

Public Funding of Arts and Culture in Canada

2012 Federal Budget Pre-budget Consultations

Standing Committee on Finance
House of Commons

Brief by:

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August 12, 2011

The Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres

The Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres (MAL) represents some 10,000 professional artists, artisans, writers and cultural workers in Quebec who earn their living by creating, performing and distributing their works. They are involved in music, dance, visual arts, media arts, circus arts, literature and crafts. The MAL was founded in 1999 out of the need to preserve a rich and dynamic cultural and artistic life, a key ingredient in economic and social well-being. The MAL advocates for substantially higher public funding of arts and culture in Quebec and Canada in order to meet both the needs and the challenges of a vibrant Quebecois and Canadian culture in the contemporary world.

Staying the course on growth in the culture sector

Culture plays an essential role in Canada's economic prosperity, the quality of life of Canadians in urban and rural settings, the formation of a strong Quebecois and Canadian identity and Canada's standing in the world.

In a global, digital economy based on creative knowledge, Canada must make strong and strategic investments in the talent of its artists and workers in order to create long-term, value-added jobs for the future. In so doing, it must not make a distinction between research and creative activities, as well as production, distribution, training and education, market development (local, national and international), and the promoting of arts and culture nationally and internationally.

The MAL believes that the Government of Canada, in the context of economic recovery and in seeking a balanced budget in the coming years, must avoid cuts to arts and culture budgets. This applies in particular to the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) and Canadian Heritage programs and funding, the goal or effect of which is to directly or indirectly support artists and artistic companies in creating, producing or distributing their works.

For the MAL, there are at least three fundamental reasons not to cut these activities and, on the contrary, to make new strategic investments in them.

1. Canada is playing catch-up

Data on the size of budgets for encouraging the arts in other countries seem to indicate that Canada has a lot of catching up to do to reach their levels of public investment. Although these data are incomplete, they strongly suggest we are lagging in this area.

For example, the CCA's 2011 budget was less than \$5.40 per capita. Most countries with agencies that have a similar mission invest a significantly higher amount per capita, from \$25 per capita in the United Kingdom to \$10 per capita in Norway and \$7 per capita in Australia and New Zealand. For several years now, the consensus in Canada's cultural sector has been a goal of \$300 to \$350 million, or about \$10 per capita.

The argument that everyone must do their part in the effort to balance the budget must be balanced against these data. Similarly, the cuts made in other countries since the start of the recession in 2008 are not an argument for similar cuts in Canada.

2. Arts and culture are a crucial economic sector for Canada's economic future

Today, arts and culture account for more than \$46 billion of our economy and employ about 640,000 people in Canada. Recently, the Minister of Heritage, James Moore, noted that Canada's culture sector is three times larger than the insurance industry and twice as large as the forest industry. In total, the cultural sector contributes (directly, indirectly or through spin-off) approximately \$84.6 billion to Canada's gross national product.

Moreover, culture is not only a major sector of the Canadian economy; it is a growth sector. To encourage a solid economic recovery in the coming years, it is strategically important, if not essential, that the federal government, along with the other levels of government in Canada, focus on investing in sectors with strong growth potential.

According to economic theory, Canada, like the other industrialized countries, is increasingly becoming a knowledge economy, based on creativity. As a result, sectors of the creative economy are growing faster than traditional sectors. Job growth in the creative economy is twice that of the economy as a whole. Since arts and culture are an integral part of the creative economy, we must not compromise Canada's ability to develop them. As much as possible, the sectors that contribute to the creative economy should be the focus of new strategic investments.

Moreover, in this global, digital economy, content creation in Canada is as important a challenge to overcome as infrastructure and equipment. Arts and culture are a crucial segment of the content industry, and artists and cultural workers and organizations play a major role in creating original content. Canada's ability to capture its share of the global market in arts and culture rests in large part on the vitality of this sector and its workforce.

Finally, a number of regions and cities in Canada firmly believe that, from now on, arts and culture will be essential to their economic development. For example, cultural tourism is an increasingly important source of income.

