



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.

Background and challenges facing our Sector

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.

Dance is experiencing the challenges of being part of the 'first to close and last to open' sector. Ongoing cancellations of performances and closing of rehearsal and performance spaces means we are many months away from being able to return to a regular work routine. Keeping dance artists training and rehearsing with the frequent closures and ever-changing mandated restrictions on gatherings limits is a particular challenge. Companies and theatres are taking the necessary precautions to sanitize and safely distance in their spaces but are facing tougher restrictions than those imposed on indoor dining or gyms. Our artists need to be able to train regularly in order to be ready for when the sector fully returns. Even when it is safe to return to our rehearsal spaces and theatres, many companies will be months away from being performance ready. We train like athletes and need to ready ourselves for performance, otherwise we put many dancers at the risk of injury or further emotional stress.

Many companies are facing the challenge of keeping staff employed and their buildings operational. **Access to programs such as CEWS, CEBA and CERB have been a lifeline** for many, but others struggle to access supports due to restrictions on contract employees. Additionally, for-profit studios are facing challenges in accessing sufficient supports for their business and are at risk of closure, further destabilizing our education and training facilities.

Keeping cultural workers employed - There is an urgent need to continue to support self-employed cultural workers through the new CRB program or EI reforms through 2021 with a

view towards transitioning to a national Basic Income Guarantee. Self-employment is a reality for many artists. According to Hill Strategies Research, 52% of artists are self-employed, compared with only 12% of all Canadian workers.¹ 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 cannot be left out. CERB/CRB 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.

With the changes to the programs and eligibility requirements there has been some added confusion around messaging. We must ensure that those artists that accessed and needed this support are not asked for repayment unfairly. We must protect our artists who are at the heart of our work. Additionally, ensuring fair compensation for artists in this new era of working is imperative. This includes musician/composer fees, compensation to artists for access to recorded materials over subsequent days (beyond the first showing), as well as copyright issues of ownership of recorded materials.

The Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program needs to be extended for as long as government-mandated public health restrictions are in place. Many in our industry work on contracts which are currently not covered by the CEWS program. This is a major gap for our organizations in ensuring continued employment of their workers. As the performing arts sector works in a seasonal cycle, many organizations who employ contract workers have not been able to maintain the same level of staffing, leading to further cuts to programming and initiatives.

Digital and marketing support including training – Access to support for digital technology and training during this time is imperative. Many companies and artists have switched to digital programming overnight to help keep our communities connected. These investments have helped to uplift Canadians and need to be sustained. This can be in the form of support for digital broadcast and performances, including equipment and personnel with technical experience as well as developing website capacity and streaming platforms for broadcasting. All this will aid in efforts to improve connections with audiences.

Additionally, greater marketing support is needed to help improve connections with audiences, given the complexity of marketing to a global audience, and the competition for market share. A ticket subsidy program to help cover costs of theatre tickets that cannot be sold due to safe social distancing protocols would help close that earnings shortfall. Many of our members also indicated that among their most pressing concerns are programming and production costs given the increased health measures and costs associated with re-opening safely,

¹ [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 local audiences 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.

Addressing historic imbalances and systemic inequities within funding systems as well as disparities in access to funding. All priorities outlined should centre and prioritize the needs of IBPOC, deaf and disabled artists, LGBTQIA2S+ and other priority groups so that when our regrowth happens it does not leave marginalized artists behind.

Those who were already in a vulnerable position before the pandemic are even worse off now. Continued inequities in funding support will lead to further erosion of the sector. Those who have been historically underserved are facing even greater challenges as the pandemic has only exaggerated the earnings gap and inequities in access to support. Historic imbalances and systemic inequities as well as disparities in access to funding need to be addressed

Caregiver/eldercare – Many artists are facing the challenge of putting their careers on hold as they take on the caregiving role. Knowing this role often falls to women, how can we ensure female arts leaders continue to be fostered? Additionally, ensuring that those artists in childcare and eldercare roles continue to receive relief support is crucial to prevent further hardship.