



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES ORGANISMES ARTISTIQUES

Report on Town Hall: National Check-in and Round Tables for the Heritage Canada Summit

All Access Town Hall, held on January 25, 2022

99 members of the performing arts community attended this town hall facilitated by Natalie Lue, members of the CAPACOOA team and guest facilitators.

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* Emphasis, noted in **bold** text, is notetaker's, Jillian Kennedy, and not the speaker. Direct quotations from the notes have been formatted in *italics* *

1. Ensuring Audience Confidence

a. Key Themes:

Members are looking for government initiatives that will support them in **incentivizing patrons to return to venues** through tax credits, leadership in communicating the safety of gathering, a recognition program for professional venues that have taken all the safety precautions required in the community (such as air exchange and “touchless” programming) to support consumer confidence.

b. Recommendation(s):

- Members need unified public health messaging from all levels of government
- Consider introducing a Arts & Culture Tax Credit, which would provide tax credits for patrons traveling to a performance within Ontario and be modeled after the Ontario Tax Credit for Tourism
- When it is deemed safe to gather in venues, performing arts organizations must have clear and proactive support from public health officials. Many patrons feel uneasy about returning to performance venues and will need science-driven, government-led reassurances in order to confidently return.
- In order for audiences to feel safe to return, the government should develop an accreditation for venues to communicate COVID Safety Measures taken (e.g. air exchange)

c. Support Quotes

“At some point, our government and sector must remind the public that being together for a shared experience is HEALTHY, not DANGEROUS.”

“What does Recovery mean and what does it look like? How do we get out ahead, as it came up today the public has been told for a long time that it's dangerous to gather, how do we battle that?”

“Efforts to increase public support and trust in arts and culture venues/events. Targeted, multi-level campaigns to bring back audiences and attract new ones.”

2. Creating Effective Support Programs

a. Key Themes

1. Members are concerned that those left the sector for more stable or higher-paid jobs will not return. They are eager to find ways to incentivise contract workers to return to the arts.
2. The combination of slow audience return and capacity limits have many concerned with the economic risk in presenting or producing while also ensuring that artists are paid for their work.

b. Recommendation(s)

- Wage subsidies need to be available for all arts workers not covered by CEWS, specifically those who fall within funders “blind spots” e.g. gig and contract workers.
 - ◆ Further, members are looking for government initiatives that will support them in incentivizing contract staff to return to arts work
- Call for the government to provide a “ticket subsidy,” that would ensure artists & crew to be paid regardless of ticket sales or cancellation
- Assurance that rural municipalities will be provided with equitable support from the government
- Extension of job programs for a minimum of one year
- For-profit organizations and artist management groups did not have the same access to support programs as their non-profit peers. Equitable funding should be available across the sector.

c. Support Quotes

“Recovery has been recognized as a long term project by the government, which means that long term planning and solutions are required.”

3. Sustainable Arts Administration

a. Key Themes:

1. Association members are concerned, primarily, with staff retention and well-being.
2. Members are concerned about administrative capacity to continue re-building models of presentation. Specifically, they worry about the strain on human resources, financial stability, and artistic quality.
3. Administrators are overwhelmed by the demands of funding applications and reporting.
4. Concern that organizations that depend on volunteers may no longer be viable. They are having difficulty with the recruitment and retention of volunteers

b. Recommendation(s)

- Members suggested that streamlining funding programs and increasing coordination across programs would ease organizational strain

c. Support Quotes

“Sustainability isn’t only a financial issue, it’s human resources and the heart of the art.”

“Lots of concern about how things are playing out and what the long term impacts will be”

“What I’m finding exhausting- because there’s only two of us working here, we’ve had to lay everyone one- is negotiating COVID refund statements with promoters.”

“The way we present likely has to change - evolve with the times. How can we do this and what does it look like?”

"Are we innovating and developing solutions for systemic issues? Or are we recovering from the pandemic (which doesn't look like innovation)?"

"Volunteer presenters really are the heart and the soul of communities"

4. Equity in the Arts

a. Key Themes

1. Many felt that the last 2 years have *"opened more doors towards working with more diverse communities, audience members, and consultants. Conversations have been more complex, more political, inclusive of greater board involvement, and have become **action-oriented rather than reflective.**"* Examples of action-oriented change include:
 - a. Developing a *"curatorial model that's **more inclusive of racialized artists**"*
 - b. Introducing *"more **community-based programming**, involving all 26 communities across Nunavut."*
 - c. **Updating "old-fashioned approaches** that have been ingrained within the organization" For example, *"using binary language and substituting it with gender-neutral language; editing force majeure clauses and avoiding referring to acts of God & the Queen"*
 - d. Integrating and choreographing deaf-language interpreters into programming
2. *"Organizations have taken more time to really look at policies, procedures, community and audience engagement, and the growth process."*
3. Arts organizations are finding that *"the challenge in the sector is that there's an expectation to **serve or identify with only one underserved community.**"*

b. Recommendation(s)

- Members require supplementary funding to ensure that accessibility-artists can be included in the process of *all* programming, not just for stand-alone projects with accessibility mandates
- *"More funding opportunities should be created for artists from historically-underrepresented backgrounds."*

c. Support Quotes

"More work should be done at the institutional training level for post-secondary artists"

"It's easy to be routine, we have to keep challenging ourselves, commit to impact in the communities"

Regarding discussion around equity, diversity and inclusion, this organization is *"stepping up to the pressure to do concrete actions, engaging in many hard conversations that they keep working to navigate."*

"People of diversity often lose out because it comes down to accommodations, alienating most communities."

