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To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for giving us a place to give voice to what effects COVID has had on our businesses.

My name is Anja Sagan and I am the CEO/Director of Miraclewalker Productions, an emerging film production company in Ajax, Ontario.

We were in the middle of filming a production that was scheduled to be entered into a film festival. As an emerging film company, exposure, promoting and networking at these events is crucial for building success. The pandemic lockdown came right in the midst of filming on location with actors and as such, we were not able to enter that film into the festival. Because of our early stages as a business, the money that went into it was out of my own pocket (a thousand or so plus dollars) and as a result the investment and the resulting opportunity for exposure, was lost. Festivals and events of this kind also are great opportunities for meeting new talent, exploring potential collaboration and meeting people of influence that can help a young company learn and grow as well.

I have applied but been unsuccessful for government grants, which (after many deep funding cuts competition for these has become extreme) have become very difficult for artists to get.

Having more smaller grants that could go to fund more artistic ventures would be very helpful. Larger organizations have their established funding partners and connections.

Michael Kashmanian, director of the Beech Street Theatre company told me; The biggest negative impact has been the total disappearance of live audiences. Art galleries, movie houses, concert halls, sports arenas, playing fields, and theatres have all remained empty. There is no comparison between watching online versus a live performance. From a theatrical perspective, the Beech Street Theatre Company has been forced to cancel all of it's community programs. This year we would have been providing drama workshops for the Brain Injury Association of Durham Region and Friends of Aphasia. We had to cancel two plays that were scheduled as fundraisers. One was a dinner theatre scheduled to be performed in Bowmanville in support of migrant farm workers and the other would have been an afternoon of live theatre in Minden in support of the Hospital Auxiliary there. And we cannot forget that we had to cancel three sold out performances of our newest play, The Sodfather, which opened in March.

The economic impact has been significant. The cancelled shows of course, mean that the actors and crew will not get paid. The loss of revenue from the cancelled plays will also have an affect on our future programs and plays. It may take us some time and expense to train new facilitators for these programs if and when they resume. The loss of revenue this year will likely mean some very tight budgeting when we return to the stage.

Ann Ivy Male of Pixie Blue Studo in Mississauga told me that it's been extremely challenging for the arts

sector.

Her studio is a storefront business, showcasing local artists in the gallery, she teaches art to special abilities adults and all classes were cancelled along with any group creative workshops. Online classes were not an option, she felt the market was saturated.

Her storefront was mandated to close for months so no sources of income caused her to rely on my personal savings to stay afloat. None of the Government assist programs were useful for her business, just the rent relief helped because her landlord chose to apply.

These are my recommendations/suggestions:

Set up a government (or NGO) promotional hub that allows different levels of entertainment companies from emerging to mid career and established to promote themselves and their online (and eventually when it is safe again, in-person) events.

As was mentioned in the presentation I attended, government grants are very beneficial/helpful for an arts organization to receive. The emerging/smaller companies like mine would benefit from micro grants that help not only fund much needed equipment and production costs, they would also help us build credibility in the eyes of our peers and potential investors.

Set up an online networking hub where arts businesses can collaborate and help one another build their networking circles and cross-pollinate.

Thank you for your time, holding in my heart that we come through this with a new powerful direction forward and creating a new and thriving arts and culture in this amazing province of ours, that is filled with incredible talent.

Anja Sagan

AOCAD, BA (hons)

CEO & Director - Miraclewalker Productions