and Telefilm receive a total of \$358,328,000. Our proposed cuts would save the Canadian taxpayer \$183,328,000 in 2012 and an additional saving of \$35,000,000 in 2013 and \$28,000,000 in 2014.^{viii}

RECOMMENDATION #3

Promote Civic Responsibility in Order to Reduce the Debt

The state is entrusted with public money and has a responsibility to act as stewards. The rule of law applies equally to financial stewardship. Not even the state may steal. The state may not take from private citizens what it does not have the authority to take. On the flip side, Canadians do need to entrust the state with the funds necessary for it to fulfill its role.

Debt has become so normal that there is little need for the federal government to even legitimize it anymore. Yet this is a serious moral problem. When we borrow money not only do we end up forfeiting our responsibilities (by transferring them to the state), we also incur a huge public debt, plus the interest burden, that our children and grandchildren will have to bear. In effect we are stealing from future generations to pay for what we want today. When private citizens adopt this approach to personal finances it is rightfully seen as shameful. There is no reason why it should be condoned when our civil governments do the same thing, for their own political advantage.

It is necessary for this government to not only project a balanced budget within four years, but also to commit to an aggressive plan to pay down the debt within the following two decades. Paying \$0.14 of every tax dollar to debt interest alone is unacceptable.^{ix} To imagine a universal 14% tax decrease in 20 years due to the savings on the debt payments could do wonders for the Canadian economy.

One step our government must take toward attaining this goal is to defer to the institutions of the civic core. The family, churches, charitable organizations, economic entities, and others have an important role in caring for the different needs within society. Indeed, every individual Canadian is entrusted with not only the rights that come from being a citizen, but also the responsibilities necessary to make this country flourish. Human nature is such that we want to maximize our rights and privileges and relinquish our responsibilities. Many are happy when the federal government decides to provide childcare, social assistance, welfare, and many other services that individual Canadians should be primarily responsible for.

Decreasing the role of the government in public life will not only lead to a return of fiscal integrity, it will also put more responsibility on those who are best suited for it. Studies show that the private sector and charitable sector in particular are much more efficient than government agencies. In order to seriously save money, our officials should defer to and enable our charitable institutions.

Currently the Canadian tax structure is punitive towards those families who determine that the parent is best suited to raising the children. A one-income family pays significantly more taxes than a two-income family with the same income and number of children. A report by the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada noted that:

Joint filing and income splitting would result in lower taxes for families generally and help to raise after-tax incomes among the lowest income bracket. According to research from the Library of Parliament, 31 per cent of two-parent families below \$30,000 in annual income would benefit from income splitting. The average benefit would be \$215 annually (Library of Parliament, 2006). As with the EITC's marriage bonus, the size of the benefit might be considered of secondary importance. Of greater significance is the fact that married couples are being explicitly recognized by their government. This would once again send an important message to Canadian families about the benefits of marriage. And marriage, we repeat, is a proven poverty fighter.^x

Of course this is just one example. But it illustrates the broader principle of saving money by returning responsibilities to individuals and institutions that are best suited, even if they may prefer otherwise.

Conclusion

Some might read these suggestions and write them off as a “right-wing Christian” perspective. But consider carefully what is being advocated. We are not asking that Christian organizations and efforts be funded. We are not trying to advance the agenda of a narrow segment of the Canadian public. The reality is that the current budget is biased and ideological. The federal government will continue to struggle with this as long as it is involved in parts of public life that are outside of its basic role. Maintain a strong system of justice, keep our infrastructure current and in good repair, and do everything possible to keep taxes as low as possible. These are some examples of very simple principles that are for the people’s good. If individuals believe strongly about a particular cause they should have the freedom to put their time and resources to advance that cause. It should not be our tax dollars that support them.

The cuts that we suggest in recommendations #1 and #2 would save Canada almost a quarter of a billion dollars in 2012: \$210,272,000.00 to be exact. This number does not include the potential billions of dollars that can be saved should the federal bureaucrats adopt a policy as suggested in recommendation #3 of abdicating their control of so many aspects of Canadian life and properly returning that responsibility to the civic core.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these thoughts. We recognize that you have a very difficult position and we pray that the Lord gives you wisdom and courage to make good decisions.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ For more information on the history of our true and democratic rights and freedoms, see <http://www.humanrightscommissions.ca>

ⁱⁱ *Nigel Hanniford, FCPP Policy Series No. 45, July 2008. Available at http://www.fcpp.org/pdf/PS45_HRC_JN27_D2.pdf*

ⁱⁱⁱ See also the recommendation of Richard Moon “Report to the Canadian Human Rights Commission Concerning Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Regulation of Hate Speech on the Internet” Canadian Human Rights Commission, October 2008.

^{iv} <http://deborahgypong.blogspot.com/2008/02/my-conversation-with-former-liberal.html>

^v <http://www.canada.com/edmontonjournal/columnists/story.html?id=6ba546ff-f56a-4780-852d-cc743bb0994>

^{vi} See Telefilm’s annual report: <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/rapport-annuel/2009-2010/views/en>

^{vii} <http://www.familyaction.org/node/560>

^{viii} All numbers in this section are taken from Public Accounts of Canada 2010, Vol. II Details of Expenses and Revenues, Table 2.

^{ix} The IMF has shown that Canada’s debt and financial situation is a whole lot bleaker than our politicians are letting on. See: <http://www.ottawasun.com/2011/08/05/canadas-debt-fix-the-roof-while-the-sun-is-out>

^x Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, “Family Poverty in Canada: Raising incomes and strengthening families” Canadian Family View: November 2007. Available at <http://www.imfcanda.org/default.aspx?go=article&aid=1536&tid=8>.