



Advocacy Alert

Election 2004: Ensure your voice is heard 21 June 2004

With the federal election one week away, it's vital that arts supporters make their voice heard and vote count. Opera.ca urges all its members to ensure that all the candidates in your communities know about the contribution that opera companies, and the broader arts community, make to Canadian communities.

It's equally important for you to know where the candidates and parties stand on arts programs and policy, particularly operating funding, a priority for Opera.ca members.

We urge you to ask your Board, staff and volunteers to call candidates and ask them about their position on arts policy and programs in Canada.

To assist you, a fact sheet on the arts in Canada, together with suggested questions is attached.

In addition, there is a news release urging all candidates in the federal election to support increased and sustained federal funding to the arts. Please feel free to circulate and distribute it.

Thank you for your support and don't hesitate to call with questions or queries.

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Fact sheet: Opera and the arts in Canada

The contribution of the arts to our communities:

“Federal funding to the arts is a critical development tool for Canada’s cities, yet over the past 10 years, federal funding to Canada’s 25 leading arts organizations has declined by 20 per cent in real dollars. These arts organizations help drive tourism and play a significant role in attracting and retaining globally mobile talent and companies.” “The Urban Agenda Stampede”, by David Pecaut, the Globe and Mail, Friday January 30th 2004.

The ability of residents to participate in cultural activities enhances the livability of cities. Cities must be showcases of culture – regional, national and international. Preserving, promoting and celebrating culture is vital to the competitiveness of cities... Culture is an often neglected part of the urban dialogue. In other cities in other countries, cultural competitiveness has been elevated to now be a vital component for any city wishing to be regarded as a sophisticated worldly and ‘adult’ city. Elyse Allan, President and CEO, The Toronto Board of Trade, Toronto Arts Council Budget Request, December 2002.

I travel the world extensively and see first hand the value of public support to the arts ... there is a vitality and spirit in those towns and cities, which invest in and nurture their arts. Ben Heppner, on the presentation of the Opera.ca Pre-budget brief to the Standing Committee on Finance, 6 November 2003.

What Canadians say:

75 % of Canadians believe that the arts are important in enhancing the quality of their lives (Decima Research).

85% agree that governments should provide support for arts and culture. (Decima Research).

96% of Canadians believe that the arts are an essential part of children’s education (Statistics Canada).

91% of Canadians believe that the arts define Canada’s national identity (Ipsos-Reid).

93% of Canadians believe that arts activities contribute to the vitality of their communities (Ipsos-Reid).

The dollars and sense of it all

Arts and cultural activities contribute \$26 billion to Canada's gross domestic product. (www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/87F0001X1E/free.htm)

This year (2004/05), the Canada Council for the Arts budget is \$151 million; total Government of Canada program spending is almost \$148 billion. This means that total Canada Council funding represents just 0.1 % of federal spending.

Of this amount, the Music Section accounts for about 20% of Council spending. The Opera/Music Theatre operating program receives just under \$5 million of these funds each year.

The *Tomorrow Starts Today* 4-year infusion of \$25 million in additional annual federal funding to the Canada Council is uncertain from 2005/06 onwards.

The economic contribution of opera in Canada

Statistics Canada, Daily September 9, 2003.

Total revenue for the opera sector was \$50.6 million in 2001.

In the large scheme of things, the Canadian opera sector posted a \$432,000 surplus in 2001. This is a clear demonstration that opera is 'the healthy discipline.'

Private funding for opera soared 37% to almost \$16.1 million in 2001, up from \$11.7 million in 1999.

In 2001, private sector revenue surpassed government funding from all levels of government by \$2.8 million. Total public funding stood at \$13.3 million in 2001.

Fully 77% of opera company revenues are raised through earned revenue or private contributions.

Suggested messages and questions for candidates

Suggested messages

When meeting candidates over the coming days, please consider communicating these key messages:

An effective government will:

- be committed to fostering and supporting a vital and thriving arts sector in Canada through the urban agenda and the revitalization of Canadian communities;
- be committed to promoting and supporting Canadian artists and organizations, both at home and abroad;
- be committed to adequate, sustained and transparent funding support to the Canadian arts sector;
- celebrate the success and excellence of Canadian artists and arts organizations.

Suggested questions

- Polls show that 85% of Canadians believe that governments should provide support to the arts. Do you, and does your party, support increased and sustained operating funds to the Canada Council for the Arts?
- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, among others, believes that the promotion, development and preservation of arts, cultural and heritage sites contribute to the quality of life in communities. How will you and your party ensure that the arts make that vital contribution to Canadian cities and towns?