



Canadian Dance Assembly

L'Assemblée canadienne de la danse

Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2021 Federal Budget

By: Canadian Dance Assembly

CONTACT

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Summary of Recommendations

1: That the government extend and expand the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). Permit organizations with seasonal fluctuations to access the subsidy in the periods when it is most needed and include contract workers and not just employees. Extend the program for as long as government-mandated public health restrictions are in place.

2: That the government continues to support self-employed workers during the emergency and recovery phase through 2021 with a view towards transitioning to a national Basic Income Guarantee.

3: That the government invest in infrastructure support for a safe reopening and return to operations, supported through programs such as the Canada Cultural Space Fund.

4: That the government invest in greater marketing support to invigorate audiences in the arts and culture sector.

Background

The pandemic has presented the arts sector with significant challenges as a ‘first to close and last to open’ sector. Cancellations of performances and closing of performance spaces are having a major impact on our artists. The unfortunate reality is that those in our industry are many months away from being able to return to a regular work routine.

We are grateful for the federal government’s emergency supports that have helped in the relief period for Canadian arts and culture so far, specifically, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Emergency Support Fund for Culture, Heritage and Sport Sectors, and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. Many of our members have expressed great losses in terms of performances, fundraising events and other earned revenue sources. ¹According to a survey conducted through *ilostmygig.ca*, the total income estimated to be lost or at risk for independent contract workers through the end of the year is just over \$20 million (average of \$25,200 per respondent). Expected losses represent 83% of respondents’ average arts-related income in 2019 (\$30,500).

It is important to note that those who have been historically underserved are facing an even greater challenge during this time. As a result of previous systemic barriers, many Indigenous and equity group artists and organizations receive lower levels of operating and multi-year support through public funding and are currently at risk. According to Hill Strategies Research – ²“Racialized artists have a median income of \$18,200, about one-half of the median income of all racialized workers in Canada (\$35,600). Non-racialized artists have a median income of \$25,400, 44% less than all non-racialized workers (\$45,700). Racialized artists make a median income of 72 cents for every \$1 for non-racialized artists. In the overall labour force, racialized workers have a median income of 78 cents for every \$1 for non-racialized workers.” COVID-19 is putting many organizations at risk. Those who were already in a vulnerable position before are even more so now. Inequities in funding support will lead to destabilization in the sector.

³After cumulative losses of 3 million jobs since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, national employment rose 1.8% in May. However, employment continues to decline in the culture sector. Culture and recreation industries have seen the largest job loss after the accommodation and food industries.

Arts and culture in Canada is a major industry with \$59 billion in direct economic impact and which creates 715,000 jobs. It is vital that we work closely with government to find viable solutions to help sustain our businesses, our workers, and arts & culture connections with Canadian citizens as we navigate the pandemic.

¹ [Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadian Artists and Independent Cultural Workers](#), Hill Strategies. June 1, 2020

² [Demographic Diversity of Artists in Canada in 2016](#), Hill Strategies. January 2020

³ [Chronicle of a Pandemic and the Performing Arts](#), CAPACOA. June 11, 2020

About the Canadian Dance Assembly

The Canadian Dance Assembly (CDA) is the national arts service organization for the dance sector. We strive to cultivate a strong national voice for Canadian professional dance and to support the development of resources for this field of artistic expression. CDA promotes a healthy, sustainable environment in which professional dance practice can grow and thrive. We facilitate the dynamic exchange of information relevant to Canadian professional dance of all forms and aesthetics.

CDA's members are 600 dance organizations and individuals; alongside our provincial partners, CDA reaches a dance community of approximately 3000 arts workers. Our membership includes independent artists, dance organizations, presenters, service organizations, teachers and educational institutions and writers. It is the diverse network of our membership that provides us with the dynamism and synergy with which we carry out our mandate to build a resilient and robust dance sector.

Recommendations

1: That the government extend and expand the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). Permit organizations with seasonal fluctuations to access the subsidy in the periods when it is most needed and include contract workers and not just employees. Extend the program for as long as government-mandated public health restrictions are in place.

In the performing arts community, many work on contracts due to the seasonal nature of our sector. Adapting CEWS to equally take into consideration contract workers in the performing arts community would help preserve jobs in the short term, reduce midterm hardship, and ensure the strength of the arts sector over the longer term. Many of our members are currently not eligible to use this benefit unless these guidelines are expanded. Guidelines could include a minimum T4A earnings requirement similar to the \$5,000 earnings eligibility for CERB.

We also recommend that the government expand the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy to permit organizations with seasonal fluctuations to defer access to the wage subsidy to the periods when it is most needed, as identified by the organization. Many organizations operate under a festival model where there is a heightened engagement period where staff, particularly contract staff, is increased. The program should allow flexibility to help cover the periods in the year identified as the most critical.

