

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Canadian Heritage

The Honourable Anita Anand, P.C., M.P.
President of the Treasury Board

House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

March 26, 2024

Dear Ministers,

The CDA exists to facilitate the dynamic exchange of information relevant to Canadian professional dance of all forms and aesthetics. CDA represents a membership of 600 dance organizations and, alongside our provincial partners, we have a total reach to a dance community of approximately 3000 arts workers.

We are writing in response to the recent refocusing of government spending and the resulting changes in programming at the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts.

In particular, we would like to draw your attention to the reduction in funding to the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund (CCSF). One of the crucial issues for artistic infrastructure in dance is affordable, accessible, and suitable space. For example, in Ontario, less than 5% of spaces are purpose-built dance rehearsal spaces¹. Dance rehearsal spaces are often not financially or physically accessible, nor are they typically equipped with proper ventilation, sprung floors, heating, and ceiling height, resulting in unsafe working conditions. The dance sector needs safe rehearsal spaces that can accommodate dancers with diverse needs and culturally diverse practices².

¹ Dance Umbrella Ontario, *Research Study and Needs Assessment on Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario*, 2022

² Idem

Secondly, the Canada Council for the Arts is the largest public sector funder that many of our members, including individual dance artists and dance organizations across Canada, rely upon. The Director and CEO of the Canada Council has repeatedly signaled that the demand for support has never been higher.

The dance ecosystem is in a highly precarious phase. Although the dance sector is innovative and resilient, it is struggling to recover from the pandemic. Preliminary figures obtained from Canada Council statistics show that dance organizations presented 32% fewer works in 2022-2023 compared to 2018-2019. Audience attendance as well as local, national, and international touring declined by nearly 50%. The number of cultural positions in employment has also fallen. However, in contrast, the number of artists vying to sustain careers in the cultural milieu continues to grow. These alarming figures demonstrate a general impoverishment of the dance sector. The Government of Canada's response to this well-documented need, with a nearly \$21 million cut to Canada Council funding over the next three years, is detrimental to the sustainability of the sector.

Ministers, we understand and respect the need for fiscal restraint in a moment of high-interest rates and a general affordability crisis. However, we cannot express enough our profound concern at the choice to cut from the Canada Council for the Arts funding, which should instead be strengthened as the sole support system of Canada's dance ecosystem during this crucial moment in time. Cuts to funding will also undo the traction gained from earlier 'recovery' investments and initiatives intended to bolster the industry. For cultural workers and dance artists who are disproportionately affected by the affordability crisis, this is all more than discouraging.

The Standing Committee on Finance recently tabled its final report on the 2024 Pre-Budget Consultations in the House of Commons. CDA was pleased to find that the all-party committee included many recommendations for the cultural sector. In particular, CDA would like to identify recommendations 222, 224, and 226, highlighting the importance of cultural buildings, workers, and the future of the performing arts sector.

- Recommendation 222

Provide permanent funding to Canadian Heritage's arts branch, heritage programs, and the Canada Council for the Arts, to ensure a resilient, equitable future for the Canadian arts and culture ecosystem, its workers, buildings, and communities.

- Recommendation 224

Make the enhancements to the base budget of the Canada Arts Presentation Fund and the Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage program in 2019–2020 permanent.



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- Recommendation 226

Support core operational funding for arts organizations to foster institutional and workforce stability.

As a national service organization committed to the highest level of advocacy and a voice for the sector, CDA implores this government to implement these recommendations and to reverse the cuts to these hallmark programs through the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Dance artists and organizations greatly need the support from the Government, not only to make a good living and do their work decently but also to offer the citizens of Canada poignant works that elevate their state of well-being, quality of life, and exposure to meaningful art experiences. We have the opportunity to benefit from a resilient, innovative, and inclusive dance ecosystem. Funding cuts will severely jeopardize the arts sector. We invite you to participate in investing in and strengthening support for the arts. This can only be done with financial resources that mirror the needs and reality of the current cultural context. We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this further.

Karla Etienne

Executive Director

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