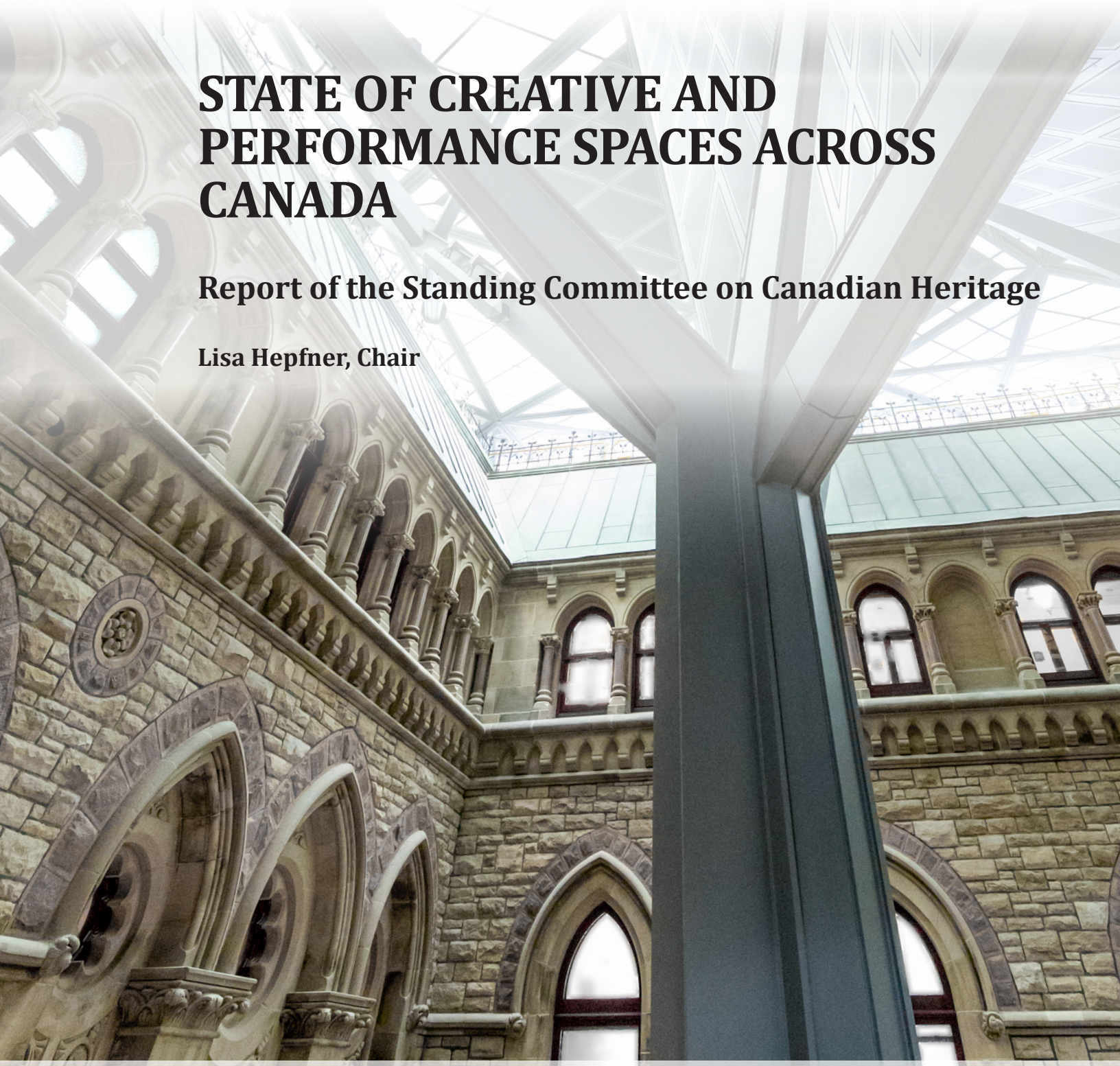
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CANADA



STATE OF CREATIVE AND PERFORMANCE SPACES ACROSS CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Lisa Hepfner, Chair

NOVEMBER 2026
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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has the honour to present its

ELEVENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the state of creative and performance spaces across Canada and has agreed to report the following:

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada earmark a portion of its infrastructure funding for the arts and culture sector. **16**

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that existing policies and programs account for the unique role of independent operators of small and medium sized venues in the ecosystem of performance spaces and reflect the importance of each rung of the venue ladder. **16**

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada, as part of its infrastructure funding programs, recognize the importance of projects that bring historic cultural buildings back into active public use. **16**

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada include support for associated operating and project management costs for cultural projects as a part of infrastructure funding programs. **17**

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada implement a live performing arts tax credit on production-related labour expenses. **17**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada study vertical integration among the various segments of the performance spaces value chain – including promotion, production, venues, festivals, ticketing, artist representation, sponsorships and audience data – and identify the range of policy options and tools in a publicly available report. 17

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada establish training, guidance and response protocols for publicly funded institutions that face safety and security threats. 17

THE STATE OF CREATIVE AND PERFORMANCE SPACES ACROSS CANADA

INTRODUCTION

On 27 January 2026, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (the Committee) agreed to "undertake a comprehensive study on the state of creative and performance spaces across Canada and what role they play in supporting the next generation of artists."

