



C A R F A C
ONTARIO

Economic impacts of COVID-19 on artists and cultural leaders representing equity-seeking groups

Submitted to:

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding the Culture and Heritage sector of the Study of the recommendations relating to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020 and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy.

Submitted by:

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To the Members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee a deputation on June 26, 2020. I would also like to express my appreciation for all members' follow-up questions, and for your demonstrated eagerness to understand and respond to the complex issues currently facing Ontario's arts and culture sector. I present here some of the key pieces of my deputation to the committee, as well as additional information and recommendations for our sector to move through the economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as it relates to improving outcomes for artists, cultural leaders, and audience members who identify as Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, LGBTQ, deaf and disabled, and who face systemic barriers to contributing to, and participating in, the arts.

CARFAC Ontario is the association of professional visual and media artists in Ontario. Founded in 1968, we represent almost 1000 members, and we work to ensure artists' rights are respected, and contribute to building stronger cultural infrastructure for the benefit of artists and for all Ontarians who engage with arts and culture.

Significance of the arts in Ontario

- The culture industries contribute \$26.7 billion to Ontario's economy;
- Ontario's culture GDP is larger than that of the accommodation and food services industry (\$16.2 billion), the utilities industry (\$14.6 billion), the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industries combined (\$7.4 billion) and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$6.9 billion);
- Ontario accounts for 42% of Canada's artists, almost twice as much as any other province, and represents 47% of the total GDP for Canada culture products;
- Between 2010 and 2017, the GDP of Ontario's arts and culture products increased by 19%;
- There are 66,000 professional artists in Ontario, and the arts and culture sector represents over 300,000 jobs.

Precarity in the arts before the COVID-19 pandemic

- Before COVID-19 the median income of Ontario artists was \$23,500, which is below the median income for Canadian artists (\$24,600), and far below the median income of all Ontario workers (\$43,600);
- 50% of artists are self-employed, which is significantly higher than the self-employment proportion for all Ontario workers (12%);
- Indigenous, racialized, and women artists have lower median incomes than their non-racialized, non-Indigenous, and male counterparts. For example, the median income of Indigenous artists in Canada is \$16,600, while non-Indigenous, non-racialized male artists have a median income of \$27,100;

- Indigenous, racialized, and women artists are underrepresented within public cultural institutions, and commercial galleries;
- There are deeply held perceptions that artists and cultural leaders from Northern Ontario, particularly those from smaller centres and communities, are not being valued within Ontario's cultural ecosystem;
- It is not uncommon for artists and cultural leaders representing equity groups, and those who experience complex marginalization and systemic barriers, to produce arts and culture through ad-hoc, grassroots, unincorporated, community-based arts initiatives and collectives. As such, these important cultural activities are not resourced through operating grants, donations, private sector partnerships, nor through other key revenue streams utilized by conventional organizations and larger institutions.

Precarity exacerbated by COVID-19

- According to the Statistics Canada, employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector fell by -45% between February and April 2020. These employment losses have had greatest impact on the lowest-paid workers, which, based on demographical analysis of leadership within Canadian cultural institutions, we anticipate is disproportionately impacting cultural workers identifying as Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour;
- According to the *I Lost My Gig* survey which surveyed artists and cultural workers across Canada, in Ontario, between March and May this year, there was an average of 24 gigs lost or at-risk, representing an average of \$22,400 in lost or at-risk income;
- We are hearing from a overwhelming number of artists that receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has provided a level of financial stability not previously experienced. The fact that working professionals in this province receiving a \$2000/month before-tax emergency relief benefit intended to provide only the basic necessities are reporting that this is the most financially stable they've ever been underscores significant problems in the sector that must be addressed;
- Because so many exhibitions and productions are being postponed, we anticipate that artists will sustain financial losses for several years as there will be fewer presentation opportunities;
- The pandemic is significantly impacting artists and cultural leaders from equity groups. This includes artists who identify as Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, LGBTQ, deaf and disabled, and who face complex barriers like poverty, mental health issues, amongst other barriers;
- Small, ad-hoc, grassroots, unincorporated, community-based arts initiatives and collectives are often not positioned to participate in COVID-19 relief programs. For example, these initiatives often do not have employees. The Canadian Government Emergency Support Fund for Cultural Heritage and Sport Organizations has not been positioned to reach these small initiatives.

To ensure that economic returns provided by the arts and culture sector are maintained, and positioned to grow, we recommend that the Government of Ontario:

- 1) Immediately invest \$5m into the Indigenous Culture Fund;
- 2) Increase the base level of funding to the Ontario Arts Council to \$80m so that it is in line with the 2021 funding level set in 2017;
- 3) Ensure that artists and cultural leaders representing equity groups and marginalized communities are positioned at the forefront of recovery and rebuilding efforts. We recommended doing this by engaging stakeholders representing these communities to co-design a long-term stabilization fund so that the arts can not only continue to drive tourism and economic growth, but will provide increased economic benefit through the reduction of barriers, and the increase of inclusion, equity, and diversity.

Ultimately, we strongly encourage the Government of Ontario to leverage, and utilize, the creativity, resilience, talent, and innovation of the province's artists and cultural leaders to collaborate on long-term rebuilding efforts. Consider artists as partners in not just rebuilding the arts sector, but in exploring and designing creative and innovative ways to regenerate growth across all sectors. While the arts is certainly in a dire position, there exists great opportunity to imagine new structures and develop new strategies to ensure the sector is positioned in a way that accelerates growth, and subsequent economic returns.

On behalf of the province's artists and cultural leaders, we thank you for your efforts in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. CARFAC Ontario is committed to working with the Government of Ontario to ensure the arts and culture sector is positioned to not only survive this crisis, but to emerge in a place of strength that will serve as an inspiration for leaders in all sectors, and for all Ontarians, as we come together to redesign our future.

Sincerely,



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