

Monday, September 13, 2021

Dear Deputy Minister Mondou,

We are a collective of arts organizations across the country who are working to find new models for affordable arts space. We are writing to request **policy changes to the Department of Canadian Heritage's Strategic Initiatives - Canadian Cultural Spaces Fund** that would lead to a more accessible, equitable, and sustainable performing arts sector. Specifically, we are asking the Department to **expand the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund to provide support to small arts organizations and independent artists for operating and capital costs associated with the temporary use of space.**

As your Department prepares for a new incoming government following the September 20 Federal Election, **we respectfully request the inclusion of this recommended policy adjustment**, not only to benefit artists and improve access to arts and culture for Canadians, but also to support the revival of Canada's many Main Streets and commercial districts with vacant spaces, now seeking new and creative ways to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Small arts organizations and independent artists are struggling. CERB has provided a rare kind of stable income for independent artists, and we applaud the speed and responsiveness taken by the government. However, the bulk of arts sector support continues to benefit larger institutions, which do not generally reflect the diversity of Canada.

Real estate prices are surging across the country, pricing out artists in major cities. In Toronto, for example, the median income for artists in 2019 was \$30,000, less than half of the \$65,000 median income for Toronto residents (Toronto Arts Foundation). In Calgary, 57% of arts professionals earned under \$35,000 in 2019, with those numbers increasing to 65% for BIPOC respondents (Calgary Arts Development). In general, Canadian artists have a median employment income of \$17,300, less than 50% of all Canadian workers (Hill Strategies). The economic pressures from COVID-19 and an already precarious freelance working culture have created a recipe for a devastating impact on the Canadian cultural industries.

Artists that do not have regular access to institutional support often rely on their own income to support their artistic practice. Arts councils do great work to support independent artists, however this funding rarely covers full project expenses, which means that artists often pay out of their own pocket in order to make the project a reality. While substantial funding exists in the current funding models at Canadian Heritage, they mainly support larger institutions, rather than smaller arts organizations, collectives, and individuals. This phenomenon disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists and organizations.

We have been collectively assessing the viability of different arts space models that could increase the number of affordable spaces across the country. As one example, a "meanwhile use" model has been proven to reduce artists' rehearsal space expenses, with those savings being passed on to pay artists a livable wage. This model, which has been explored successfully in Canada, provides artists with access to temporarily vacant spaces of all kinds, often provided by the private sector at discounted rates.

Activating empty spaces is not only a benefit to artists, who are able to access space cost-efficiently for creation, collaboration, and presentation, but also enhances the vibrancy of the local community, and brings new audiences to artists. Arts activity helps draw people to main streets, making empty spaces more attractive to long-term tenants, while at the same time increasing access by Canadians to arts and culture.

Currently, the **Canada Cultural Spaces Fund only supports organizations with building, purchasing, and long-term leasing of space**. We believe that this is limiting to the industry, both for artists and organizations. If the Cultural Spaces Fund were to **make room for new and innovative models that allow artists and organizations to access spaces on a temporary basis**, it would support the CCSF's objectives of "allowing Canadians to value and access arts and heritage spaces in their community", while also benefiting the economic prosperity of artists all across the country. This would mean including both **operating costs and temporary space capital costs as eligible criteria** for this program.

Access to affordable space has been an issue for some time and the pandemic has only exacerbated this problem. Expanding the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund will ensure that artists can remain in their communities, with significant and long-term benefit to the Canadian cultural sector and audiences across the country.

We thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,



Ravi Jain
Founder & Co-Artistic Director
Why Not Theatre
(Toronto, ON)



Mary Rowe
President & CEO
Canadian Urban Institute
(Toronto, ON)



Tom Arthur Davis
Managing Producer
Why Not Theatre
(Toronto, ON)



Alex Glass
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Michael Vickers
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**The Arts, Culture & Creative
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Marie-Josée Vaillancourt
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Executive Director
GRIP Artists Kingston
(Kingston, ON)



September 20, 2021

Deputy Minister Isabelle Mondou
Department of Canadian Heritage
15 Eddy Street
Gatineau, QC K1A 0M5
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Dear Deputy Minister Mondou,

On behalf of the Toronto Arts Council and the city's arts community, I am writing in support of a recent initiative of the National Space Network.

The National Space Network is requesting that the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund be expanded to provide support to small arts organizations and independent artists for operating and capital costs associated with the temporary use of space.

Space costs are a significant, long-standing and increasingly urgent problem for artists and arts organizations in Toronto.

In 2019, Toronto Arts Foundation published Arts Stats 2019 [Going Without: Artists and Arts Workers in our Creative City](#). The report documents hardships faced by Toronto's artists, who contend with disproportionately high costs for work space and are burdened by disproportionately low incomes. Although perhaps more acute in Toronto given the exceptionally high costs of real estate here, we understand from our colleagues across the country that space costs are a significant concern in every major Canadian municipality.

Solving the space crisis for the arts sector is of paramount importance to its survival. We believe that the policy change proposed by the National Space Network could be an important part of the solution.

If the Cultural Spaces Fund were to make room for new and innovative models that allow artists and organizations to access spaces on a temporary basis, and include both operating costs and temporary space capital costs as eligible criteria for this program, it would have a significant impact on artists across the country. In particular it would benefit Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists and organizations all of which are disproportionately affected by low incomes.

As identified in their request, the benefits of the change extend past the artists and organizations to include the revival of Canada's many Main

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Streets and commercial districts with vacant spaces, now seeking new and creative ways to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to affordable space has been an issue for some time and the pandemic has only exacerbated this problem. Expanding the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund will ensure that artists can remain in their communities, with significant and long-term benefit to the Canadian cultural sector and audiences across the country.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Hopkinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Claire Hopkinson, M.S.M.
Director & CEO