3. Public funding plays a strategic and unique role in the growth of Canada's cultural sector

An important feature of Canada's arts and culture sector is the unique and strategic role of public funding. It does not play a secondary role; it is a vital factor. Unlike other sectors of the economy, arts and cultural organizations receive their key investments from the public sector, at crucial stages in their artistic process.

A major part of federal public funding is allocated to artists and cultural organizations according to criteria of excellence, through systems based on peer-recognition or independent juries and with credible governance. This type of public funding (often only a few thousand dollars) is the primary way that the excellence of an artistic work is recognized. This is even truer for new and innovative works. Interest in artists' works from private investors and consumers is based in part on this recognition, which is essentially achieved through public funding. Because of this highly atypical system, cuts to public funding of the arts have a direct effect on the very source of creativity and innovation at the root of the entire cultural industry.

Moreover, workers and organizations receiving public funding are also the weakest links in the chain of the cultural economy. They are typically very fragile financially. The number of independent workers in the culture sector is twice as high (26%) as in the Canadian economy overall (12%). It goes without saying that thousands of them would be directly affected, and their artistic process and research work would be directly compromised by cuts to programs and funding for the cultural sector.

Three recommendations

As a result, MAL has three recommendations for the 2012 federal budget:

1. The MAL recommends increasing the CCA budget to \$300 million over the next three years

The MAL recognizes the CCA's expertise and its excellent knowledge of the circumstances facing artists and the conditions and requirements for promoting the arts in Canada. A repeated annual increase in federal government funding over the next three years to reach \$300 million will allow it to fulfil its mission. Among its objectives are improved access to support programs for young professional artists, ongoing training and development of artists and cultural workers, the promotion of the arts' contribution to Canadian society and the dissemination and promotion of the arts, which serve to attract audiences and develop markets. The CCA must also be better able to support emerging practices, such as circus arts, media and technological arts, increase its funding for the consolidation of organizations receiving operational support and increase its assistance to research, creative, production, coproduction and distribution projects.

2. The MAL recommends creating international promotion assistance programs with a budget of \$25 million

The Government of Canada must take action and put measures in place to help artists and organizations be as strong and active in international markets as possible. The April 2009 report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage describes the requirements for artists and artistic organizations in Quebec and Canada to maintain a strong position in foreign markets. Ongoing and effective promotion of Canadian arts and culture is essential for maintaining and increasing their presence and success in these markets.

3. Finally, the MAL recommends that, as part of Canada’s strategy for the digital economy, the government ensure that the CCA and Canadian Heritage have the programs and resources necessary for artists and cultural workers in Quebec and Canada to successfully meet the challenges of the digital economy

Artists and cultural workers in Quebec and Canada face the challenges of the digital economy just like a number of other sectors in the economy, but in an even more pronounced way. Arts and culture are inextricably linked with the digital world and the rise of Canadian culture in this world, and this represents a major challenge for Canada. Digital technology has become omnipresent in the work of artists and cultural workers: in research, creation, production, distribution, artistic training and education, market development and promotion of arts and culture on the national and international levels. The work of both the CCA and Canadian Heritage in supporting artists and cultural communities and in meeting the challenges of the digital economy is another of Canada’s strategic priorities.

APPENDIX

MAL Member Associations

The *Conseil québécois de la musique* (CQM) is a non-profit organization representing organizations and individuals working in the field of concert music. Its more than 200 members represent Quebec's professional music community. They include the major production organizations (symphony orchestras, ensembles, quartets, etc.), distribution organizations (festivals and performance venues), schools and recording studios, as well as performers, composers, musicologists, producers and managers. The CQM also offers many benefits and services to its members, including the Diapason management-support program, ongoing training, distribution of concert calendars, preparation of agreements with various commercial partners, publication of an electronic member directory and a number of promotional activities such as the *Prix Opus*, *Adoptez un musicien!* and, on the international stage, *Le Québec, une présence collective à Musicora*.

