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Opera.ca

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

Submitted to:

The Standing Committee on Finance
fina@parl.gc.ca

For more information, please contact:

Christina Loewen
Opera.ca
c_loewen@opera.ca
Tel. 416 591 7222
Toronto, Ontario

Opera.ca is aligned with recommendations made by the Canadian Arts Coalition which include:

- that the Government of Canada **follow through on the planned increment of \$35M annually to the Canada Council for the Art's budget in 2020-21 and to maintain the Council's new base funding level of \$362M in 2020-21 through 2024-25.**
- Grow the **Strategic Initiatives component** within Canadian Heritage's **Canada Cultural Investment Fund by \$2M per year** to enhance innovation and long-range sustainability in the sector.
- Enhance base funding for the **Canadian Arts Training Fund (CATF) by \$10M per year** to strengthen arts training and diversify practices for the next generation of Canadian artists.

The promised increased investment in the Canada Council for the Arts will ensure that arts organizations, like opera companies, are able to increase their civic engagement, be reflective of an increasingly diverse public, and develop the best of artistic creation and practice. We believe that additional funding investments into Canadian Heritage programs will round out the arts value chain in complement to the increased creation and production now funded through the Canada Council for the Arts.

We fully support these recommendations. For the purpose of this brief, we have three recommendations of our own which are aligned with the specific work of the opera sector:

Recommendation 1

Continue investment in the **Creative Export Strategy, \$125M between 2018-2023**, to support international coproductions and collaborations, cultural exchange, cultural diplomacy, and artist mobility.

Recommendation 2

Continue funding and support for **Gender Equity** programs like mentorships, residencies, grants, unconscious bias training, and sector-led change commitments through Women and Gender Equality.

Recommendation 3

Support **Social Finance and Impact Investing in the Arts** by continuing the \$755M investment into the new Social Finance Fund, developing a comprehensive Social Innovation Strategy, and responding to complementary recommendations from the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector.

Opera.ca appreciates the opportunity to submit a brief to the Standing Committee on Finance as part of its pre-budget consultations in advance of the 2020 budget.

Opera.ca is the voice of Canada's opera sector: the companies, artists, businesses and organizations that bring opera to Canadians and beyond. Our members are an important part of their community - be that a community in a large urban centre or a smaller town or city. Through partnerships and collaborations among the cultural sector, with community organizations and businesses, we reach out to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Recommendation 1

Continue investment in the **Creative Export Strategy, \$125M between 2018-2023**, to support international coproductions and collaborations, cultural exchange, cultural diplomacy, and artist mobility.

Canadian opera singers have long been among Canada's finest cultural exports in demand worldwide. Opera.ca and its member companies are increasing their presence on the world stage. In May 2018, we attended the World Opera Summit in Madrid and were hosted at the home of the Canadian Ambassador to Spain, Mr. Matthew Levin. We were one of only two countries who hosted a cultural diplomacy event. The reception highlighted Canadian opera companies, which delivered enhanced profile, access and market advantage to the sector.

Following on the success of this trip, we recently received funding from a Global Affairs Canada program, Global Opportunities for Associations (GOA), to develop an international market development strategy. This strategy will support the proliferation and mobility of Canadian artists, international coproductions between Canadian partners and countries with market potential, second and subsequent performances of Canadian opera, and the sharing of Canadian values and culture through cultural diplomacy.

Opera.ca fully supports the efforts of Canadian Heritage, Foreign Affairs Canada, Global Affairs Canada and the Trade Commissioner's Service to increase funding for cultural exports, coordinate trade missions, and connect cultural organizations with business partners abroad.

We commend the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on their study regarding cultural diplomacy and encourage the Government to follow through with the committee's recommendation to "develop and implement a comprehensive cultural diplomacy strategy." We see, first-hand, how culture can serve our country and bridge international relationships not only through strong trade mechanisms, but also through the soft power of cultural diplomacy.

Recommendation 2

Continue funding and support for **Gender Equity** programs like mentorships, residencies, grants, unconscious bias training, and sector-led change commitments to Women and Gender Equality.

Opera.ca's Executive Director Christina Loewen was invited to appear before the Standing Committee of Canadian Heritage studying gender equity. The opera sector must address systemic inequities and unconscious bias in hiring if it is to achieve gender equity. The recent funding available through Status of Women (now Women and Gender Equality Canada) for the Women's Program was prioritized to organizations with a stated mission to support women's equity. Many of these organizations are often outside the sector and lack the leverage to affect real change from the inside.

With \$160M over 5 years announced in Budget 2019 for the Women's Program, we would like to see these funds expand beyond Women's organizations to other organizations who are also equipped to deliver the program's intended outcomes. Arts Service Organizations are positioned to promote gender equity and affect positive change in their respective sectors from within, and many organizations in the performing arts are already collaborating to develop Codes of Conduct, anti-harassment policies, and more. We need the partnership of government to support capacity for implementation so that the work can realize its full potential.

Recommendation 3

Support **Social Finance and Impact Investing in the Arts**, by continuing the \$755M investment into the New Social Finance Fund, developing a comprehensive Social Innovation Strategy, and responding to complementary recommendations from the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector.

Social finance is a strategy to mobilize capital for public good. Social Finance tools create opportunities for investors to finance projects that realize both financial and social returns. A growing number of foundations, not-for-profits and other organizations managing pools of capital are embracing the promise of organizing their investments to achieve a blend of financial and social value. Recently, the Metcalf Foundation commissioned a white paper on the opportunities that social finance might bring to the arts sector:
<https://metcalffoundation.com/stories/publications/more-than-money/>.

Opera.ca is unique among arts service organizations, as it has both the requisite capital as well as a framework for capturing evidence of social returns, the Opera Civic Impact Framework. These two assets are essential for a successful social finance opportunity. Opera.ca has already begun offering social finance programs through its Coproduction Loan Program, a form of impact investing.

Leveraging these two assets, Opera.ca is positioned to expand its social finance tools to launch an Opera Bond offering to investors. Proceeds from the sale of the bonds will go to provide low or interest-free loans to member opera companies for projects with a social and financial return, leading to long-term sustainability in the sector.

Opera companies in Canada are currently largely under-capitalized, therefore limiting innovation and long-term change. There is a great deal of capacity-building needed in the sector to realize the opportunities that social finance can bring to the sector. We commend the government for engaging social finance experts and partners to share knowledge with organizations who are interested in social finance mechanisms.

Currently Canada's Social Finance Fund is focused mainly on the not-for-profit sector. Ensuring that this fund targets support for the development of **Social Finance in the Arts** will promote capacity-building, greater resilience, and long-term change in the sector for social and financial returns.

We are pleased to see the recognition of social finance and innovation within recommendations from the Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy Co-Creation Steering Group and the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. An enabling legislative, regulatory, and investment support system for not-for-profits and charities in the opera sector will allow the arts to reach enhanced potential for innovation, capital and sustainability.