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The Hon. Pablo Rodriguez
Minister of Canadian Heritage
Suite 485, Confederation Building
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

July 13, 2023

Dear Minister Rodriguez,

I am writing to call for the government to immediately guarantee federal support of 11.5 million dollars for Alberta's CKUA Radio Network (CKUA), a donor-supported arts organization and broadcaster caught in economic turmoil. This cherished cultural institution has been a driving force in inspiring and connecting people through music, art, culture, and storytelling for more than 95 years.

With 16 transmitters across Alberta and a global streaming service, CKUA's broadcasts (spanning on-air, online, and in-person experiences) have been instrumental in promoting Albertan and Canadian artists to the residents of Edmonton, Alberta, and audiences across Canada and beyond. Through promoting Canadian art, digitizing its remarkable 95-year-old recording archive, greening its broadcasting system, and fostering cultural tourism in Edmonton and Alberta, CKUA has shown commitment to nurturing artistic expression and bolstering the cultural fabric of our nation.

However, CKUA is facing a significant financial challenge that requires a federal solution. In 2012, CKUA embarked on a momentous endeavour to restore the historic 1903 Alberta Hotel in partnership with the federal government. Despite assurances of federal funding, CKUA was confronted with a devastating blow when the promised financial support failed to materialize.

As a result, CKUA was compelled to secure a loan of 6 million dollars, which it has been unable to repay in a volatile Alberta economic environment over the past ten years. The current situation is dire and unpredictable:



- Borrowing costs have nearly doubled in the past year due to inflation.
- Edmonton's downtown real estate market in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has dropped 50 percent, resulting in a 6.5-million-dollar write-down of the 14-million-dollar building.
- As part of a revenue diversification strategy when the building was built, 40 percent of the building was commercial real estate. The tenant that occupied the space for ten years is now bankrupt, and the prospects of finding new tenants in a market facing 23 percent office vacancy rates and with competing office towers offering significantly marked-down rent make it impossible for CKUA to compete against large building owners.

The result is a perfect storm wherein the building is too devalued to sell and vacate while simultaneously too expensive to maintain. These mounting financial and real estate hurdles now threaten CKUA's ability to continue delivering its invaluable cultural services.

CKUA's aspirations align with Canada's national heritage strategy, tourism recovery efforts, and sustainability goals. I am urging you to take action to ensure CKUA's financial stability with 11.5 million dollars in federal funding to ensure that this cultural institution can continue to serve Canadians for another 100 years.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue. I look forward to reading your response.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament
Saanich-Gulf Islands
Leader of the Green Party of Canada

