



October 26, 2018

Mr. Peter Caldwell
Director and CEO
Ms. Rita Davies, Chair
Ms. Judith Gelber, Vice-Chair
Ontario Arts Council
121 Bloor Street East, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M4W 3M5

Dear Peter, Rita and Judith,

Thank you for your letter from October 24, 2018 following up on the Town Hall meeting the Canada Council recently held with members of the Toronto arts community.

We will limit our response here to a few of the key points raised in your letter so as to bring into focus the Canada Council's role in the ecosystem of public funding for the arts in Canada, a complex system with multiple interacting agencies and jurisdictions.

On page two of your letter, you state that most of the community attendees at the Town Hall misinterpreted the bar chart we presented regarding proportions of public revenue to core-funded organizations. Whether or not this is the case, the slide was in fact clearly titled "Breakdown of 2016-17 Public Sector Revenues of Canada Council Funded Organizations receiving Core Grants". As you rightly point out, its purpose was to illustrate exactly this point – that, when looking at the proportion of funding received from the Canada Council as a share of overall public sector funding, core-funded organizations in Toronto and Ontario are not disadvantaged relative to Québec, or the national average.

Regarding individual artists, we agree that there is variability between the number of artists per province reported by Statistics Canada and the Canada Council's funding. As you know, the Canada Council's funding distribution is based on demand. Therefore, one might think that 43% of artists in Ontario, compared with 21% in Québec should translate into a significantly higher application rate by Ontario. As we said at the Town Hall meeting, this is not the case – for example, the number of applications received from individual artists from Toronto (1,249) is barely 10% higher than the number of applications received from Montreal (1,197).

On page three of your letter you discuss the distribution of Canada Council peer assessors by province. First and foremost, the Council aims for as diverse a representation on our peer assessment committees as possible, taking into account not only region, but also gender, cultural diversity, age, official language and Deafness and/or disability. Peers are asked to make decisions on artistic merit, not on which region an applicant is from or where they reside. The number of Québec peers in our assessment committees is in part attributable to the fact that a number of our committees are language-based – that is, francophone or bilingual. While the Canada Council relies heavily on francophone official language minority artists from different regions in the country, including from Ontario, to sit on these language-based committees, there is simply a greater pool of francophone artists in Québec to draw from. We continue to actively recruit new peers and closely monitor the representation on our committees on all fronts.

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Also on page three, you cite the fact that the Ontario Arts Council provides core funding to a greater number of Ontario-based organizations (557) than the Canada Council does (256). This is not an exceptional situation. For example, in 2016-17, the Canada Council provided core funding to 146 unique organizations in British Columbia, compared with 327 funded by the British Columbia Arts Council.¹ In Québec, the Canada Council provides core funding to 315 organizations compared to 552 funded by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.²

In closing, we must underscore that whenever and wherever the issue of regional distribution of our grants arises, the Canada Council can only fund according to the applications received from artists and arts organizations. Applicants operate in local and provincial contexts that vary widely across the country which are largely shaped by ever-changing public and private funding decisions over which the Canada Council has no control. Indeed, we strive to understand these contexts to optimize the impact of our actions and to find partners to better support the artists and artistic organizations we fund and hope to fund in the future.

In the case of Ontario, we truly hope that we will soon start to see a significant increase in applications, thus leading to an increase in the overall amount we invest in the province. We will be actively encouraging applications from all Ontario artists and organizations, including through upcoming outreach sessions, and would appreciate any opportunity to further discuss with you how our agencies might work together to achieve this desired goal.

Again, we thank you for your letter and look forward to future dialogue about our funding – both the patterns to date and our strategic directions for the next few years.

Sincerely,



Simon Brault, O.C., O.Q.
Director and CEO

cc: Pierre Lassonde, Chair, Canada Council for the Arts
Canadian Public Arts Funders Chairs and CEOs
Carolyn Warren, Director General, Arts Granting, Canada Council for the Arts
Michelle Chawla, Director General, Strategy & Public Affairs, Canada Council for the Arts
Regine Cadet, President, Board of Directors, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts
Jacoba Knaapen, Executive Director, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts
Claire Hopkinson, Director and CEO, Toronto Arts Council
Patrick Tobin, Director, Arts and Culture Services, City of Toronto
Roslyn Jacobs Edwards, Chair, PASO Alliance

¹ http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/documents/publicationforms/pdfs/annual_report_2016-2017.pdf, Operating Assistance pp. 38-44, Community Arts Funding pp. 73-79;

² https://www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/rag_2016-2017.pdf, Tableau 38, p. 94