The Committee held a total of four meetings between 28 May 2026 and 9 June 2026, heard from 26 witnesses and received 14 briefs. Witnesses shared their insights regarding the state of creative and performance spaces in Canada as well as the challenges facing the sector, and the Committee would like to thank everybody who participated.

Over the course of the study, the Committee heard about the substantial contribution of creative and performance spaces to the Canadian economy, as well as the important contributions that these spaces make to Canadian culture. Witnesses also highlighted some of the challenges facing the sector, such as the underfunding of independent operators, rising costs for venues and consumers and market consolidation, as well as safety and security.

The first section of the report provides information on the state of creative and performance spaces in Canada. The second section then focuses on the sector's key challenges, while the third section closes with the Committee's recommendations for the federal government.

THE STATE OF CREATIVE AND PERFORMANCE SPACES IN CANADA

Contribution to Canada's Economy

According to an October 2025 report from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, arts and culture is a "high economic impact sector," contributing $131 billion to Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024 when accounting for direct, indirect and induced revenues. The report also notes that the sector supported 1.1 million jobs across the country in 2024, when accounting for total impacts throughout the economy. For context, the report notes that arts and culture support more jobs and GDP than the manufacturing and oil and gas sectors.

This contribution to Canada's economy was a recurring theme in witness testimony. For instance, Alexandre Curzi from the Union des artistes told the Committee that the cultural sector "generates between $5 and $15 for every dollar invested in it and employs more than 500,000 Canadians."

Erin Benjamin, the former CEO of the Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA), who appeared as an individual, described Canada's live music sector as "a significant economic and cultural force." Citing a January 2025 economic impact assessment commissioned by the CLMA, Ms. Benjamin told the Committee that "live music activity generated nearly $11 billion in economic impact [in terms of contribution to GDP] and supported more than 100,000 jobs nationwide" in 2023. The economic impact assessment also suggests that, in 2023, the live music sector contributed $5.84 billion in labour income and $3.73 billion in tax revenue to the Canadian economy. To contextualize these statistics, the assessment notes that the fisheries industry generates 32,500 jobs and contributes $2.6 billion to Canada's GDP.

Citing a report that they commissioned from Hill Strategies in 2025, a brief from the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française notes that "[t]he artistic and cultural sector of the Canadian and Acadian francophonie (outside Quebec) employed more than 36,100 people in 2021 and contributed $6.15 billion to the national gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023." The Hill Strategies report adds that the $6.15 billion contribution to GDP represents a nine percent increase from $5.63 billion in 2021.

While most may think of a theatre or rehearsal hall when picturing a performance space, Ryan Filsinger from Iron Fox Games suggested to the Committee that for video game developers, "it's a studio floor, a home office and collaboration across many time zones, often all at once. In practice, our creative space is the ecosystem itself—the tools, the distribution platforms we use, the training programs, the studios that give young artists somewhere to start." Mr. Filsinger told the Committee that "Canada's video game industry contributed $5.1 billion to the GDP of Canada in 2024. It employs 34,000 workers at an average salary of $102,000 per year."

Contribution to Local Economies and Communities

In addition to the national-level impacts of the creative and performance space sector, witnesses also discussed the local impacts of these spaces on the communities they serve. For example, a written brief from Les Scènes de Musique Alternatives du Québec

(SMAQ) notes that independent venues[1] "support jobs in the cultural, technical and events sectors, while boosting business at local restaurants, bars, hotels, shops and suppliers." André Myette from the Marigold Cultural Centre in Truro, Nova Scotia noted that "performance spaces serve as the civic living rooms for our communities. They are places where we connect, find common ground and celebrate our shared humanity."

A brief from the Nova Scotia Arts Coalition suggests that, in rural and remote communities, "[c]ultural organisations play a disproportionate role in the economic resilience and civic life of our communities and in giving rural Canadians opportunities to engage in the national cultural conversation and represent Canada to the world."

In terms of local economic impacts, a brief from the Canadian Opera Company cites a City of Toronto study that found that the cultural sector contributed $8.4 billion to the city's economy, representing five percent of the city's total GDP. In the Greater Montreal area, Frédéric Messier from RIDEAU told the Committee that members of Réseau Scènes generate an average of $2.38 million in indirect economic spinoffs in their communities. Christy Morin from the Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society also told the Committee that arts and festivals generate over $171 million annually in economic activity in Edmonton.

Witnesses from the theatre sector told the Committee about the impacts that their venues have had on their communities. Jennifer Brewin from the Globe Theatre in Regina noted that "[a]rts and cultural institutions bring people into city centres in the evenings, and on weekends they support restaurants, hotels, retail businesses, parking services and tourism. We animate public spaces, encourage foot traffic and help create vibrant downtowns." Ms. Brewin told the Committee that her theatre expects to generate over $579,000 in provincial sales tax and liquor tax revenue this season, representing an estimated 200% return on the provincial government's $200,000 grant to her theatre.

Kelly Straughan from Theatre Aquarius in Hamilton, Ontario noted that approximately 125,000 people attended over 265 performances at her theatre in 2025, with a recent production of the Tragically Hip musical generating an estimated $6 million economic impact.

Caroline Gignac from the Conseil québécois du théâtre told the Committee that in 2024, "there were approximately 4,588 theatrical performances in Quebec. They attracted 1.2 million people and generated $35.1 million in box office revenue."

1 The SMAQ's written brief defines independent venues as "autonomous cultural spaces, managed independently of major cultural institutions and entertainment multinationals."

