



**SPEECH BY CARMEN GIBBS**  
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**LAUNCH OF**  
***A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR THE INTEGRATION***  
***OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN ACADIAN SOCIETY***  
***IN NEW BRUNSWICK***

**(ENGLISH VERSION OF THE**  
***STRATÉGIE GLOBALE POUR L'INTÉGRATION DES***  
***ARTS ET DE LA CULTURE DANS***  
***LA SOCIÉTÉ ACADIENNE AU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK***)

**APRIL 4, 2011**

Artists, Friends of the Arts, Members of the Media,

Good afternoon.

When we decided to embark on the mega-adventure of the États Généraux on Arts and Culture in Acadian Society in New Brunswick, we were deeply aware of the importance of dealing with the common concerns and the needs for action on issues shared by artists in the three cultural communities of New Brunswick, and to bridge the gap between the diverse cultures in our province. The project was designed to address these concerns, notably by including an Intercultural component which brought together Acadian, Aboriginal and Anglophone New Brunswickers under the direction of the Office of the Lieutenant-Governor, the New Brunswick Arts Board and the AAAPNB. Together, these artists and community members reflected on the value of the arts and on the powerful and fundamental role the arts play in the growth and development of a society.

By articulating the issues and challenges facing the arts community in each of the cultural groups and in all of them, they contributed greatly to the development of the Global Strategy for the Integration of Arts and Culture in Acadian Society in New Brunswick.

I sincerely believe that the founding of ArtsLink NB arrived at exactly the right time to carry on this task. I would like to congratulate ArtsLink NB on this important initiative. By recognizing the importance of this strategy, developed and refined over a 10-year period, Kathryn, Sandy and their Board of Directors have shown political commitment and great vision. Now that this Strategy has been translated, we have a common tool to work with. And that is very useful: in the current economic and political juncture, it is obvious that we have important ground to cover. We need to help our elected officials understand the contribution arts and culture make to the economy, the well-being, and the creativity of all of New Brunswick's citizens.

As you know, the document we are introducing today is the result of an extensive process of consultation and co-operation. Since 2004, several thousands of people from every background and every sector of Acadian society have been engaged in this important work, and the Strategy is the fruit of their labour.

The monumental task we took on enabled us to make the entire population aware of the significant contribution that arts and culture has made and will continue to make to the quality of life of citizens enjoyed by New Brunswick and of Acadie as a whole.

Today, however, we cannot help but feel that we are facing our greatest challenge so far. We have developed a strategy for improving the quality of life in our province and for giving New Brunswick's citizens a resource to help them explore their own culture, by providing them with different perspectives, different ways of seeing the world. We have offered the new government this resource on a silver platter.

To make this work, we need to have the means to fulfil our objectives, and this will be impossible without the support of all levels of government, starting, of course, with our provincial government. We are absolutely outraged by the recent budget cuts in the area of arts and culture. This is simply unacceptable. When we know the impact of arts and culture on every aspect of life, and know how important they are in the economic crisis we are experiencing, the cuts defy comprehension.

As we saw last week in the media, the repercussions of the cuts have already captured public attention. As a direct and immediate consequence of the elimination of the film tax credit, film and video companies have announced they are leaving the province and moving to Nova Scotia. We can't allow this to happen! This cut is jeopardizing a growing industry which contributes a great deal to the new economy.

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To echo a perceptive Tweet: Is the government of New Brunswick trying to send the message that we can Be... in this place, without women, artists and filmmakers?

When we think about how we come to know and understand different societies and the great civilizations which preceded us, doesn't their artistic and cultural heritage come to mind right away? It is a part of this heritage that we are putting in danger. We are running the risk of losing our creators and their contributions to our history.

No people can survive without a vibrant culture, and no culture can survive and remain vibrant unless it is able to express itself and share with others through multiple forms of art, both forms which exist now and forms that will be invented in the future.

And so, I am sounding an alarm for everyone gathered here today to hear, issuing a call to action. We urge the government to overturn its decision to cut \$948,000, or 8.6% of the tiny budget for arts, culture and heritage, and overturn its decision to abolish tax credits for the film industry. Mr. Holder, as Minister responsible for Culture, we are counting on you and on your commitment to take this message to your government.

If we truly believe in the benefits of arts and culture on the health and well-being of our citizens, and if we are really convinced of the importance of integrating arts and culture in our society by following the itinerary set out in this Global Strategy, we need to work together. Now, more than ever, we need to join together to break down the sense of isolation in which our different cultural communities exist, and build up, in its place, a sense of solidarity as we face this period of fiscal restraint.

Thank you for your attention.