

### *Questions about federal support by Martin Lerner*

During the first year of Harper's Conservative government, John Baird, then federal Treasury Board president, stated that cultural organizations looking for federal funds should first line up private sector backing. More recently, Heritage Minister James Moore said, "Certainly where we want to go as a government is to encourage more private sector donations for arts and culture. . . We've done that with our endowment incentive program where we're matching almost dollar for dollar what the private sector invests." Referring to how many arts organizations rely on governments for 90 per cent of their funding, he stated, "That's dangerous. When times get tough and government budgets get lean, arts and cultural organizations collapse."

If we are to take Baird and Moore at their word, we then have to wonder why the federal government has made a substantial financial contribution to the proposed Art Gallery of Saskatchewan without confirmation that private sector funding is in place. Furthermore, when the provincial and federal governments announced their funding for the new AGS, they didn't seem to require a business plan for its operation. In fact, there was not even a proposed design in place.

Although Moore says his government wants "to encourage more private sector donations for arts and culture," by his government's actions in Saskatoon, he is actually encouraging greater dependency on government and discouraging donations from the private sector by supporting the elimination of the Mendel Art Gallery and, by default, the diminishment of the outstanding philanthropic legacy of Fred Mendel.

Shouldn't we expect of our Heritage Minister that he support Canadian heritage, not help to destroy it?