Morgan Simms from Glasgow Square Theatre detailed how his venue contributes to the rural community of Pictou County, Nova Scotia:

> There's the Jubilee music festival that we host Natal Day weekend every August in New Glasgow. That three-day music festival brings upwards of half a million dollars of economic impact to our rural community of 10,000 people. Outside of that, as we're investing more in programming and seeing full houses at Glasgow Square Theatre, the feedback from restaurants and businesses is that they are getting increased business. They have wait-lists for nights that we have sold-out shows. We partner with the local hotels in our area, and they're also noticing upticks of hotel stays in the shoulder seasons when we are hosting sold-out events or any type of event like that. Without our cultural hub, the off-spin from that could truly be devastating to our community.

Cultural spaces can also contribute to community building. For example, Ms. Morin from the Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society told the Committee about how their Kaleido Family Arts Festival contributed to revitalizing their community on Edmonton's 118 Avenue:

> We closed five blocks of 118 Avenue, which was known as the strip, and we filled the rooftops with artists. Sidewalks, alleyways, storefronts and vacant lots were filled with theatre, dance, music, visual arts, artisans and street performances for three full days, and it transformed the neighbourhood. The neighbours, the newspapers, everyone started talking. Instead of saying "prostitution meets produce" and talking about crime, grime and exploitation, people began to talk about hope, creativity, resilience and what the arts can do—they change people. People see a neighbourhood. They can change themselves, and we change each other.

Given the important role of creative and performance spaces in local economies and communities, witnesses such as Jonathan Bunce from Wavelength Music Arts Projects and Jenny Thibault from the Society for Arts and Technology suggested that these spaces should be seen as essential cultural infrastructure rather than commercial real estate. A brief from the MacKenzie Art Gallery suggests that creative and performance spaces are more than their physical infrastructure:

> Creative and performance spaces are not simply buildings. They are public cultural infrastructure. They provide access to artistic expression, support artists and cultural workers, hold collections and stories in trust, anchor downtown and regional revitalization, and create places where communities can gather across differences of geography, identity, age, language, and experience.

In terms of its function as a gathering space, the brief also notes that artists, families, students, elders, newcomers and other community partners can make use of the gallery. Similarly, a brief from the Association des théâtres francophones du Canada (ATFC) describes their venues as "some of the most important gathering places for life in French in our minority communities." Ms. Gignac and Angel Blanco, a performer from the École de Musique Alain-Caron, both characterized creative and performance spaces as "living

infrastructure." A brief from the Canadian Opera Company characterizes these spaces as "enabling infrastructure that provides the space, technical capacity, and operational support necessary for artistic creation, collaboration, training, and cultural production across the Canadian arts sector."

In a report submitted to the Committee, the Vancouver Concert Hall and Theatre Society highlights the work of the proposed Vancouver Cultural Precinct, a collaborative initiative involving 32 performing arts organizations. Its supporting feasibility study found that Vancouver has approximately half the music hall seating capacity per capita of Toronto, with existing venues unable to meet current and future demand. The initiative illustrates how coordinated cultural infrastructure planning could address regional needs while strengthening Canada's cultural and economic competitiveness.

A written brief from the SMAQ characterizes independent venues as "vital local social infrastructure," adding that:

> By bringing people together around shared artistic experiences, they create opportunities for connection, socializing and sharing that contribute to a sense of belonging. Their human scale and local roots make them spaces where communities can come together, recognize each other and develop lasting ties.

In the SMAQ's view, independent venues are "spaces for connection, well-being and social cohesion." Citing studies that show a statistical connection between arts participation and public health, David LaRiviere from PAVED Arts echoed the SMAQ's sentiment, suggesting that "[t]hese spaces serve the social and civic health of our communities."

Some witnesses also discussed the impact of creative and performance spaces on marginalized communities. For example, Ms. Brewin from the Globe Theatre suggested that performance spaces can contribute to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples:

> For us, reconciliation is a lot about finding the worlds where settlers and [I]ndigenous and non-[I]ndigenous people meet. Comedy is a place where we do it, and that's one of the critical parts. […] Also, 85% of our audience is non-[I]ndigenous. Ten years ago, when we put on a play by an [I]ndigenous artist, no one came to it. Now they sell out. It's becoming a third space where people are sorting out that conversation among communities and among different cultural and ethnic spaces.

Mr. Simms from the Glasgow Square Theatre noted that, in addition to contributing to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, creative and performance spaces can welcome other historically marginalized groups, such as African Nova Scotians and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Contribution to Canadian Culture

In addition to their economic and community-building benefits, witnesses also told the Committee about the contributions of creative and performance spaces to Canadian culture. The SMAQ's written brief suggests that independent venues "serve as spaces where Quebec and Canadian cultural identity is built, shared and allowed to evolve." Ms. Thibault noted that "[b]efore a work exists, before an artist can meet their audience, they first need spaces to let their imaginations flourish, to experiment, to collaborate, to create and to take risks."

Similarly, Mr. Myette from the Marigold Cultural Centre described performance spaces as "true incubators for Canadian identity," adding that "[i]f we do not protect and preserve these spaces, the next generation of artists loses the very places in which they can safely learn, grow and perfect their crafts." Ms. Straughan expressed her concern that "[w]ithout support [for cultural spaces], we risk losing the very foundations that allow Canadian stories to be created and experienced."

