



Joint statement by ArtsBuild Ontario and Ontarians for the Arts

April 24 2018 – The Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario recently signed a bilateral agreement that will see both levels of government invest in infrastructural renewal and development [source: March 14 [News Release](#); [Backgrounder](#)]. It is noteworthy that a predetermined amount is set aside for a Cultural and Recreational Infrastructure stream. The federal government will contribute \$407.2M, with the province adding another \$335.9M for a total of \$742.9M over the next ten years. On average, that's \$74M per year. Government projects and non-profits will be eligible.

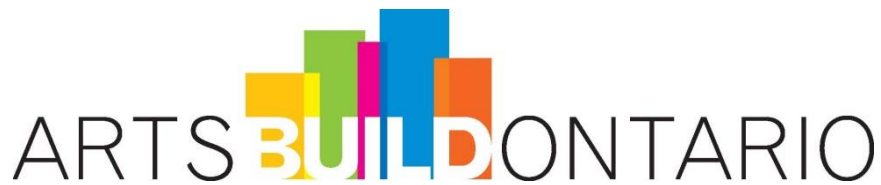
ArtsBuild Ontario ([see recommendations](#)) and Ontarians for the Arts ([see discussion paper](#)) are both advocating for stand-alone programs for arts and culture. While our respective recommendations stand, recent developments and dialogue on this topic are encouraging. An opening may exist through the bilateral agreement to advance our respective recommendations.

Accordingly, we ask that careful consideration be made when distributing funds between arts/culture spaces and recreation facilities. Specifically, we encourage the development of a sub-stream for arts/culture and another sub-stream for recreation with equitable annual allocations. Different eligibility requirements and program guidelines will help to ensure these important and distinct infrastructure needs are met in cities and communities across Ontario. Further, program managers in government should not have to choose between hockey arenas and soccer goal posts or new lighting for the community theatre and a new space for local Indigenous peoples. We can meet many needs through this agreement.

We ask that the guidelines and application, once formalized, be widely distributed using arts service organizations like ArtsBuild to ensure that this fund is accessible to small and large creative spaces across Ontario.

The bilateral agreement also outlines how the federal government will roll out its investments. The timetable is back-loaded. We hope the province of Ontario will consider front-loading its contributions so that these streams may be delivered in timely, stable, responsive and measured ways. Cultural infrastructure in Ontario is in dire need of renewal. We would like to emphasize the urgency of the situation. Without timely attention to this matter: some buildings will fall into further disrepair or possibly even fail, energy efficiency will continue to be compromised (affecting operating budgets), and new projects that will serve Canadians of all backgrounds in communities large and small may be delayed. Perhaps most glaringly, meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples on a cultural level will be further delayed, which is hardly acceptable when the truth is clear.

There is so much riding on this needed investment. It is time to deliver on cultural infrastructure so we may all better engage with new cultural paradigms in Ontario. Much of Ontario's cultural infrastructure was built a generation ago. Renewed investment would update and revitalize existing cultural spaces, while creating more local and culturally respectful places. Meeting our objectives is paramount.



Program guidelines are being developed and should be available later this year. In the meantime, an opportunity exists to affect how such a program may be efficiently and effectively delivered. Now is a time for dialogue with government officials and politicians; to remind them that arts and culture infrastructure are a necessary part of community life and require dedicated support.

We are focused on finding solutions to address Ontario's cultural infrastructure deficit. This may be one way that can happen. We remain optimistic, committed to our goals, and open to further dialogue.

About

ArtsBuild Ontario is the only organization in Ontario dedicated to realizing long-term solutions for building, managing and financing the sustainable arts facilities needed in Ontario communities.

For further information

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Ontarians for the Arts is an inclusive non-partisan movement intent on promoting the benefits of the arts in every city, community and reserve.

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