



# **Investing in Canada's Opera Sector for a Stronger Canada**

Written Submission

August 1, 2025

Submitted to:

The Standing Committee on Finance

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### Recommendation:

The Association for Opera in Canada is aligned with the Canadian Arts Coalition's recommendation for the Government of Canada to permanently allocate at least 1% of its overall spending towards arts, culture, and heritage. To achieve this for the 2025-26 fiscal year, the Government should increase its allocations by \$330 million, via:

- a) An increase of \$140 million to the Canada Council for the Arts; and
- b) An increase of \$190 million to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Association for Opera in Canada (AOC) appreciates the opportunity to submit a brief to the Standing Committee on Finance as part of its pre-budget consultations for 2025/26.

AOC 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 with the cultural sector, with community organizations, businesses, and individuals, we engage with Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The Association for Opera in Canada urges the Government of Canada to adopt a bold and strategic approach to nation-building by permanently investing at least 1% of total federal spending in arts, culture, and heritage. This is not just a cultural imperative—it is an economic, social, and democratic one.

To achieve the 1% target, we recommend two targeted investments totalling \$330 million:

- a) An increase of \$140 million to the Canada Council for the Arts; and
- b) An increase of \$190 million to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

#### An increase of \$140 million to the Canada Council for the Arts

**Canada Council for the Arts** is the foundation of artistic investment in Canada.

An increase of \$140 million to the Canada Council for the Arts would broadly impact the opera economy through its flow-through investment into Core or Operating funding for opera organizations, large and small. Core funding represents predictable, long-term support that stabilizes organizations and the communities they serve. This stability enables companies to plan, innovate, and deliver transformative work while keeping ticket prices accessible, employment stable, and programs active year-round. In this way, core funding directly supports affordability—ensuring that Canadians can access high-quality cultural experiences regardless of income, while also helping arts workers sustain livelihoods in a challenging economic climate.

Opera companies are engines of creativity, economic activity, and national identity. The opera ecosystem includes not only performers and companies, but also creators, craftspeople, designers, educators, and small businesses across the country. This interconnected system delivers high-impact economic returns while telling Canadian stories, cultivating Canadian talent, and engaging communities across all regions.

According to Hill Strategies' *Arts Economy Canada 2024* report, Canada's arts sector generates nearly **\$38 billion** in annual revenues, with **live performance alone contributing**

**\$7.6 billion** to GDP<sup>i</sup>. This economic strength underscores the opera sector's capacity to drive prosperity, create jobs, and support Canada's broader economic goals—demonstrating that investment in the arts is not only cultural but deeply economic.

We also support a \$190 million increase to the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) to expand key programs vital to the opera sector which include:

### **Creative Export Canada: Driving Economic and Cultural Diplomacy**

Creative Export Canada (CEC), a key program of Canadian Heritage, helps Canadian opera companies and artists expand their global reach through support for international tours, co-productions, and partnerships. These activities diversify export markets, generate revenue, and strengthen Canada's soft power and cultural sovereignty. By amplifying Canadian stories and values abroad, CEC supports trade diversification and aligns with Canada's broader economic and diplomatic goals. It recognizes that doing business internationally requires cultural diplomacy—and that shared values can lead to a competitive edge. Continued investment in CEC positions Canada as a nation of creativity and global influence, with benefits that extend beyond the arts sector into broader trade and international engagement.

### **Canada Arts Training Fund (CATF): Cultivating Canada's Next Generation of Creative Talent**

The Canada Arts Training Fund supports professional-level training institutions that nurture Canadian artists for national and international careers—such as the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio, Calgary Opera's Emerging Artist program, and Opéra de Montréal's Atelier lyrique. Canadian opera talent consistently graces the world's great stages—from the Met to Covent Garden—and is internationally recognized as among our finest cultural exports. By investing in CATF, the government strengthens Canada's cultural workforce, promotes artistic excellence, and builds the soft-power and Canadian pride and identity that stem from homegrown creative talent thriving both at home and abroad.

### **Conclusion**

Opera is more than performance—it is civic infrastructure, an economic driver, and a cultural force. In a world of polycrisis and global uncertainty, Canada's opera sector—and the broader cultural field—offers not only a soft power advantage but also a way to deepen Canadian identity, sovereignty, and pride. Opera, a sweeping experience that encompasses rich storytelling and powerful music, brings people together across differences for a shared, collective, and uplifting experience. It fosters empathy, understanding, and a sense of belonging that transcends background, language, or belief. As a generator of jobs, tourism, and regional economic activity, opera contributes significantly to local economies while enriching

national life. By gathering communities around compelling stories and powerful music, we nurture social cohesion and help shape a common national narrative rooted in imagination, compassion, and dialogue. This shared cultural experience is not a luxury—it is a foundational tool of nation-building, economic vitality, and a resilient democratic society—key goals of the Government of Canada.

We urge the Standing Committee on Finance to recommend the proposed increases to Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage, and to support these targeted investments which are foundational to the Government of Canada's mission to build a stronger, more prosperous, and more resilient country—through the power of the arts.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [Hill Strategies, Statistical insights in the arts, July 29, 2025](#), referencing Statistics Canada, [Table 36-10-0652-01. National culture and sport indicators by domain and sub-domain](#) (for each quarter of 2024) and [Culture and sport indicators by domain and sub-domain, by province and territory, product perspective](#) (for annual statistics from 2012 to 2024).