Jon Weisz from the SMAQ further added that independent venues help audiences discover new artists: "They [independent venues] are the laboratories of artistic innovation. For the public, they also play a major role in discoverability, as they introduce artists from Quebec and Canada in person." In the case of rural performance spaces, Mr. Simms from the Glasgow Square Theatre told the Committee that these venues can serve as "early-stage discovery platforms" for emerging Canadian artists.

A written brief from the Canadian Actors' Equity Association specifies how creative spaces can protect Canadian cultural sovereignty by bypassing the borderless online platforms that influence much of modern culture:

> Physical arts attendance bypasses the digital gatekeepers and algorithms entirely. And by filling seats at local venues, Canadians directly fund domestic infrastructure ensuring that we retain our ability to define, protect, and promote Canadian artistic expression free from outside interference.

In terms of Francophone culture outside of Quebec, a brief from the ATFC describes each of their venues as "a meeting place and a generator of human contact that energizes the French language and culture in communities across Canada." The brief also notes that the theatre sector contributes to identity building, linguistic security, arts education and academic performance, while also helping integrate newcomers in minority Francophone communities.

Joshua Beamish from Ballet Vancouver put it succinctly: "We don't have a national culture without the artists of our nation who create the work that creates our Canadian identity."

Immersive and Participatory Experiences

Witnesses told the Committee about a trend towards immersive and participatory performance experiences. Christina Santiago Keenan from Secret City Studio, a company that works on escape rooms and immersive theatre experiences, suggested that:

> There's a clear generational shift in how people relate to narrative entertainment and to each other. The generation that grew up with the Internet didn't just consume content: They participated in it. They built worlds in Minecraft; they co-wrote fan fiction, and they adventured together in virtual worlds. Audiences no longer want to watch. They want to play a part.

In Ms. Santiago Keenan's view, there is an opportunity for Canada to use heritage sites for such immersive and participatory experiences.

A written brief from the SMAQ also highlights this trend towards "immersive, participatory and personalized experiences that foster proximity, social interaction and exploration," noting that "independent venues are particularly well positioned to meet these expectations and transform artistic discovery into a collective experience and a sense of belonging."

S.E. Grummett, a performer from So.Glad.Arts, a queer theatre company based in Saskatoon, told the Committee that they have used the participatory format in some of their performances. In their view, the format gives audiences something that they cannot get at home on their screens.

CHALLENGES IN THE CREATIVE AND PERFORMANCE SPACES SECTOR

Independent Operators and Creators

A recurring theme in witness testimony was the unique role of independent operators and creators in the ecosystem of Canada's creative and performance spaces. Mr. Myette told the Committee that "[e]very household name started as an emerging artist looking for a welcoming local stage to test their voice."

Ariane Caron Lachance from Cinéma Beaumont in Quebec City provided their perspective on the role of small and medium venues in their communities:

> Small and medium-sized organizations have enormous potential as testing grounds for introducing people to culture. Generally, these organizations have teams with expertise, are deeply rooted in their communities, and are very flexible when they are being proposed new projects.

Ms. Thibault suggested that "Canada's cultural vitality depends precisely on this balance, on the coexistence of small, medium and large players and on the diversity of voices, models and spaces."

In the view of the SMAQ's brief and Ms. Benjamin, independent operators need unique policy tools that reflect the realities of how their part of the ecosystem operates today. Both suggested that changes are needed to existing funding programs to account for the unique role of independent operators. In particular, the SMAQ's brief suggests that permanent funding for the Canada Music Fund should be increased to $60 million per year, with $10 million dedicated to independent venues.

In terms of independent creators, S.E. Grummett highlighted the important role of federal funding in their national and international success:

> In 2024, we received Creative Export Canada funding for a 10-week U.K. and European tour of our queer clown show, *Creepy Boys*, touring it to five different countries: Ireland, Iceland, the U.K., Germany and Denmark. This tour allowed us to solidify our profile in the U.K. and Europe, and it allowed us to build relationships with international venues and presenters. One in particular, LiteraturHaus in Copenhagen, has since invited us back for a two-week Denmark tour in 2025 and is presenting our new show, *Slugs*, later this fall. This includes supporting us in building additional tour stops across Denmark. These relationships with international presenters would not have been possible without this funding. This tour also allowed us to lay the groundwork for future touring and allowed us to build our audiences abroad.

They further added that "[t]he funding we received from Canadian Heritage—as well as provincial funding and Canada Council for the Arts funding — is the backbone of our recent success and, frankly, our entire careers." As a result of that federal funding, S.E. Grummett suggested that they are "now getting to a place at which our touring can be supported by presentation fees from international partners and ticket sales in a way that, two to three years ago, we weren't seeing."

Artist Progression (or Venue) Ladder

Witnesses noted that artists will often start their careers at small independent venues. In this regard, Ms. Benjamin specified that:

> They [independent venues] are where artists first develop, where creative risks are taken, where local communities form and where the talent pipeline that ultimately feeds the broader commercial industry begins. The success we see later in theatres, arenas, major festivals and international touring circuits very often starts in these smaller rooms. […] Canada's live music sector works precisely because different parts of the industry perform different functions, but independent venues and operators aren't simply one segment of the sector. They're foundational to its long-term sustainability and renewal.

The SMAQ's written brief characterizes this phenomenon as the "venue ladder" or "artist progression ladder,"[2] which is "a network of venues that allows artists to develop gradually, from local stages to mid-sized venues, festivals and larger stages," with independent venues forming the foundation of this ladder. In some cases, the SMAQ's brief adds, "performing in an independent venue is not a compromise, but an artistic choice," with some artists deliberately choosing independent venues "for the atmosphere, the proximity to the audience and the quality of the live experience they provide."

