

**Notes for opening remarks by Tom Perlmutter,
Government Film Commissioner and Chair of the National Film Board
before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
(Study into appointment)**

June 19th 2007

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here with you today as the new Government Film Commissioner and Chair of the National Film Board. I am deeply honoured to have been entrusted with the governance of such a vibrant and dynamic cultural institution.

The National Film Board is a unique cultural institution in Canada and dare I say the world. Its mandate is to produce and distribute innovative and relevant media works reflect Canadian perspectives and values. But the Film Board is so much more. From our active participation with the educational sector, to public screenings and partnerships with public libraries, the Film Board reaches out and engages Canadians in dialogue and encourages debate on issues that are important to them.

The NFB gives voice to filmmakers from across the country, with particular focus on underserved communities, such as emerging filmmakers, aboriginal filmmakers, ethno-cultural communities and filmmakers living in minority linguistic settings. For example, in revitalizing “Challenge For Change” for the digital era we have pushed the boundaries of documentary form while giving creative voice

to those who even in this age of anytime, anywhere media remain excluded. The result has been projects like *Filmmaker in Residence*, where a filmmaker joins the front line medical team of an inner city hospital and *Wapikoni Mobile*, a mobile film studio traveling to remote aboriginal reserves in Quebec, to name a few. I am particularly proud of recent initiatives to promote creation by persons living with disabilities.

The Film Board also ensures that Canadian stories, our stories, are told to the world. With proactive distribution activities and the development of strategic international partnerships, we ensure that Canadian perspectives are shared with the world.

Let us not forget how proud we all felt this past March, when Torril Kove accepted the Oscar for *The Danish Poet*. This year alone - and we're only half way through the year - the NFB has brought home an Oscar, two awards, Canada's only awards, at the Cannes Film Festival, the GSM award, the "Oscar" of the mobile world, for original mobile content, the first ever Rocky for original mobile content, the Canada New Media Award, the top two awards for feature docs at Hot Docs, a nomination in the second annual international interactive Emmy awards, the prestigious Focal award for conservation and that is only a partial list. This is by anyone's reckoning a phenomenal achievement. A record that we all can take pride in; because if it takes a village to nurture a child; it takes a whole country to nurture its cultural institutions. These awards don't

merely celebrate accomplishments of a few talented filmmakers; they inspire all Canadians to strive for excellence in their chosen fields.

The recent report by the Conference Board of Canada indicates that our country is lagging behind in innovation, ranking 14th out of 17 countries. The NFB has a unique role to play in encouraging and nurturing innovation, in content and in form.

You have had the opportunity to review my résumé. As you can see from my background as a journalist, then an independent producer and finally, for the past five years at the NFB as Director General of English Programming, I am deeply committed to John Grierson's vision, a past Film Commissioner and the father of documentary filmmaking, who continues to inspire us to this day, with his guiding principles: remember why you are doing this...tell a story, yes...but be by guided by social relevance, authenticity, truth. "Art is a hammer."

I joined the NFB because I believed in its unique mission. Five years on, I am more passionate and engaged than ever.

The technological environment might offer opportunities, but it also presents certain risks. It is essential that Canadian voices in public service are heard in both traditional and new media, so that Canadian diversity, individuality and

identity are preserved. Hence it is vital to protect, enrich and consolidate public national institutions like the NFB.

I understand the Film Board's mandate will shortly be revised. At the NFB we believe that any examination of state organizations and companies working in film should be carried out in the wider context of general government policy in this sector.

It is our duty to provide Canadians with a space reserved for public debate, where they can discuss social values. And we should do so by utilizing the specific expertise of the various public sector institutions. The private sector cannot and must not take on this role.

I look forward to working with the Committee during my mandate and in particular on this important review. I would also like to invite you to visit the NFB headquarters in Montreal, to witness first hand the work of our creators and technicians.

I thank you again for your invitation and will be happy to answer your questions.