The investment in this program is greatly appreciated and we wish to ensure more of our members are able to access the benefits by expanding the parameters. Given that restrictions may be in place for an extended period of time, it is our recommendation that the program, including these amendments, should be extended to as long as government-mandated public health restrictions are in place.

2: That the government continues to support self-employed workers during the emergency and recovery phase through 2021 with a view towards transitioning to a national Basic Income Guarantee.

Self-employment is a reality for many artists. ⁴According to Hill Strategies Research, 52% of artists are self-employed, compared with only 12% of all Canadian workers. Most of the federal emergency measures to date have targeted organizations. The individuals at the heart of the work are left scrambling for access to resources and support and can not be left out.

CERB has been vital for our artists, contractors and self-employed cultural workers who are out of work due to COVID-19; whose income cannot be covered by other support measures; and who continue to be out of potential work opportunities until the arts sector can safely reopen and resume development, production, rehearsal and performance activities.

Given the public gathering nature of arts performances and group creation processes, many arts organizations were required to cancel activities for the Fall 2020 season and into Winter 2021. We stress that many individuals who cannot be employed or contracted will require access to income relief support well past October 3rd.

The federal government should take the lead partnering with the provinces and territories to enact a basic income program. CERB was created as a temporary emergency program to support hard working Canadians who lost their job as a result of the pandemic. A similar relief measure should continue and then be transitioned into a national Basic Income Guarantee at \$2,000/month. The pandemic has only exaggerated the earnings gap and inequities in access to support. A Basic Income Guarantee achieves the goals of living a dignified, healthy, engaged life.

3: That the government invest in infrastructure support for a safe reopening and return to operations, supported through programs such as the Canada Cultural Space Fund.

We respectfully request infrastructure and operating support for venues and facilities so that they are well-equipped to return when it is safe to do so. Many are facing exorbitant costs associated with helping to modify buildings and office spaces and need to acquire PPE among other structural changes. Some of the increased costs our members are facing include: cleaning supplies; extra staffing for supervision/check-in; structural improvements such as dividers and plastic shields; PPE for staff; signage, seating, furniture and ventilation modifications.

According to a recent CDA membership survey, participants said that they will need between 12-18 months to reach a point of meaningful recovery and will require between \$21,000-\$50,000 in emergency support. They also indicated that their most pressing concerns are around programming/production costs given the increased health measures and costs associated with re-opening safely. Additional investment into programs such as the Canada Cultural Space Fund would aid in this recovery.

4: That the government invest in greater marketing support to invigorate audiences in the arts and culture sector.

⁴ [A Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada in 2016](#), Hill Strategies. November 27, 2019

As many organizations and artists plan for the eventual reopening of their performances and venues, they will need support from government to encourage audiences to return to the arts, from both inside the community and through increased tourism. There will be a natural hesitation to return to the theatres as we have seen a major disruption with COVID-19. All artists and organizations face increased marketing costs associated with encouraging attendance and support for their events and initiatives. It will take careful planning and creative marketing to bring people back. Targetted funding from Regional Development Agencies should be explored to support this initiative.

One area of support would be in the form of a ticket subsidy program as many venues will not be able to fill their seats to capacity. For most, ticket prices rarely cover the high costs of production and profit/loss margins will now be even further exaggerated by having to minimize seating capacity to mean COVID-19 restrictions.

Our sector is also facing a significant increase in digital investment and so access to digital support or training during this time is imperative. Many companies and artists have switched to digital programming overnight to help keep our communities connected. These connections have helped uplift Canadians and need to be sustained.

Conclusion

We believe these recommendations will greatly benefit our communities so that we can build a better, more inclusive future and not just return to the status quo. As a member of the [Canadian Arts Coalition](#) we support their pre-budget asks and work alongside our colleagues across the country in the performing arts towards greater access for the arts. It is important that any government measures consider equal access, transparency in process and consultation.

The proposed measures will support the wider economy:

- An extension of the CEWS would ensure that creative workers can continue to tackle the major challenges the performing arts sector faces.
- The expansion of the CEWS to allow for seasonal and contractual considerations would help maintain sectoral expertise and ensure a speedy return to operations.
- An extension of a CERB-like program, would enable artists to continue to meaningfully contribute to our society by providing them with the stability they greatly need.
- A Basic Income Guarantee would help eliminate the un-sustainability of many existing social programs like EI: where self-employed artists and precarious short-term contract workers often do not qualify.
- Creative workers can continue to tackle the major challenges the performing arts sector is facing while accessing support to ensure longer-term stability, building a more inclusive and equitable future for the arts.
- Investing in areas that will encourage engagement and participation in the arts will have many physical and mental health benefits to help alleviate the emerging mental health crisis due to COVID-19.