The *Conseil des métiers d'art du Québec* (CMAQ) brings together close to 900 members on a voluntary basis, in accordance with the mandate it was given under the *Status of the Artist Act*. The CMAQ's mandate is to represent and defend the social and corporate interests of Quebec's professional artists and artisans specializing in artisan products. In addition to being the sector's key instrument for international exposure, through its Créa gallery, the CMAQ owns and manages three independent companies that promote artisan products. These non-profit organizations are entirely self-financed; they are not subsidized and reinvest their surpluses in marketing activities. In addition to offering numerous services to the artisan community (including training, career support and information), the CMAQ generates over \$10 million in annual sales through its distribution activities in Quebec and abroad (fairs, exhibitions, etc.).

The *Conseil québécois des arts médiatiques* (CQAM) is the national organization representing independent, professional creators, cultural workers and arts centres (research, production, dissemination and distribution) in the media arts, which comprises four sectors: independent film, independent video, new media and audio arts. The CQAM's mandate is to represent media artists to governments and institutions at all levels in order to improve the creative and living conditions of its members, support their career paths and professional development and promote their activities and productions, both domestically and internationally. Quebec has the greatest number of media arts creators and organizations, as well as the broadest range of works produced each year, in all of Canada. The excellence and innovation of Quebec media arts creators and the calibre of their work are internationally renowned.

The *Regroupement québécois de la danse* (RQD) represents and defends the interests of nearly 500 dance professionals, including some 60 organizations (professional schools, specialized presenters and service organizations). Bringing together all dance sectors—training, performance, research, creation, production and distribution—the RQD uses this unique synergy of talent to develop meaningful projects for the entire discipline.

The RQD was founded out of the need for the professional dance community to speak with a single voice, above the fray and competing interests of its individual members. The RQD's

activities focus on five areas: community life, coordination and mobilization, public representation, promotion of the discipline and organizational consolidation. Its services include a refund program for training classes, a host of professional development activities and a dynamic network of contacts, exchanges and information sharing.

The *Regroupement des centres d'artistes autogérés du Québec* (RCAAQ) is an association of 71 visual arts and media arts centres run by artists and located in most regions of Quebec. The RCAAQ provides its members with training, promotion and representation services. Artist-run centres are devoted to non-profit creation, dissemination and production. Their main purpose is to provide professional artists with working space, equipment, services and specialized resources. The RCAAQ publishes the *Directory of Artist-run Centres in Quebec and Canada*.

En piste, Circus Arts National Network represents over 300 members, organizations and professionals in the circus arts. Since 1996, *En Piste* has supported development of the field by encouraging creative initiatives, through numerous circus-event representation and promotional activities, by providing professional development, responding to requests for artistic performances each year and networking with and hosting some 15 foreign cultural delegations. *En Piste* is the only association dedicated to the circus arts in Canada. It promotes the circus arts through a truly pan-Canadian network of specialized practitioners.

The *Union des écrivaines et des écrivains québécois* (UNEQ) represents close to 1400 writers who have published at least one book, including poets, novelists, playwrights, children's authors, essayists, scientific and technical writers and translators. The UNEQ's mandate is to promote and disseminate Quebecois and French-Canadian literature in Quebec, Canada and abroad, and to defend the socioeconomic rights of writers. The UNEQ also works for recognition of the writing profession and defends the moral, legal and fiscal rights of writers.

Thirteen *Conseils régionaux de la culture* (regional cultural councils or CRCs) representing the following regions: Centre-du-Québec, the Eastern Townships, Montérégie, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Mauricie, Outaouais, Lanaudière, the Laurentians, Bas-Saint-Laurent, North Shore, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the Gaspé, Quebec City and Chaudière-Appalaches. CRCs are mandated to support arts and culture development in their regions and do so by bringing together, coordinating and representing their members. The councils also monitor, defend and promote arts and culture; document the issues and challenges in their respective communities; and promote the flow of information, consultation, exchanges, coordination and networking. Finally, they contribute to public recognition of the culture and communications community and its venues and stakeholders.