



Creative City Network of Canada  
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September 24, 2020

To the attention of:

Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage

Honourable Bernard Davis, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, NL

Honourable Leo A. Glavine, Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, NS

Honourable Bruce Fitch, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, NB

Honourable Matthew McKay, Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture, PEI

Honourable Nathalie Roy, Minister of Culture and Communications, QC

Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, ON

Honourable Cathy Cox, Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, MB

Honourable Gene Makowsky, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, SK

Honourable Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, AB

Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, BC

Honourable David Joanase, Minister of Culture and Heritage, NU

Honourable R.J. Simpson, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, NT

Honourable Jeanie Dendys, Minister of Tourism and Culture, YT

Dear Ministers of Culture in Canada,

The Creative City Network of Canada supports those working in cultural policy and development at the local level throughout Canadian towns and cities. Our 140 members represent the culture work of municipalities across the provinces and, together, they enrich the lives of Canadians, develop a national identity, and contribute to the significant economic impact of the sector on Canada's GDP: \$53.1 billion in 2017 (Statistics Canada). In March 2020, our sector was one of many significantly impacted by the arrival of COVID-19.

We would like to begin by expressing that, as a sector, we have been grateful for the federal and provincial governments' emergency support for the artists, organizations, and the institutions that create and present art and culture in Canada since March. We also appreciate the acknowledgement of Culture as one of the hardest hit industries in Wednesday's Speech from the Throne.

In particular, the performing arts have been forced to pivot to virtual and distanced programs quickly and under the extraordinary pressure of the unknown. Their ability to do so is indicative of the creativity and flexibility of the arts, but these short-term solutions cannot sustain the whole of the sector's needs during this pandemic. Theatres are left vacant, festivals have been cancelled, and tour revenues have been lost. Because you identified and addressed these needs many months ago, we have hope that venues, artists, and administrators may ultimately be able to survive. During a time when gathering became for the first time the worst thing we could do for our well-being, the funding that was provided to performance venues has helped to stabilize a vulnerable industry. For that, we thank you.

However, through our conversations with CCNC members, we have identified a gap in this support. There's someone who has been missed and their survival is imperative for the local economic and cultural recovery of our towns and cities:

Municipally owned and operated performing arts centres.

This issue was first brought to us by Kirsten Schrader of the Cowichan Performing Arts Centre in British Columbia. She has pointed out that, although Nanaimo's local not-for-profit theatre received more than \$400,000 in government COVID-19 subsidies allowing them to maintain relationships with artists and agents while planning next season, her theatre has received nothing.

Through a sampling of membership and with the extended help of Ontario Presents, we've identified several such venues with the same story. Forced layoffs and staff redeployment have put these centres at high risk of being unable to recover. Their status as municipal property makes them ineligible for CERB, wage benefits, or other COVID-19 relief programs. All federal support of municipalities has gone to other essential services and none has trickled down to their cultural facilities. If external partners or Councils remain unable to help, these centres are vulnerable to the lasting effects of the pandemic.

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[Some of the concerns about the plight of these facilities and their stakeholders have been compiled in the attached summary document. Please note, not all municipalities in Canada are members of the Creative City Network of Canada. We expect that there are many more municipalities in Canada that find themselves in this predicament.](#)

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We wish to make a case for the value of these centres and those who run them. Until 2020, local and touring talent made its way across these stages, offering culture, entertainment, and community to the people of these towns. Box office revenues fed back into the community, supporting local artists and youth programs. Local economies thrived on the tourism, dining, and shopping directly connected to the municipality's stage. The importance of these centres' survival is on par with their private counterparts, and perhaps more so where their mandates include a specific investment in their town's success.

We write to advocate for the centres and their many stakeholders who have been forgotten. We are asking that the Ministries of Culture in Canada review the current avenues for support with the aim of ensuring that municipally owned facilities are eligible for and receive both programming and wage-related COVID-19 subsidies as part of the overall stabilization of the Canadian cultural sector. Furthermore, we are requesting that a review of the maximum capacity for indoor events be undertaken with data from across the country to normalize and create equity for the facilities in question.

We request an immediate response to this problem. These theatres have been without recognition in emergency support plans for months. There is no time to waste.

We are eager to hear from you soon and look forward to assisting you further if needed.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Darby, General Manager  
Creative City Network of Canada