

THE
NATIONAL
Ballet
OF CANADA

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-Budget Consultations 2018**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Ballet of Canada is considered one of the top ballet companies in the world, and is the fourth largest ballet company in North America. In recent years, the company's artistic excellence has been recognized with invitations to perform in major international venues and festivals and collaborate with top international companies and artists.

Innovation is at the heart of our culture on both sides of the footlights. From new stage technologies to the pursuit of advancements in dance medicine, to non-traditional ways to engage and develop our audiences. As an organization, we understand the critical importance of innovation and adaptability to deliver our mission and advance our field.

In recent years, the federal government has been an engaged partner in achieving many of these goals. Increased investment to the cultural sector in Budget 2016 were well received, especially the increased funding envelope for the Canada Council for the Arts, from which the National Ballet receives significant resources toward programming and operational activities. As an active member of the Canadian Arts Coalition, we support the asks contained in their submission, including:

- Raising the *annual cap* on the Canada Cultural Investment fund – Endowment Incentives to \$3 million to assist Canadian arts organizations in becoming more competitive and to encourage new revenue streams.
- Investments in training and development through two essential programs, Canadian Arts Training Fund and Building Careers in Heritage, to recognize the significant growth in the arts sector.
- Increase funding to the Canadian Arts Presentation Fund for performing arts presenters and festivals by \$30 million which will in-turn increase productivity and access to performances.

There are additional budgetary recommendations that we would like to highlight, to ensure they are considered and remain on the government agenda:

- 1. Increase investment funding for organizations under the Endowments Incentives Program of the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, including raising or eliminating the *overall* \$15 million per organization cap on support.**
- 2. Enhance opportunities for National Ballet involvement in federal government cultural export funding programs, especially regarding touring, with an additional long-term investment in Showcasing Canada's Cultural Industries to the world.**
- 3. Government of Canada investment in innovation and digital programming opportunities for the arts and culture sector.**

NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA: WHO WE ARE

The National Ballet has served as Canada's leading dance institution since its founding by Celia Franca in 1951. For more than a decade, the company has been under the artistic direction of Karen Kain. Ms. Kain's focus has been founded on three guiding principles – develop, attract and retain. Develop best dancers, attract and retain the finest choreographers, composers and designers to create works for the company and return the National Ballet to Canada to the world stage.

The National Ballet currently employs 78 dancers, 21 of which are Canadian-born. Over the past three years, Ms. Kain's guiding principles have resulted in the promotion of four dancers to the principal level from within its ranks, and the addition of three established Principal Dancers

from the Dutch National Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet and the Stuttgart Ballet. All three dancers were attracted to the National Ballet by its exciting repertoire and reputation as one of the world's finest companies. The company has also returned to the world stage with completed and upcoming tours to major venues in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Paris and Hamburg.

Ms. Kain has also placed institutional focus on ensuring that the National Ballet has relevance at home and is accessible to all. This commitment can be seen through programs like YOU Dance, a critical performance program for the development of the company's apprentices that now reach students in every Canadian province and territory through live-streaming.

We are strongly committed to developing Canadian choreographers, recently expanding the National Ballet's Choreographic Workshop to include emerging choreographers outside the National Ballet. In 2013, Ms. Kain appointed Canadians Robert Binet and Guillaume Cote as Choreographic Associates. Since their appointments, Mr. Cote and Mr. Binet have created 17 new works for the company and are now receiving commissions from other companies in Canada and throughout the world. We have also continued our long-standing commitment to live music, employing 65 pianists and musicians as members of the National Ballet Orchestra.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

Creating a Stable Financial Future

The National Ballet of Canada has successfully delivered a modest operating surplus for the past eight years. This success has been driven by the careful management of expenses, combined with robust growth in sustainable annual fundraising and incremental growth in box office attendance and ticket revenue.

We have seen substantial growth through the National Ballet of Canada Endowment Foundation, which is currently at \$71 million. Due in large part to the investments made by the Department of Canadian Heritage's *Canada Cultural Investment Fund – Endowment Incentives Program*, which matches the contributions of private donors to endowment funds for not-for-profit professional arts organizations, this fund has maintained a steady level of growth.

