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Voice of the people

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Unifying force

In her Sept. 25 column, Chantal Hébert argues that *Culture en péril*, the hilarious video produced by Quebecois singer and songwriter Michel Rivard and friends, "misses the mark" in focusing on a "French/English divide" and is "potentially divisive."

There is a francophone versus anglophone dimension to the video. However, it strikes a broader chord which has resonated with many artists, francophone and anglophone, across Canada.

This is because: a) it exposes how artists are expected (when exhibiting or performing internationally) to subordinate their work to Canadian government policy objectives; and b) it illustrates the arbitrary ways in which artists' work is evaluated, sometimes by bureaucrats with little understanding of the subject matter, who are ready to spring censoriously at the least suggestion of anything controversial, to enforce politically or bureaucratically determined notions of political correctness.

As such, it has clearly unified artists across the country, rather than divided them. Hébert may be right about it preaching to the converted when it come to anglophone Canada, but within Quebec I wonder if the non-converted may see it as illustrating Conservative dogmatism, ham-fistedness, and right-wing ideology, and whether it may thereby unite some of the progressive forces Hébert fears are in disarray.

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