

NEW INITIATIVE ADVOCATING FOR CANADIAN ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR SENDS URGENT LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER AND KEY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

**One Voice for Arts + Culture,
a growing network of 65 organizations and institutions,
outlines recommendations to support sector's survival during COVID-19 pandemic**

April 14, 2020 - One Voice for Arts + Culture (OVAC) is a new initiative proactively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis on behalf of the arts and culture sector across Canada. Today, its founders sent an urgent [letter](#) to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and relevant Ministers outlining recommendations to support the arts and culture sector and offering to serve as a partner in the endeavor. 65 arts and culture organizations from across Canada joined as signatories.

The arts and culture sector is one of Canada's largest, with a real value-added economic output estimated at \$58 billion annually. Many organizations are now facing a threat to their existence where performances, events, and exhibitions have been cancelled; key staff are being laid off; and revenues have essentially fallen to zero. Yesterday the Canada Council for the Arts released their finding that close to 40 percent of Canada's artists and artistic organizations will need more from government to survive the COVID-19 crisis.

The letter is OVAC's first initiative since its establishment in mid-March. The organization's overarching goal is to help ensure the survival of this essential sector, and for OVAC to be a resource for the arts and culture community by providing leadership and advocacy.

Brad Keast, Co-Founder and Interim Chair of OVAC and Chair of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto said, "This is a key moment where we decide who we are as a country. We are witnessing a spectacular display of Canadian values and culture. We need the arts to help capture and remind us how we have come together and remain resolute. We need the arts to help us heal when this passes. Now more than ever we need art in our lives."

Patrizia Libralato, Executive Director of the Toronto Biennial, a supporting organization, noted, "There are many artists and arts organizations who today do not know what the future holds. Many in our community are looking for leadership and an opportunity to contribute themselves. As members of OVAC, we are united in asking for immediate and critical support in order to keep arts and culture in Canada intact. When this is all over, it will be the work of artists and organizations across this country that will bring people and communities together again."

Brady Wood, Co-Founder and Interim Executive Lead of OVAC, said, “Our aim here is that out of this crisis we come together as a sector like never before. Our immediate work is outreach to share our purpose with all Canadian arts and culture organizations. We are keen to work with government and begin our own discussions about how arts and culture can help unite the country at this time and plan for recovery together.”

OVAC was formalized following discussions in mid-March among approximately 50 arts leaders of not-for-profits across the country with a goal of ensuring the sustainability of Canadian arts and culture organizations and institutions. Initiated by a team at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto, a key outcome of the on-line convening was the desire to work together as a group and engage in meaningful dialogue with government. The group concluded that OVAC’s core mission was to present issues impacting the arts and culture sector as one voice to the federal government.

OVAC’s expanding website is being developed as a gateway for information-sharing. OVAC is piloting three initiatives: government communications and planning; the establishment of working groups to detail concrete solutions; and educational opportunities and resources accompanied by a calendar of events. OVAC seeks to expand participation to help its membership network face the challenges and provide opportunities for exchange and support.

As the network grows, OVAC plans to organize a board of directors in the coming weeks.

About One Voice for Arts + Culture (OVAC)

Established in March 2020, OVAC is a growing network of Canada’s not-for-profit arts and culture organizations and institutions. OVAC is proactively organizing an infrastructure and forum for communication; expanding its membership; and advocating on behalf of the arts and culture sector across Canada. OVAC seeks to present issues and ideas in a single, unified, inclusive voice to government and elected officials to ensure the survival and sustainability of the arts and culture sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. artsandculturevoice.ca

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