



Making sure the curtain rises: Opera sector renews call for federal operating support to the arts

For immediate release

(21 June 2004, Toronto) - Opera.ca urges all candidates in this federal election to commit to sustained, permanent and increased funding to the Canada Council for the Arts. Currently, the Council's support to Canadian arts organizations and artists amounts to just 0.1 % of total federal spending, despite a strong belief by Canadians that arts contribute to the vitality of their communities.

75% of Canadians believe that the arts are important in enhancing the quality of their lives, and fully 85% agree that governments should provide support for arts and culture. (Decima Research for the Department of Canadian Heritage, 2001).

Currently, 2005/06 operating funding to the Canada Council is in jeopardy, putting both the Council and the entire Canadian arts sector in a dangerously precarious position.

“Sustained and increased federal funding is critical to the ongoing vibrancy of our sector” says **David Devan**, Chair of Opera.ca and General Manager of Pacific Opera Victoria. Public funding has not kept pace with the needs of the sector. “Our development and marketing departments are working in overdrive to make up the difference, but we can't go on making vital contributions to our communities, through education, outreach and performance opportunities, if we don't have stable funding from government, led by Ottawa,” stressed Devan.

In its brief to the Standing Committee on Finance last November, Opera.ca called for a commitment to provide stable and adequate federal arts funding. “This call is echoed by member opera companies and arts service organizations across Canada” said Executive Director **Micheline McKay**. “An increase to federal arts funding is critical if we expect opera companies, indeed all arts organizations, to enrich the lives of all Canadians.”

Opera.ca is the voice of Canada's opera and music theatre companies. As Canada's only opera service organization, working in international collaboration with others like OPERA America, Opera.ca plays a critical role in advancing the interests of its members and building the canon of Canadian opera. Its members include all of Canada's professional producing companies and a wide spectrum of business, affiliate and individual members.

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