As part of that progression ladder, a written brief from the Performing Arts Consortium of Winnipeg highlights a shortage of "modern, accessible, technically capable mid-sized performing arts venues."

Rising Costs for Venues

Witnesses also identified rising maintenance and operating costs as a key challenge in the sector. Echoing a written brief from Théâtres associés, Rachel Billet from the Conseil québécois du théâtre told the Committee that "between 2017 and 2024, venue-related costs rose by 53%, while overall inflation stood at around 20%. These costs include the operating expenses of performance venues, as well as maintenance and asset upkeep." As a result of these rising costs, Ms. Thibault suggested that:

> Cultural organizations often have no choice but to prioritize the maintenance of their infrastructure, often at the expense of their mission, which is to support creation and present works. In the case of technological infrastructure, the challenge is even greater. Equipment is aging rapidly, and technologies are constantly evolving.

2 The terms "artist progression ladder" and "venue ladder" are used interchangeably in this report.

Noting "rising operating costs across the board," Mr. Messier highlighted that "[t]he financial model for live performance relies heavily on ticket sales, but according to RIDEAU data, over 70% of any show's revenue is already absorbed by artist fees, royalties and performance rights before presenters can even cover their own [rising] expenses."

In the view of Joshua Beamish from Ballet Vancouver, infrastructure support is only part of the solution:

> Canadian Heritage has an opportunity to react to the pulse of public enthusiasm and recognize circumstances of extraordinary growth. Infrastructure support is vital, but what is the purpose of investing in venues if organizations cannot afford to use them? This vision will be inconsequential if affordable rental access is not simultaneously considered and addressed.

Mr. Beamish added that, despite the remarkable post-pandemic increase in attendance, Ballet Vancouver's rent subsidies have not kept pace with the growth in public interest in their performances. This rise in operating costs, combined with limited theatre availability, means that Ballet Vancouver has found it difficult to add performances to meet the public's growing demand.

In terms of labour costs, a written brief from the Canadian Actors' Equity Association and Ms. Straughan recommended that the federal government create a "live performing arts accelerator, a labour tax credit modelled after successful film and television incentives. This credit would offer a 25% tax rebate on production-related labour expenses."

On the issue of existing infrastructure programs, the Canadian Opera Company's written brief notes that the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund was reduced and reoriented to focus on specialized equipment in Budget 2025, with arts and cultural organizations instead having access to the new Build Communities Strong Fund for their infrastructure projects. However, Nancy Juneau from the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française suggested that, as a result of this change, the cultural sector needs to compete with other infrastructure priorities to receive funding under the Build Communities Strong Fund. Echoing briefs from the Nova Scotia Arts Coalition and the Canadian Arts Coalition, Ms. Juneau suggested that "[e]armarking a portion of the funding for arts and culture infrastructure specifically would mean that we weren't at a disadvantage, having to compete with sectors completely different from ours."

The Nova Scotia Arts Coalition's written brief recommends that "[i]nfrastructure funding should include support for associated operating and project management costs for cultural projects," such as staffing and technical expertise.

Similar to Ms. Santiago Keenan's call to use heritage sites for immersive and participatory experiences, a written brief from the Performing Arts Consortium of Winnipeg recommends that the federal government "support the adaptive reuse of historic cultural buildings," to create "a clear federal priority for projects that bring historic cultural buildings back into active public use."

Market Consolidation

Increasing market consolidation in the hands of Live Nation was also a recurring theme in witness testimony. For example, Ms. Thibault highlighted "the growing concentration of the cultural sector […] where a few major players occupy an increasingly important place."

Patrick Kearney from the Regroupement des festivals régionaux artistiques indépendants added that, in addition to owning Ticketmaster, Live Nation also owns 49% of Quebec-based Evenko: "It [Live Nation] owns 49% of a group called Evenko. The 49% gives it significant influence and allows it to keep obtaining support from grants, since the company remains Canadian." As a result of this stake in Evenko, Mr. Weisz from the SMAQ told the Committee that "half the profits from those events, supported by millions of dollars in public money, go off to Los Angeles."

According to Mr. Kearney, Live Nation (through Evenko) owns seven festivals and six venues in Quebec as well as all of the major events and venues in Toronto. Through its ownership of the American company Ticketmaster, Mr. Kearney also noted that Live Nation has control over ticketing for the largest festivals and venues.

Echoing the testimony of Tania Kontoyanni from the Union des artistes, the SMAQ's written brief suggests that Live Nation is able to control several parts of the value chain:

> The concentration of the live performance market is not just a matter of the size of certain players, but also their ability to simultaneously control several segments of the value chain: promotion, production, venues, festivals, ticketing, artist representation, sponsorships, marketing and audience data. This vertical integration allows artists, income, data and visibility to flow within a single network. […] Its operation has been described as a flywheel: income generated by ticketing and sponsorships strengthen its promotional activities; access to a large catalogue of artists consolidates its relationships with venues; and ticketing agreements in turn provide it with income and data that feeds into the entire system.

In controlling several parts of the value chain, the SMAQ's written brief further specifies that Live Nation has "control of several points of access to the market," which "transforms the conditions under which other cultural enterprises can access artists,

promote their events and reach audiences." Mr. Kearney highlighted that Live Nation's market control is a subject of litigation in Quebec and the United States.