The value of this program cannot be understated. As one of the largest arts employers in the country, the impact of a robust endowment fund has allowed us to build capacity for future programming, organizational growth and the ability to weather any economic downturns. In addition, the matching component in the program is particularly appealing to donors because their philanthropic contributions are being recognized (and matched) by the federal government.

As a long-term user of the program, we are closing in on the maximum limit of overall assistance that can be achieved, which is currently set at \$15-million (there is also a reduction set out within the program structure which cuts the annual level of endowment support in half, once the \$10-million threshold has been reached). It is expected that 2018 will be the final year the National Ballet will be eligible to receive funding from the program. Although it will not have a direct hit on the immediate bottom line, it will significantly impact on our long-term revenue and future ability to generate philanthropic support.

RECOMMENDATION

Increase investment funding for organizations under the Endowments Incentives Program of the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, including raising or eliminating the \$15 million per organization *overall* cap on support.

Touring and Exchange

Touring is an important component of the National Ballet programming and the company's commitment to showcasing our artists and repertoire on the world stage. The 2017/18 season will include a tour to Paris, the company's first in 45 years, taking place in October 2017. Following the Paris tour, the company will travel to London for a collaboration with The Royal Ballet to celebrate Canada's sesquicentennial.

In the Spring of 2018, we will launch a new strategy to bring the company to key cities around the world and to bring major ballet companies to Canada. This new exchange program begins with the National Ballet of Canada making an appearance in the San Francisco Ballet's season, followed by the San Francisco Ballet appearing in Toronto. This will be the first in a series of exchanges over the coming years, in addition to working with the National Arts Centre and other Canadian presenters to encourage multi-city touring for visiting companies.

In Budget 2016, the government invested \$35-million over a two-year period into *Showcasing Canada's Cultural Industries to the World*. As the National Ballet moves forward on the international stage, with opportunities in both the touring and exchange (including substantial prospects in China), we call on the government to continue their investment in this program on a multi-year basis going forward.

RECOMMENDATION

Enhance opportunities for the National Ballet's involvement in federal government cultural export funding programs, especially in regards to touring, with an additional long-term investment in *Showcasing Canada's Cultural Industries to the World*.

Access in the Digital World

Over the next two seasons, we plan to evaluate our outreach programming activities to articulate a new plan to make the National Ballet accessible to all Canadians, leveraging evolving digital platforms to bring live workshops and performances to every corner of the country.

A program that is already achieving this goal is YOU Dance (Youth, Outreach and Understanding Dance) which is designed to introduce students in grades four, five and six to the world of dance through free workshops, performances and live streaming. In 2017, we livestreamed YOU Dance for the third year in a row, reaching 16,000 students in schools, community centers and hospitals across 144 cities and town in every Canadian province and territory.

We are also working on a long-range plan to outfit all our locations to capture live streaming digital content, including working with the Canadian Opera Company to arrange digital equipment for performances at the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto. We have been meeting with key people in the creation of digital content for the Lincoln Center and Royal Opera House to learn best practices. In addition, we participate in World Ballet Day, where performances from around the world are livestreamed on a single day to show the diversity of dance around the globe.

As Minister of Canadian Heritage Melanie Joly has indicated, she will be launching next steps pertaining to the government's engagement in the digital frontier in the arts and culture sector. We believe the government should be making investments to ensure our performances can be shared across the world-wide web.

RECOMMENDATION

Government of Canada investment in innovation and digital programming opportunities for the arts and culture sector.

CONCLUSION

The National Ballet of Canada is a successful arts institution that serves as a significant employer of professional artists and arts practitioners, and produces work that is respected around the globe. Often, there is an assumption that major arts institutions need less public support than smaller groups. In fact, while our budget is significant, there is tremendous pressure to manage our costs (of which more than 70% are for the employment of people) and to ensure that contributed and earned revenue can keep pace while maintaining the highest standard of artistic excellence.

We are grateful to the federal government for the investments that have been made in the arts and culture sector and we look forward to working with the Standing Committee on Finance to discuss the level of artistic and cultural advancement that would be possible by implementing the recommendations outlined above.

The National Ballet has not appeared before the committee in over twenty years. We would welcome the opportunity to be called before the committee to discuss these recommendations.