

April 11, 2007



The Honourable Caroline Di Cocco
Ministry of Culture
900 Bay Street
5th Floor, Mowat Building
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Di Cocco:

I am writing today to express our profound disappointment in this government on its failure to address the real financial crisis facing workers in Ontario's arts and cultural industries with its *Status of Ontario's Artists Act 2007*.

Introduced as part of the 2007 Budget Measures, the proposed Act provides no meaningful change to the material status of artists and cultural industry workers. This despite the fact that professional artists such as live performers, writers, visual artists, musicians, actors, dancers, multi-media artists, and many, many others have been calling on the Ontario government to implement meaningful legislation that will improve artists' capacity to improve their wages and working conditions.

We note with regret that your government has ignored the recommendations of its own Advisory Council. Despite a lengthy consultation undertaken by your Advisory Council for Arts and Culture, virtually all substantive recommendations contained in its report were left out of the proposed *Status of Ontario's Artists Act*.

While the Ontario Budget provides loads of tax breaks for corporations, producers, distributors and marketers, there was little for the very people who create, construct, design and perform the art upon which Ontario's entertainment and cultural industry is based.

Even basic measures that most would assume to be already a matter of law in Ontario in the 21st century, such as protection for child actors have been ignored in the proposed legislation.

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The Ontario Federation of Labour is calling on you and your government to take immediate steps to correct the proposed legislation.

Artists and cultural industry workers need a collective bargaining regime.

Many of Ontario's artists and cultural workers are a crucial natural resource that fall between the legislative cracks, and work without even the minimal protection of Ontario's *Employment Standards Act*. For too many, there are no minimum wages, there are no pension plans, there are no health and safety provisions, and critically without a collective bargaining regime, there is no mechanism whatsoever to establish these norms.

The proposed *Status of Ontario's Artists Act* states the obvious: *That artists make contributions to Ontario's economy and quality of life.* As it stands, it does nothing to address the quality of life of Ontario's artists.

Your government has designated the first full weekend in June to be an annual "Celebrate the Artist" Weekend. We urge your government to celebrate the artist by making amendments to this legislation that will genuinely improve the status of all of Ontario's artists and cultural industry workers.

Sincerely,



WAYNE SAMUELSON
President

WS:fc:cope343

cc. The Hon. D. McGuinty
The Hon. G. Sorbara

