



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES ORGANISMES ARTISTIQUES

Data Infrastructure for Humans and AI

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of
the 2026 Federal Budget.

By CAPACOA (Canadian Association for Performing Arts / Association
Canadienne des Organismes Artistiques)

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Summary of recommendations

That the Government of Canada invest \$5 million over 5 years to support the growth and sustainability of data infrastructure for the arts accessible to both humans and AI.

Detailed recommendations

The AI Revolution and the Arts Sector

AI has become ubiquitous in information retrieval. Whether Canadians are searching the web through traditional search engines or through chatbots, their queries are interpreted, executed, analyzed and/or summarized by one or more LLMs. Notably, AI-generated overviews now appear prominently at the top of search engines results pages, and it appears as though many users are content with this information. As a consequence, arts and culture organizations are observing a decrease in organic website traffic from human users¹.

The shift is happening at a rapid pace. A growing proportion of Canadians are abandoning traditional search engines and turning to chatbots to find events to attend.² Soon, with the advent of agentic AI, they may stop searching, let their agent decide which event to attend and then book tickets on their behalf.

Is the arts sector equipped to remain visible throughout this transition?

Data Readiness: A Prerequisite to AI Readiness

Before expecting meaningful, accurate results, we need to review how our data is stored, cleaned and maintained. Investing time in effective data governance, consistent processes and clear ownership will significantly improve the usefulness of any AI tool that we are using.

– The Audience Agency³

A Quebec survey on AI readiness within the cultural sector found that 1 in 2 organizations reported not having structured data with which they could prompt AI.⁴ In reality, the situation is worse.

¹ One Further. *The impact of AI Overviews in the cultural sector*. 2025.

<https://www.onefurther.com/blog/ai-overviews-cultural-sector-report>

² Canadian culture-goers report having used AI in the past year to search local events (6.1%) and out-of-town events (8.4%). Among those who use AI, 72% are likely to recommend it to friends and family. Nanos Research. *Arts Response Tracking Survey*. February 2026 edition.

<https://www.businessandarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/ARTS-Feb-26-EN.pdf>

³ The Audience Agency. *Let's Get Real: AI Report*. 2026.

⁴ "51% do not have structured data and do not plan to process their data for AI-related use."

Compétence culture. *L'IA en culture : Mieux comprendre pour agir ensemble*. 2025.

https://competenceculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/11/ia-etude-21-novembre-2025_competence_culture.pdf

As cited at the National Summit on AI and Culture, in Banff, Alberta, March 17, 2026.

The Artsdata project found that 4 in 5 performing arts organizations do not have event structured data on their website. This data gap is estimated to cost \$9 million per year in missed admission revenues.⁵ Based on this data, the arts sector appears to be lacking data literacy competencies – and the actual data – to remain visible in the age of AI.

Blind spots for search engines and AI

Exhaustive research commissioned by CAPACOA found that web pages with event structured data drive considerably more organic traffic from Google Search, compared to sites without structured data.⁶ The effect of structured data was more pronounced for music performances, and less pronounced for theatre and dance. These findings were supplemented with a series of information retrieval tests performed with popular AI chat bots. These tests revealed unintended biases in AI Retrieval-Augmented Generation activities: when asked about upcoming performances, AI models begin their search with large international databases – mostly music databases.⁷

Based on these findings, Canadian theatre and dance performances fall in a blind spot to both AI chatbots and search engines. The impact is already being felt on attendance rates and admission revenues.⁸

“The infrastructures of authority (registries, metadata, provenance systems) look like plumbing, so no one notices them. It is boring. But unlike pipes or roads, these systems are never neutral. Every registry, every standard encodes choices about who is visible and who is left out. Perhaps it is not blindness at all. Perhaps invisibility is the point. Platforms profit from keeping authority obscure, so capture can proceed without contest.”

– Tammy Lee, Culture Creates⁹

⁵ CAPACOA. *Artsdata 2025-2026 Annual Report*. April 2026, p. 31.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rcu0Nu2ZFXU72d9URPq6OT5M9MQwMAwNbhEPbCnDISk/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.73cpjupxkpjx>

⁶ Ramboanasolo, G., et al. *Driving Discoverability in the Performing Arts through Structured Data*. 2025.

<https://www.artsdata.ca/en/news/impact-of-structured-data>

⁷ Hayes, D. and F. Julien. *LLM-Proofing Tests: Discovery Search across the Web, Artsdata and Wikidata*. 2025 [Unpublished manuscript].

Cited in Dessa Hayes, “Helping AI Decipher the Canadian Performing Arts.” *Artsdata*, November 21, 2025.

<https://www.artsdata.ca/en/news/helping-ai-decipher-the-canadian-performing-arts>

⁸ According to Statistics Canada’s [Performing Arts](#) survey, performing arts companies, theatre companies in particular, attracted much fewer spectators in 2024 than a decade ago.

