

## Advocacy Brief- Connecting with Members of Parliament (MP)

Share your impact directly with your elected officials. This brief is meant to give an overview for successful meetings and events. If you would like any additional support, please don't hesitate to contact Breanne Harmon ([breanne.h@persephonetheatre.org](mailto:breanne.h@persephonetheatre.org)) & Rahul Gandhi ([operations@quebecdrama.org](mailto:operations@quebecdrama.org)) co-chairs chair of PACT's Advocacy Committee.

### Meeting Process

#### Outreach and Invitation:

- Reach out to your MP's constituency office, introducing yourself and asking for a meeting, to attend an upcoming performance, or if applicable, take a tour of your facility. This may take a few follow-up emails/calls. [Find your MP by postal code](#). PACT has an outreach template on its [Advocacy and Resources Page](#).
- Provide a brief overview of your organization, and highlight that you are a constituent from their riding.
- Once a meeting is confirmed, please let PACT / Breanne Harmon ([breanne.h@persephonetheatre.org](mailto:breanne.h@persephonetheatre.org)) & Rahul Gandhi ([operations@quebecdrama.org](mailto:operations@quebecdrama.org)) know.

#### Hosting and Meetings:

- Prepare for the meeting by reviewing the Meeting Framework. If there are two or more people in the meeting, discuss beforehand who will be saying what. Refer to the [PACT Advocacy Tools and Resources Page](#) for stats, or recent advocacy updates.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early for your meeting in order to respect the time of the member. If you are hosting at your space, try to meet them at the entrance, or have a designated member of your team meet them.
- Address candidates professionally (Mr./Ms./Mrs. LAST NAME) and address a Minister as "Minister" - not Mr. or Ms. Minister.
- Don't presume their positions on topics based on their political affiliation; approach the discussion as an interested member of the community who wants to discuss solutions to issues of importance to Canadians. You're holding a dialogue!
- Try to find a personal connection to the theatre or the performing arts – a family member's involvement, a favourite show, arts in education, etc.
- Keep in mind that most politicians will afford only 20-30 minutes for meetings, so be brief and to the point.

#### Conclusion / Follow-Up:

- Reiterate any commitments of actions identified in the meeting.
- Wrap up the meeting by thanking them and make sure to add that if they have any further questions, to contact you personally or PACT.
- Take a photo together. You don't need to post it publicly if you're not comfortable, but it can be used for internal communications, and please share this with PACT. If they plan to use a photo taken in front of/on your stage, please share the production credits with their office.
- Offer to keep them updated periodically throughout the year, and make a note to check-in.
- Send a thank you email to the MP and any staff participants in the following days after your meeting. Thank them for their time and reinforce your most important points that you wanted to get across, add in a personal touch, and this gives you the opportunity to include any materials you may have promised to provide them.

## Key Messages

### Message Framework:

- Open your meetings by thanking the MP for taking the time from their busy schedule to meet with you and discuss the industry's issues and obstacles.
- Give a brief background of your organization, history, and operations, and don't assume they know. Talk about the communities you serve and your impact locally.
- Don't worry about having messaging memorized. It is okay to bring in a few speaking notes, but try to speak from your personal experience. **Remember, you're the expert.** If you don't know the answer to a question simply offer to follow-up with the information afterwards.
- Try to avoid acronyms or professional terminology.
- Feel free to share the challenges you face, while recognizing the MPs are rarely in a position to influence specific programs. Be mindful of jurisdictional oversight – is the issue federal, provincial, or municipal?
- Remember to leave time for the MP to ask you questions – this is the most important part of the meeting.
- Some national messaging is included below that you should feel free to use as appropriate.

### The Current State of Canadian Theatre:

- Member theatres report a 25% increase in operating expenses since 2019;
- Audience have mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels, with a new generation of theatre-goers leading the charge. However, there are new purchase trends and price sensitivity.
- Philanthropic donations in the arts were down 45%;
- Government funding for the arts has not grown with the sector, leading to significant inflationary devaluation.

### Opportunity & Impact:

- When our sovereignty feels under threat, our cultural institutions become vital places of storytelling. Now is the time to invest in the things that make us Canadian. Not all nation-building projects are infrastructure.
- Canada enjoys a world-class theatre sector, with amazing professional work being produced every day across this country, by companies large and small, rural and urban. Most years, over 10 million Canadians (25%) attend a live theatre production. We are seeing audiences return, longing for shared live experiences.
- With studies reporting a national rise in feelings of loneliness and isolation, Canada's theatres offer an opportunity for connection as places for community members to come together, to share, and be inspired.
- Theatres are aware of price sensitivity with the rising cost of living, with nearly all theatres having a robust portfolio of accessibility programs and community outreach.
- Canada's theatres employ over 30,000 people.
- Cultural tourists stay longer and spend nearly *three-times* more while they're here, supporting other local businesses.

### Federal Asks: (don't feel the need to get into too many details, this can be the topic of a follow-up meeting with PACT)

- That 1% of government spending go towards Arts and Culture programs, including an additional \$140 million in permanent funding to the Canada Council for the Arts. This increase will support stabilization, regional inequity, and growth for core operations, while addressing over-subscribed programs at Canadian Heritage.
- A sector coalition is asking for a Live Performing Arts Tax Credit, which would mirror the successful Film and Television Tax Credit by reinvesting a labour rebate into local jobs and scalable industry growth.