

Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister

Hon. Anita Anand
President of the Treasury Board

Hon. Pascale St-Onge
Minister of Canadian Heritage



March 21, 2024

Ministers Freeland, St-Onge, and Anand,

The arts and culture sector in Canada is in crisis. Over recent weeks and months, you have each heard directly from members of the Canadian Arts Coalition and the sector, constituents, and Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast about the essential role that the arts play in our communities, and the very real and urgent crisis that arts organizations are facing as we rebuild our audiences, revenue sources and labour force in a post-pandemic reality.

We write today, on behalf of the [Canadian Arts Coalition](#), which represents the collective voice of the arts sector in Canada, to express our profound disappointment that the Government of Canada has chosen to cut funding for our sector through Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. Put simply, while we understand the all-of-government imperative for fiscal responsibility, we are disappointed that you have heard our calls for support at this perilous time, and not only have not stepped in, but have chosen to cut sector funding. Cutting sector funding further jeopardizes the arts economy, jobs and service to our Canadians, livelihoods and communities everywhere.

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

The Government of Canada's response to this well-documented need is a nearly \$21 million cut to Canada Council funding over the next three years.

Similarly, the Department of Canadian Heritage has operated essential programs for organisations across the arts sector that have long been oversubscribed and in need of permanent investment. With temporary investments ending, and organisations facing increased costs, labour shortages and many on the brink of collapse, increases to many individual programs across the Department would make a real difference in the arts and culture sector in Canada.

However, in response to this crisis, the Government of Canada has decided to eliminate and reduce programs within the Department of Canadian Heritage to a tune of nearly \$80 million over the next three years.



Ministers, we understand and respect the need for fiscal restraint in a moment of high interest rates and an affordability crisis. However, we cannot clearly enough express our profound dismay at the choice to cut from government departments, cuts that go beyond the sunseting of emergency and recovery programs to the core work of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council, which underpin Canada's cultural ecosystem at this crucial moment in time. For cultural workers who are disproportionately affected by the affordability crisis, this is all the more frustrating.

There is a crisis in the arts sector in Canada: now is not the time for cuts. It is a critical junction point in which investment is required to facilitate the rebuilding and rebirth of culture in our communities and a thriving economy.

As such, we write to urge you to take two steps immediately:

- 1) Reverse all cuts to the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts, effective immediately, to ensure, at minimum, that these organisations can continue supporting the arts sector at current levels; and
- 2) Provide increased investment to both the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts through Budget 2024 to truly invest in a sustainable future.

Ministers, you need to invest to ensure a healthy, inclusive, and thriving culture in every Canadian community for years to come. Or you can follow through with harmful cuts that do not respond to the very real crisis we experience today, resulting in further labour losses, draining the cultural workforce, forcing a lack of cultural programming in communities, and dismissing the rebuilding of in-person cultural gatherings and cultural patronage.

We implore you to invest in the future of Canada's arts sector. We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this further.

The Canadian Arts Coalition

CC:

Chief Executive Officer and Director of the Canada Council for the Arts, Michelle Chawla

Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage, Isabelle Mondou

The Canadian Arts Coalition is a collaborative non-partisan advocacy movement of national associations, arts organizations and artists, lead by a volunteer Steering Committee comprised of representatives of national, provincial, regional, territorial arts organizations and/or associations committed to equity in the arts and inclusive of Indigenous, racialized, the deaf and disabled.



Membership of the Canadian Arts Coalition

Arts Organizations and Associations / organisations et associations artistiques:

Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario
Annapolis Valley Honour Choirs and Aeolian Singers
Arts Club Theatre Company
Arts Commons
Arts Network Ottawa / Réseau Des Arts D'ottawa
Artists for Real Climate Action
L'Assemblée canadienne de la danse / Canadian Dance Assembly
Association des groupes en arts visuels francophones - AGAVF
Association des théâtres francophones du Canada (ATFC)
Association for Opera in Canada / L'Association pour l'opéra au Canada
Association of Canadian Publishers
Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity
Business / Arts. Affaires / Arts
CAMDO-ODMAC. Canadian Arts Museum Directors Organization / Organisation des directeurs des musées d'art Canadiens
Canadian Association for the Performing Arts/l'Association canadienne des organismes artistiques (CAPACOA)
Canadian Crafts Federation / Fédération Canadienne des métiers d'art
Canadian Museums Association / Association des musées Canadiens
Canadian Network for Arts and Learning / Le Réseau canadien pour les arts et l'apprentissage
Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC)
Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts
Choral Canada / Canada Choral
Contemporary Calgary
Conseil québécois de la musique
Conseil québécois du théâtre
CPAMO. Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario
Creative PEI
Culture Days . Fête de la culture
Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA) / L'Alliance des arts médiatiques indépendants (AAMI)
La danse sur les routes du Québec
Literary Press Group of Canada
Manitoba Legal Clinic for the Arts

National Ballet of Canada / Le Ballet national du Canada
Orchestras Canada / Orchestres Canada
Playwright's Guild of Canada
Professional Association of Canadian Theatres
Ross Creek Centre for the Arts
Rozsa Foundation
Saskatchewan Arts Alliance
Stratford Festival
The Old School House Arts Centre
Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts
Young Associates



Individuals / les individus:

Ally Ladak
Joyce Zemans
Meghan Hila
Nadine Medawar
Zoe Davidson