The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C.,O.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

May 7th, 2025

Dear Prime Minister Carney,

On behalf of Galeries Ontario / Ontario Galleries (GOG), the leading voice for public art galleries and museums across Canada, please accept our warmest congratulations on your appointment as the 24th Prime Minister of Canada.

Your leadership arrives at a pivotal juncture—one marked by social transformation, economic turbulence, and a growing global reckoning with questions of sovereignty, inclusion, and the future of democracy. We are encouraged by your commitment to fostering a resilient and forward-looking nation, and we are confident that your tenure will advance a renewed vision of Canadian values rooted in equity, innovation, and cultural integrity.

For over five decades, GOG has been a trusted national partner, championing the essential role of the visual arts and Public Art Galleries and Museums in shaping Canadian society. As you prepare to deliver on your commitment to ***Cultural Sovereignty***, we urge you to make Public Art Galleries and Museums central to your government's agenda. In an era of climate crisis, public disillusionment, and the global erosion of democratic norms, our institutions remain among the most enduring and trusted guardians of freedom of expression, pluralism, and the collective imagination.

The cultural sector is far from monolithic. It is an ecosystem requiring strategic investment, evidence-based policymaking, and equitable access. GOG has long advocated for targeted, systemic solutions to strengthen this ecosystem. A critical and often overlooked barrier to national cultural cohesion is the legacy of Canada's internal trade obstacles, which continue to hinder the flow of creative goods and services. One striking example is the discontinuation of **Exhibition Transport Services** (ETS) in 2007—a decision that has had devastating consequences for the visual arts sector. For more than 30 years, ETS provided a reliable, cost-effective national infrastructure for transporting artworks. It enabled institutions, especially in remote and rural regions, to circulate collections, share exhibitions, and support artists. Its absence has led to increased isolation of communities, diminished national exposure for artists, and weakened collaboration across provinces. Addressing this barrier is not only an economic imperative—it is a cultural necessity.

Equally urgent is the sector's policy framework. Canadian Public Art Galleries and Museums continue to operate within a policy environment shaped by models dating back to the 1970s. While the Liberal government's *Moving Forward* report (2019) was a step in the right

direction, it no longer reflects the challenges of the post-pandemic era or the rapidly evolving digital landscape. It is time to reimagine and modernize our approach in formulating a **new National Museums policy**.

In light of the urgent need for a modern cultural framework, we propose the creation of **a National Cultural Policy Commission**—a bold, future-facing initiative that would serve as a contemporary counterpart to the 1951 Massey Commission.The original Massey Report was a visionary blueprint for national cultural development and sovereignty. Today, we need a renewed mandate to address the complexities of cultural politics, digital infrastructure, climate responsibility, equity, and the changing role of public institutions. Such a commission would articulate not only the *how*, but the *why*—why cultural sovereignty is essential to Canada's unity, diplomacy, economy and global relevance.

We would welcome an early opportunity to meet with you and your Cabinet to explore an implementation strategy that positions Canada's Public Art Galleries and Museums as engines of national renewal and imagination . Furthermore, we respectfully request that GOG be included in the prospective **Canadian Sovereignty Task Force**, ensuring that the expertise and lived realities of our sector are embedded in its deliberations.

Prime Minister, Galeries Ontario / Ontario Galleries stands ready to support your government in delivering on its cultural commitments and reaffirming Canada's place as a beacon of creative, democratic, and inclusive excellence.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Zainub Verjee, C.M.
Executive Director
Galeries Ontario / Ontario Galleries (GOG)
zverjee@galeries-ontario-galleries.ca
416-598-0714
www.galeries-ontario-galleries.ca