"Far more audiences become accessible through digital performances."

5. Tools for Digital Futures

a. Key Themes

1. Many are feeling **enthusiastic about the opportunities** of *"digital advancement"*. They are excited to be working with artists across the country and internationally that they would not have otherwise collaborated with. They are equally eager about the accessibility value of live streaming.
2. There is **concern about the business model** of digital presentation. There is a recognized need to offer live and virtual programming, but the model audiences are accustomed to does not allow us to pay artists and cultural workers.
3. There are concerns about **sufficient, consistent and stable funding** for creating digital presentations. The added expense of offering performances digitally needs to be met with targeted funding.
4. Members are struggling to meet the needs of **two distinct audiences**: those online and those attending in person.
5. Members are finding it **difficult to find skilled individuals** who can provide the support needed for streaming.

b. Recommendations

- The added expense of offering performances digitally needs to be met with targeted funding. Members are finding that existing grants are insufficient for the large-scale purchases and the training necessary to produce quality digital content.
- Make funding for digital projects more accessible. Currently, *"it is difficult to get and the curve of knowledge needed to receive the funding is steep."*
- Call for grants to go directly to the arts sector itself, rather than to consultants
- More work needs to be done to ensure that artists have access to the guidance and assistance needed to develop their digital presence and improve their online "discoverability"
- In their digital work, members are working across international, national and linguistic borders. In order to support these projects, there needs to be more funding available for translation services.

c. Support Quotes

Funding & Revenue Concerns:

"The way we are thinking, planning, and receiving funding is not going to be sufficient for future demands."

"We struggle with how much streaming accessibility costs vs how much revenue it brings in."

"Grant support is insufficient to afford VR, updated technology that is not 10 years behind."

"The issue is that these grants primarily target artists, and the artists do not know enough to ask for the right things to help themselves."

"The right information is not being given to artists."

"Known artists are being hired, but without digital materials it is much harder for emerging artists."

"To reach people digitally, well, is a huge investment. A one time grant is not sufficient."

"Hardly anyone is able to build a business model of just online content"

"Will continue to do this if funding becomes available. If it doesn't, they will do a fundraiser."

"far more audiences become accessible through digital performances."

*"I think it will be streaming everything. **It is very expensive**"*

"Hybrid productions (live & digital) can double the cost when you include the price of high quality technology. With these extra costs, does it help sustainability to have hybrid productions? Where is the funding for that?"

Enthusiastic Responses:

"It has been amazing to be able to take in work and collaboration from across the country- this expansion is really an advantage and a benefit of the digital advancement"

"The opportunity to work with people/artists across Canada and beyond, where this was never a possibility before."

"Embrace the opportunity of greater geographical sharing, collaboration, more sharing, exposure."

"I would love to see us adopt an opportunity mindset about these new skills. Try to focus on the opportunity, let go of the fear."

6. The Climate Crisis

a. Key Themes

1. Participants are concerned about how to address environmental damage inherent to their work. Of specific concern was national and international artist touring.
2. Interest in developing regional touring networks that allow for multiple tour dates within a region, known as Block Booking.
3. Balancing institutional, collective and individual responsibility. Members discussed how artists and arts workers can move past individual guilt and impact organizational or collective change.
4. Recognizing the potential power artists have in climate crisis discussions with the public.
5. Members were interested in how metrics for positive social impacts could be considered within calculations of environmental impact.

b. Recommendations

- A desire for the government to introduce a national campaign for the public to focus on the issue of climate change. They suggested that the awareness initiatives could be done in tandem with government and that, as artists, *"our power is as communicators"*

- Requested that funding should be put toward helping arts organizations and individual performances shift public opinion on the climate crisis.
- Requested that tools be made available to reduce the impact of the travel- or calculate and raise awareness of- the environmental impact of performance.
- Suggested funding to specifically offset the carbon footprint of touring

c. Support Quotes

"As artists, we are best equipped to encourage feeling, mitigate and address the climate crisis."

"Artistic Directors are feeling guilty about not doing enough."

"If your business model is touring, how do you address climate concerns within that model?"

"Solutions can come from the community, not just the government."

"How can we encourage people to come to the theatre using green modes of transportation?"

The government *"should fund projects that address the issue of grief and encourage the public to feel that grief"*

Report prepared for CAPACOA by Jillian Kennedy, February 25, 2022.