The SMAQ's Mr. Weisz told the Committee that "[w]hile the huge integrated groups make record profits quarter after quarter, independent production continues to operate in an ecosystem that is growing evermore precarious." In Mr. Kearney's view, Live Nation's "monopoly is a real threat to Quebec's—not to say Canada's—cultural sovereignty."

To account for this market consolidation, the SMAQ's written brief recommends that the federal government implement a "solidarity fee" on ticket sales for major music events, with the proceeds reinvested in independent venues.

Noting that the Canada Pension Plan owns 8.79 million shares of Live Nation (3.7% of the company's total stock), Ms. Benjamin suggested that the challenge is "to identify how we build sustainable growth at every rung of the venue ladder, because this ultimately will serve Canadian artists, Canadians and the Canadian economy."

Rising Ticket Prices

Witnesses also identified rising ticket prices – a result of rising costs for venues and market consolidation – as a challenge for creative and performance spaces. Mr. Bunce from Wavelength Music Arts Projects noted that small venues often pass on some of their rising costs to consumers through ticket prices:

> Now, post pandemic, we've seen that these spaces, even these small venues, can no longer afford to allow emerging artists or presenters to book space at no cost. Now we're seeing facility fees. As those cost barriers increase, ticket prices get passed on to the consumer—that's why you see rising ticket prices—and of course, that starts to create a negative feedback loop in which people go out less.

At the higher end of the venue ladder, Mr. Bunce added that having "one multinational promoter [i.e. Live Nation] that also owns one of the biggest ticketing companies in the world" results in ticket costs for larger concerts increasing. In particular, witnesses such as Mr. Kearney and Mr. Simms highlighted Ticketmaster's use of dynamic pricing, where ticket prices adjust in real time based on factors like demand, time of day or season, as contributing to higher ticket prices.

The SMAQ's written brief notes that "[i]n Quebec, between 2004 and 2022, average ticket revenue per attendee increased by 68%, while the consumer price index rose by 45%," with the most popular shows featuring international stars driving most of that increase. In contrast, the SMAQ's brief also notes that "ticket prices for shows catering to more specific interests, particularly in local and independent scenes, have often

remained stagna[nt].” In the SMAQ’s view, “[i]ndependent venues therefore play a critical role in maintaining access to local cultural offerings. Despite their rising operating costs, they continue to offer affordable pricing, but this accessibility relies on increasingly fragile margins.”

Mr. Simms highlighted that the increasing costs of larger performances leave consumers with less money to spend on smaller community performances:

> As major touring acts become increasingly expensive, many Canadians are forced to choose between one major event and several smaller community performances, typically priced at $20 to $40 at our venue. Once that discretionary spending is used, support for local venues declines, limiting access to emerging artists and straining grassroots spaces.

In response to this challenge, Mr. Simms noted that his theatre has launched a “Moments for Everyone” program in collaboration with their regional library, which provides people with free access to tickets using their library card.

Safety and Security

Some witnesses also highlighted the issue of safety and security at live performances. David Matas, an international human rights lawyer, states in his written brief that “[c]onsideration of the state of creative and performance spaces across Canada requires consideration of the state of foreign interference in general and transnational repression in particular directed against these creative and performance spaces.” In particular, Joel Chipkar from the Falun Dafa Association of Canada told the Committee that Shen Yun – a performance by the Falun Gong spiritual community that “celebrates a China before Communism” – has been the target of interference from the Chinese Communist Party: “In the past two years, Canada has seen over 20 hoax bomb and death threats targeting Shen Yun theatres, Parliament Hill and politicians.” Mr. Chipkar’s testimony highlighted incidents in Toronto, Mississauga, Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver. He added, “[o]ur concern is when we start to ignore the interference, transnational oppression happening in Canada, then it doesn’t just become a Falun Gong, Shen Yun issue, it’s everybody’s issue.” Joel Etienne from the Falun Dafa Association of Canada recommended that the federal government establish training, as well as guidance and response protocols for publicly funded institutions that face these types of threats.

A written brief from Théâtres associés also highlights the rapidly rising security costs of Montreal’s Société des arts technologiques, as a result of “increased vandalism, theft and insurance costs in the downtown area.”

Ms. Morin also mentioned the issue of safety in the context of her organization's community revitalization efforts, noting that her organization brought together volunteers to collaborate with the Edmonton Police Service and other local agencies to help curb violence in their neighbourhood, including through a ban on the sale of dangerous knives in convenience stores. Similarly, a brief from the Performing Arts Consortium of Winnipeg notes that the renewal of downtown cores through creative and performance spaces can contribute to public safety "through increased public presence."

Ms. Kontoyanni from the Union des artistes raised the issue of safety in the context of deteriorating infrastructure creating unsafe working conditions for performers:

> [O]ur cultural infrastructure is crumbling, and this has a direct impact on the working conditions of our artists. In performance, rehearsal and creative venues, there are problems with heating, outdated technical equipment and inadequate sanitation facilities. In addition, there are issues specific to certain disciplines, such as the quality of floors for dancers, which is essential to preventing injuries. These conditions are not anecdotal; they are widespread and directly affect the health, safety and dignity of artists at work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada earmark a portion of its infrastructure funding for the arts and culture sector.

