

Statistics Canada
150 Tunney's Pasture Driveway
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6

September 26, 2023

Re: Canada's live performing arts data

Dear Megan McMaster and Statistics Canada,

Thank you for your recent Analysis in Brief report, ["Return to Life after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic"](#), released on August 22, 2023. We at the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) appreciate the ongoing work of Statistics Canada in providing vital and trusted data that will document our society's recovery from the pandemic and inform future public policy.

PACT is the collective voice of professional Canadian theatres, and a leader in the performing arts community. The association represents over 160 professional theatre companies operating in communities across the country.

It is because of the impact of your work that we feel it is important to be cautious and always position such data within a broader context and paint a more complete picture of where the cultural sector finds itself, at the close of 2022, and indeed, today. It is entirely possible that a reader might walk away from this report with the perspective that most cultural industries are thriving, with strong revenue and salary growth. And while year-over-year reports can give us early indicators, it is far from the full story. Other than one line in the Conclusion paragraph, there is little to indicate that the live performing arts sector remains the hardest hit by the restrictions and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We request that any future reports tracking pandemic recovery provide pre-pandemic comparison data points. In this report, revenue for golf courses, country clubs and skiing facilities is tracked from 2019 to 2022. A similar approach for the live performing arts would possibly lead to very different conclusions. In the interest of painting a more complete picture of the situation of the live performing arts sector, I would like to provide supplementary comparative data that we would encourage policy makers to keep in mind.

From the CADAC (Canadian Arts Data / Données sur les arts au Canada)¹ – theatre, dance & music activities

	2018/19 ² :	2021/22 ²	Difference
Earned Revenue (ticket, subscription sales)	\$522 million	\$346 million	-33%
Total number of public activities	67,681	46,498	-31%
Total Public Attendance	18.6 million	10.8 million	-42%

From the Canadian Artist Equity Association (actors, directors, dancers, stage managers):

	2018/19³:	2022/23	Difference
Number of CAEA contracts issued:	6,037	4,064	-32%

The recently released *Arts Response Tracking Survey*, conducted by Nanos for Business/Arts and the National Arts Centre found that **34%** of self-identified culture goers have still not returned to attending an indoor event in the last three years⁴. PACT's own national professional theatre members have reported a **35-41% increase** in operating costs⁵, and a **35% decline** in indoor attendance, with **38%** of organizations reporting being in a deficit position.

These numbers paint a very clear picture. Quite simply, the live performing arts sector in Canada, particularly the theatre sector, is hurting. Faced with hesitant audiences, dwindling support from sponsors, donors, and governments, and increases in expenses, live performing arts organizations are struggling to keep the lights on and doors open for audiences. We are happy to hear about the recovery of our friends in the entertainment and recreation service sectors, and hope that over time our sector will follow suit. However, to realize that goal, urgent action, informed by data and analysis, is needed now.

PACT, alongside many peers, calls upon our government partners to recognize that the live performing arts sector is on a different recovery trajectory, and as such requires a unique approach to support it through targeted investments into resilience, innovation, and sustainability. We encourage Statistics Canada to consider multiple variables in their analysis and to engage with the sector so policy makers have the full picture of the situation.

Thank you for your ongoing reporting of our sector.

Sincerely,



Brad Lepp
Executive Director
Professional Association of Canadian Theatres

1 CADAC – Theatre, Music, Dance: Explore our Data · Starter Portal (cadac.ca)

2 CCA Reporting fiscal year July 1, to June 31.

3 CAEA fiscal year April 1, to March 31.

4 Nanos, Business/Arts, NAC – National Survey, July 2023 – Submission 2023-2411.

5 PACT 2024 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Finance Committee