⁹ Tammy Lee, “The Blind Spot in AI: The Economics of Authority.” *Substack*, Sept. 8, 2025

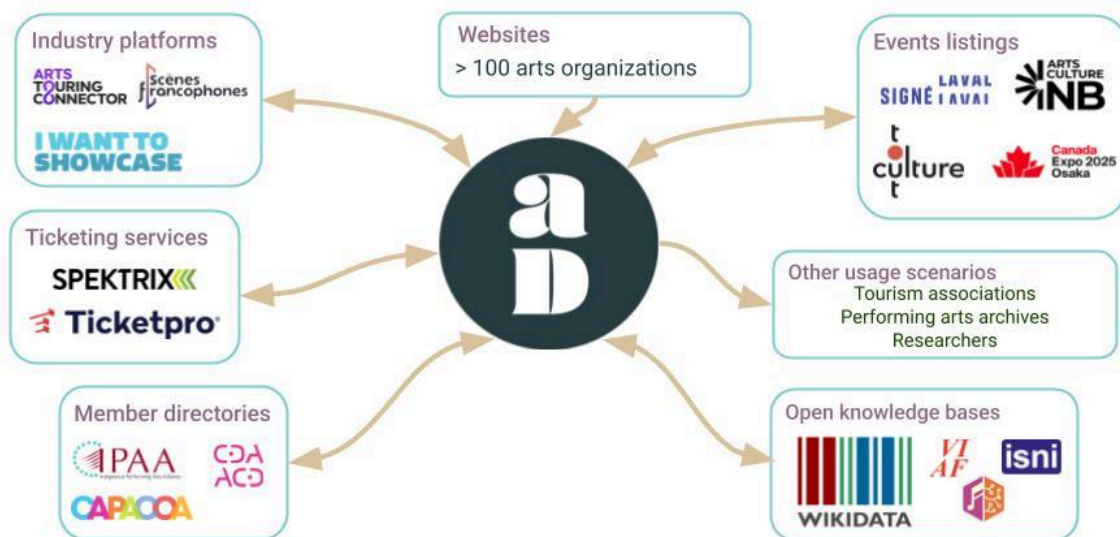
<https://substack.com/home/post/p-173031425>

A Source of Trust for Canadians and AI

Over the past decade, Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts invested \$5M to build data infrastructure that AI can find and access and that Canadians can trust : the **Artsdata knowledge graph**.

- Artsdata is a pan-Canadian knowledge graph connecting more than 200 data sources from the arts sector.¹⁰
- It transforms inaccessible or hard-to-find information into machine-readable, linked and open data about close to 100,000 Canadian people, places, organizations, and events.
- It also infers new relationships out of existing information, making more than 8 million data points available to humans and to AI.¹¹

The Artsdata Ecosystem



Artsdata is being used by many organizations in the arts, culture, and tourism sector. It was notably used by the National Arts Centre, Global Affairs Canada and Destination Canada at Expo 2025 Osaka to manage and publish information and contents across multiple Canada Pavillion platforms. This is just one of many user stories: Artsdata adds values to many more industry processes and platforms.¹²

¹⁰ See the full list at: https://kg.artsdata.ca/query/show?sparql=feeds_all&title=nav.data_feeds.

¹¹ CAPACOA. *Artsdata 2025-2026 Annual Report*. April 2026.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rcu0Nu2ZFXU72d9URPq6OT5M9MQwMAwNbhEPbCnDISk/edit>

¹² This and other user stories can be found here: <https://www.artsdata.ca/en/stories>.

Artsdata is rather unique. There are few other cultural knowledge graphs around the world. Those that do exist are mostly in the heritage sector (for example, the [Europeana](#) knowledge base).

Today, Artsdata is at risk. It was developed over the last decade at the cost of 5 million dollars, through project funding from the Canada Cultural Investment Fund (Canadian Heritage), the Digital Strategy Fund (Canada Council for the Arts) and the Strategic Innovation Fund (Canada Council for the Arts). As of April 2026, all of these programs have sunsetted and none has been replaced by a program fit for sustaining a sector-owned knowledge graph.

Unless the Government of Canada starts supporting Artsdata as public data infrastructure for Canadians and AI:

- Organizations will lose access to the knowledge graph they helped build;
- The distributed stewardship community will dissolve;
- Unique Canadian expertise will be lost;
- Canadian art goers will lose access to trustable data, and will become entirely dependent upon foreign-owned databases and AI services to find and engage with Canadian artists and their works.

CAPACOA recommends that the Government of Canada invest \$5 million over 5 years to support the growth and sustainability of data infrastructure for the arts accessible to both humans and AI.

This funding will enable Artsdata to:

- Continue to grow within the performing arts domain.
- Expand to the visual arts and media arts domain.
- Keep up with AI development.
- Serve additional use cases in operational and reporting processes, archives, research and tourism.

Alignment with the federal government's priorities

- The federal government wishes to **identify and expedite nation-building projects that will connect and transform our country**. Artsdata is not a physical pipeline. However, Artsdata's decentralized data infrastructure enables information to flow freely across application boundaries, and makes the entire arts sector more connected and more open.
- Building and maintaining data infrastructure fit for use by humans and AI is an essential part of **protecting Canada's sovereignty** in this day and age.

Other recommendation endorsed by CAPACOA

CAPACOA also endorses the Canadian Arts Coalition's recommendations:

- That the Government of Canada allocate a permanent annual increase of \$140 million to the Canada Council for the Arts.
- That the Government of Canada ensure that, within the Direct Delivery and Community streams of the Building Stronger Communities Fund, a minimum level of funding be dedicated to artistic and cultural infrastructure, ensuring that rural and urban communities across Canada are served by cultural facilities, and recognizing the reorientation of the Cultural Spaces Fund managed by Canadian Heritage.
- That the Government of Canada ensure the principles of authorization, remuneration and transparency (ART) are in place for artists for the use of their work, whether auditory or visual, in all contexts, including for the training of generative artificial intelligence technologies and for any AI outputs.

About CAPACOA

The Canadian Association for the Performing Arts / l'Association canadienne des organismes artistiques (CAPACOA) is a national arts service organization for the performing arts touring and presenting community. CAPACOA represents 190 professional for-profit and not-for-profit presenters, festivals, presenter networks, artistic companies, agents, managers and other stakeholders working across the presenting and touring sector in Canada. Collectively, our network members represent nearly 2000 professional and volunteer organizations, associations and companies. CAPACOA's mission is to champion a flourishing national performing arts community.