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada ensure that existing policies and programs account for the unique role of independent operators of small and medium sized venues in the ecosystem of performance spaces and reflect the importance of each rung of the venue ladder.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada, as part of its infrastructure funding programs, recognize the importance of projects that bring historic cultural buildings back into active public use.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada include support for associated operating and project management costs for cultural projects as a part of infrastructure funding programs.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada implement a live performing arts tax credit on production-related labour expenses.

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada study vertical integration among the various segments of the performance spaces value chain – including promotion, production, venues, festivals, ticketing, artist representation, sponsorships and audience data – and identify the range of policy options and tools in a publicly available report.

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada establish training, guidance and response protocols for publicly funded institutions that face safety and security threats.

APPENDIX A:
LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee's webpage for this study.

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
As an individual	2026/05/28	39
Erin Benjamin, Formerly Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Live Music Association		
Falun Dafa Association of Canada	2026/05/28	39
Joel Chipkar, Spokesperson		
Joel Etienne, Barrister and Solicitor		
Globe Theatre	2026/05/28	39
Jennifer Brewin, Artistic Director		
Regroupement des festivals régionaux artistiques indépendants	2026/05/28	39
Patrick Kearney, Chief Executive Officer		
Scènes de Musique Alternatives du Québec	2026/05/28	39
Jon Weisz, Executive Director		
Marigold Cultural Centre	2026/06/02	40
André Myette, Executive Director		
RIDEAU	2026/06/02	40
Frédéric Messier, President		
Secret City Studio	2026/06/02	40
Christina Santiago Keenan, President and Chief Executive Officer		
So.Glad Arts	2026/06/02	40
S.E. Grummett, Performer and Creator, Creepy Boys		
Theatre Aquarius	2026/06/02	40
Kelly Straughan, Executive Director		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Wavelength Music Arts Projects	2026/06/02	40
Jonathan Bunce, Artistic and Executive Director		
Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society	2026/06/04	41
Christy Morin, Executive Director		
Glasgow Square Theatre	2026/06/04	41
Morgan Simms, Manager, Program, Culture, and Events		
Iron Fox Games	2026/06/04	41
Ryan Filsinger, Chief Executive Officer		
Society for Arts and Technology	2026/06/04	41
Jenny Thibault, Executive Director		
Union des artistes	2026/06/04	41
Alexandre Curzi, Director General		
Tania Kontoyanni, Chair		
ANTITUBE	2026/06/09	42
Ariane Caron Lachance, Executive Director, Cinéma Beaumont		
Ballet Vancouver	2026/06/09	42
Joshua Beamish, Artistic Director		
Conseil québécois du théâtre	2026/06/09	42
Rachel Billet, Director General, Théâtres associés		
Caroline Gignac, Director General		
École de Musique Alain-Caron	2026/06/09	42
Angel Blanco, Master of Music Performance		
Fédération culturelle canadienne-française	2026/06/09	42
Laurence Dubuc, Analyst, Policy and Research		
Nancy Juneau, Chair		
PAVED Arts	2026/06/09	42
David LaRiviere, Artistic Director		

APPENDIX B:
LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's webpage for this study.

Association des théâtres francophones du Canada

Canadian Actors' Equity Association

Canadian Arts Coalition

Canadian Opera Company

Falun Dafa Association of Canada

Fédération culturelle canadienne-française

Iron Fox Games

MacKenzie Art Gallery

Malik, Neil

Matas, David

Nova Scotia Arts Coalition

Performing Arts Consortium Of Winnipeg Inc.

Scènes de Musique Alternatives du Québec

Théâtres associés

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 48, 49 and 52) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hepfner
Chair

Conservative Supplementary Report on State of Creative Spaces and Performance Spaces Across Canada

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

On behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, we submit this supplementary report on the State of Creative Spaces and Performance Spaces Across Canada.

The arts offer tremendous benefits to Canadians. They help preserve our cultural identity, encourage creative expression, strengthen communities, and contribute to our economy. However, these benefits cannot be fully realized without a safe and secure environment in which artists, cultural institutions and audiences can operate freely. Threats, intimidation, harassment and efforts to silence artistic expression undermine the sector and the freedoms it represents. No artist should have to fear for their safety, and no institution should face intimidation for the programming it presents. Unfortunately, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's report significantly omitted this critical issue. A meaningful examination of the arts sector must recognize that safety and security are fundamental to its ability to thrive.

Witness testimony made it evident that: 1) the government has a responsibility to prioritize security to ensure all sectors, including the arts can thrive; 2) the Liberal government is failing to uphold public safety and security; and 3) practical solutions exist to address the security challenges facing the arts and other sectors.

1. The Government Has a Responsibility to Prioritize Security to Ensure Sectors Like the Arts Can Thrive

The first and foremost responsibility of the government is to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians, especially when transnational threats are present. Without safety and security, the arts and culture sector is left vulnerable to disruption, intimidation, and transnational repression.

This was highlighted through a written submission to the committee by David Matas, an international human rights lawyer, who stated, "Consideration of the state of creative and performance spaces across Canada requires consideration of the state of foreign interference in general and transnational repression in particular directed against these creative and performance spaces."

