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Economic security of women¹ within the arts and culture sector

Submitted by the Canadian Dance Assembly, Playwrights Guild of Canada, Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), Opera.ca, Pat the Dog Theatre Creation, Theatre Ontario, CPAMO, and CARFAC.

Executive Summary:

There are 650,000 arts workers in Canada, with women representing 51% of all artists and 50% of cultural workers.² Despite the central role women play in the creative industries, outmoded divisions of labour and discriminatory hiring practices are still the norm. Women, especially marginalized women, are much more likely to have precarious contract positions and less likely to be in positions of leadership; this inequity is further compounded for women who are also Indigenous, racialized, seniors, disabled, and so on.

As service organizations for the arts, we respectfully request that:

1. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women direct the Canada Council for the Arts to require that Boards of Directors of all publicly funded arts organizations must have gender equity policies in place; correspondingly, these organizations must ensure that these policies include hiring more women in leadership positions.
2. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women direct the Canada Council for the Arts to help to eliminate systemic bias within operational policies, distribution of resources, and hiring processes, by providing arts organizations with the professional development funding that is needed to do so throughout the broader arts sector.

¹ The term "woman" is meant as inclusive of both cis and transgender.

² MacArthur, Michelle. "Achieving Equity in Canadian Theatre: A Report with Best Practice Recommendations." April 2015. PGC, 27. <http://www.eit.playwrightsguild.ca/sites/eit.playwrightsguild.ca/files/FINAL%20EIT%20Report_4%2022%2015.pdf>.

Context:

The arts sector is perceived publicly as progressive and welcoming to people of various genders, races, abilities, sexualities and so on. But recently, as documented by Kate Taylor in the *Globe and Mail*, several of the major arts organizations in the country have hired privileged, non-Canadian men in leadership roles;³ sadly, this is indicative of an historic and systemic lack of equitable opportunities for women in the arts sector.

For example, Women in Music Canada found significant and broad reaching gender disparities in the Canadian Music Industry in 2014: the annual salaries of women were 27% lower than the average annual industry salary; and only 10% held executive positions.⁴ Within Canadian opera, women hold 35% of the leadership positions at the smallest companies, and the stats drop further for General Directors and have been regressing in recent years.⁵ In visual arts, we see similar trends: directors and curators of galleries are 70% women and 30% men (almost 92% Caucasian), but once again, the bigger the gallery, the fewer the number of women in leadership positions.⁶ Women form the vast majority of dancers at 84% – so perhaps it is not surprising that this is one of the poorest paid of all the arts occupations⁷ – but men are still prioritized as Artistic Directors and choreographers. We also see women disadvantaged in the world of Canadian literature. Studies show “an undeniable gender bias that overwhelmingly favour[s] male authors,” as evidenced by reviewing practices: only 30% of the books reviewed by male critics were written by women, which means women’s books are “less likely to sell well and less likely to be considered for major awards,” and that leads to greater economic disadvantage and disparity due to gender discrimination.⁸ In Canadian theatre, women occupy less than 35% of the profession’s leadership roles, such as Artistic Directors, Directors, and Playwrights.⁹ Furthermore, while women constitute 52% of the Playwrights Guild of Canada’s membership, the country’s production statistics do not reflect this fact. In the 2016/17, men accounted for 64%, women for 26%, and mixed gender collaborations for 10% of the productions produced on our nation’s stages.¹⁰ If a woman is Indigenous or racialized, then the statistics sink much lower yet, plunging to fewer than 4%.¹¹ If a woman also lives with an impairment, annual arts sector income drops even further. The disproportionate number of staged productions written by (privileged) men indicates a notable industry

³ Kate Taylor, “No Canadians need apply,” *Globe and Mail*. August 5th, 2016.

⁴ Women in Music. “A Profile of Women Working in Ontario’s Music Industry.” May 2015.

<<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58794b1fd2b8570fc2d4e7de/t/58910c50414fb590145b40b4/1485900882521/A+Profile+of+Women+Working+in+the+ON+Music+Industry.pdf>>

⁵ The National Opera Centre (NOCA) – Women’s Opera Network. “Research and Data.”

<<http://www.operaamerica.org/content/about/won.aspx>>.

⁶ Maranda, Michael. “Hard Numbers: A Study on Diversity in Canada’s Galleries.” *Canadian Art*. April 5, 2017.

⁷ Canada Council for the Arts (CCA). “Towards an Understanding of the Breadth and Depth of Dance Activity in Canada.” Canada Dance Mapping Study. 2011.

⁸ The CanLit Guides Editorial Team. “CWILA and Literary Representation” *CanLit Guides*. 2012. Revised 2016.

<<http://canlitguides.ca/canlit-guides-editorial-team/feminist-history-of-literature-and-culture-in-canada/cwila-and-literary-representation/>>.

⁹ MacArthur, 10.

¹⁰ Playwrights Guild of Canada. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2016/17*. Two-page Handout. June 2017.

<<https://www.playwrightsguild.ca/sites/default/files/PGC%20Annual%20Theatre%20Production%20Survey%202016-17%20FINAL.pdf>>.

¹¹ Burton. “Adding it Up: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre – A Report on the Phase One Findings of Equity in Theatre: The Women’s Initiative.” Oct. 2006, 14-15. <<http://www.playwrightsguild.ca/sites/default/files/AddingItUp.pdf>>.

bias. That bias is still largely upheld with the Boards of Directors. As was noted in the *Toronto Star* on Aug. 9, 2017, arts organizations with Boards of Directors composed of primarily privileged men, tend to hire privileged men.¹²

Economic Disparity:

A 2014 Harvard University study suggests that women's difficulties advancing their careers and increasing their paycheques is "caused primarily by discrimination rather than by barriers traditionally believed to hold women back, such as lack of access to affordable childcare and elder care and inflexible work schedules that fail to accommodate the domestic responsibilities with which women are often burdened".¹³ Women did not opt out of their careers due to family duties; rather, employers *believed* that women valued their careers less, which resulted in discriminatory hiring practices. This is not an unusual or unique scenario; the above statistics are mirrored in other countries (AU, FR, UK, US).

Not surprisingly, these sectoral imbalances manifest economic inequities. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, as actors and comedians, women earned 26% less than men; as authors and writers, 12% less; and as producers, directors, choreographers, and in other related roles, women earned 16% less than men.¹⁴ Notably, more women than men applied for Canada Council for the Arts funding between 2011 and 2014, but men had higher success rates, and they received more dollars.¹⁵ In the Deaf, Mad, and Disability Arts domain, 100% of the contributors that produce Deaf Art, Mad Art and/or Disability-identified Art work are female-led organizations, yet (or perhaps as a result) these arts organizations are significantly under-funded.¹⁶ These statistics reveal a Catch-22 situation: less money means that women are marginalized and thus have fewer resources for producing artistic excellence.

Recommendations:

To help redress these imbalances, the Government of Canada could direct the Canada Council for the Arts to prioritize gender equity.

As service organizations representing thousands of artists and arts organizations, we would be happy to send a representative to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to discuss the economic security of women in the arts in more detail.

¹² Bob Ramsay, "Arts boards still don't represent Toronto's diversity," *Toronto Star*, Aug. 9 2017.

¹³ MacArthur 28 – 29.

¹⁴ MacArthur 28.

¹⁵ MacArthur 27.

¹⁶ The Disability Arts and Culture Alliance of Canada. "Gender & Disability in Canada's Deaf, Mad and Disability Art Domain." One-page Handout. 2015.