The need for security in the arts was emphasized by a variety of witnesses. A prime example is Shen Yun Performing Arts, which has been a target of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Matas informed the committee of evidence of the CCP's targeting of Shen Yun stating, "A 2010 leaked Chinese Communist Party internal notice stated: 'Combating and suppressing the ...performances of ... the 'Shen Yun Show' is an important part of the current struggle against 'Falun Gong'." Joel Chipkar, a spokesperson for the Falun Dafa Association, which presents Shen Yun, highlighted the serious security concerns facing the production. He stated: "This year Shen

Yun has faced booking denials, theatre evacuations and cancellations. For example, on March 15, Mississauga's Living Arts Centre received a bomb threat from China, threatening to bomb the theatre and Parliament Hill if Shen Yun performed. The theatre was evacuated, and the show delayed 90 minutes until police determined the threat non-credible."

As a target of transnational repression, Shen Yun is being forced to operate under the constant threat of bomb threats and other forms of harm. No artistic organization should have to face such intimidation simply for exercising its right to freedom of expression.

Similarly, the Globe Theatre faced death threats over a controversial performance. Jennifer Brewin, the Director of Globe Theatre, stated, “We had to have police officers in the theatre to protect the artists and the audience from the death threats”. Without security, performers and audiences sometimes face great danger.

Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society also faced unsafe circumstances. Christy Morin, the founder and Executive Director of the organization, described when they first arrived at the neighbourhood that would be the home of Arts on the Ave, stating,

> “That district was an old historic neighbourhood, but was really seen with a lot of crime and grime. […] We went for a picnic. We put down our gingham blanket and there was a fellow who was chasing a woman with a two-by-four across the picnic. We looked and we saw needles scattered everywhere.”

Morin took personal responsibility for strengthening her community through the arts. Through Arts on the Ave, she helped transform the neighbourhood while working alongside local officials to improve safety and security. Recognizing an opportunity to make a meaningful difference, Morin demonstrated how residents can play an important role in addressing local challenges by working together with government and law enforcement. One powerful example was the organization's response to the neighbourhood's knife problem. As Morin explained:

> “We, as artists, began conversations across the whole entire city of Edmonton, and we actually went to City Hall together and created a new business class for convenience stores so they could no longer carry dangerous knives. That's the kind of work we do.”

Whether facing foreign interference and transnational repression, threats of violence, or the effects of crime and disorder, artists and cultural organizations cannot fully contribute to Canadian society when they are forced to operate in unsafe environments.

2. The Liberal Government Is Failing to Uphold Public Safety and Security

The Liberal government is failing to protect Shen Yun from demonstrable transnational repression from the CCP. David Matas stated, "To date, the Government of Canada, though informed of what has been happening at the various venues with Shen Yun, has done nothing.”

This was made clear when Conservatives put forward a motion in committee to condemn the CCP's actions against Shen Yun, only to see the Liberal members of the committee resoundingly vote against it.

This failure to act has real consequences. After the Liberals voted down the motion, the spokesperson for Shen Yun, Joel Chipkar, stated,

> "It's a bipartisan issue. It's an issue that affects everybody. It's not just the Falun Gong community or Shen Yun. Today, it's Falun Gong and Shen Yun. Tomorrow, it's going to be somebody else. When we allow foreign dictatorships to silence our voices and our arts, we lose everything. We lose everything in Canada. We have no sovereignty anymore. We're at the behest of a foreign dictatorship."

The Government's failure to secure performing art spaces and artists sends a troubling message that transnational repression and threats to safety are tolerated.

3. Practical Solutions Exist to Address the Security Challenges Facing the Arts and Other Sectors.

The most commonsense solution is that the government must take some form of action. David Matas affirmed this, saying, "This form of foreign interference/ transnational repression directed by the Chinese embassy and consulates should not be left to performance venues to address. Foreign interference/ transnational repression should be a Government of Canada concern."

Matas also advocated for a reporting system for transnational repression. He stated, "All interactions between the Chinese embassy and consulates in Canada and Canadian arts venues hosting Shen Yun should go through the Global Affairs Canada of the Government of Canada."

Additionally, Joel Chipkar recommended assessments from law enforcement,

> "Public security agencies—the RCMP, CSE, CSIS and local police services—should assess and investigate the broader pattern of foreign interference and transnational crime targeting the cultural sector, including the threats and intimidation campaigns, not merely as isolated public order incidents, and enforce relevant provisions of existing legislation."

Chipkar also asked for federal guidelines stating,

> "Canadian Heritage should establish federal guidance and response protocols for publicly funded cultural institutions facing foreign state intimidation." He also recommended training on foreign interference for crown corporations: "Publicly funded venues in Crown corporations, including the NAC, should receive training on foreign interference, transnational repression and diplomatic pressure tactics, and the NAC should be directed to offer Shen Yun dates to perform in Ottawa."

The government's foremost responsibility is to protect the safety and security of Canadians. Yet, the Liberal government has repeatedly failed to uphold this fundamental duty across numerous areas, including the arts and cultural sector. Canadians deserve more than rhetoric; they deserve meaningful action to address these concerns and ensure that artists, cultural institutions and audiences can operate safely and without fear.

Summary

The arts and culture sector plays an important role in Canadian society, but it cannot thrive without safety, security, and freedom from foreign interference. The testimony before the committee demonstrated both the serious threats facing cultural institutions and the practical solutions available to address them. The government has a fundamental responsibility to protect Canadians, uphold Canadian sovereignty, and ensure that artists and audiences can participate in cultural life without fear or intimidation. The Conservative members of the committee call on the government to take meaningful action to protect Canada’s arts and culture sector and ensure it remains a place where freedom of expression can flourish.