

Canadian
Crafts
Federation

Fédération
canadienne des
métiers d'art

CRAFT: An entrepreneurial investment

Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-budget hearings
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Submitted to:
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"Our government recognizes that arts and culture are important generators of economic growth, jobs and wealth in our communities" ¹

– Jim Flaherty, Federal Finance Minister

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Canadian Crafts Federation / Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art* (CCF/FCMA) is the national arts service organization that represents provincial and territorial craft councils and the Canadian craft sector. It advances and promotes the vitality and excellence of Canadian craft nationally and internationally to the benefit of Canadian craftspeople and the community at large.

Our recommendations:

1. Provide access to funding for skills and training, particularly through apprenticeships.
2. Maintain, and if possible, increase the budget of the Canada Council over three years to reach \$300 million.
3. Invest \$40 million of new money into domestic touring and the development of foreign markets.

Thank you for the opportunity to explain how our unique market fits into the overall Canadian economy. We appreciate the vast range of funding proposals the committee must review, and hope that our proposal sparks an interest in the extraordinary potential of the professional Craft industry.

PREFACE

The *Canadian Crafts Federation / Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art* (CCF/FCMA) is the national arts service organization that represents provincial and territorial craft councils and the Canadian craft sector. It advances and promotes the vitality and excellence of Canadian craft nationally and internationally to the benefit of Canadian craftspeople and the community at large.

Since 1998, the CCF/FCMA has grown to become an active, collaborative organization. We utilize a unique structure in order to achieve our goals – one which focuses on collective strength to affect positive change in areas of mutual interest.

As a federation of organizations, we represent over 6,000 craftspeople through our membership, made up of the Provincial and Territorial Craft Councils. The work we do benefits the entire craft sector, estimated to be over 22,000 practising craftspeople across the country, a sector valued at \$727 million.² Craft is an important component of the cultural industry, which is three times the size of Canada's insurance industry, and double that of forestry. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the cultural sector contributed \$84.6 billion to the GDP in 2007. For every dollar of real value-added GDP produced by Canada's cultural industries, roughly \$1.84 is added to the overall real GDP.³ A major player in the Canadian economy, culture and Craft should be treated as such, with appropriate investment for future growth.

The sector is an important, though often undervalued vein of the cultural industry in Canada, one which is clearly recognizable as a viable, entrepreneurially driven, homegrown market. There is an effective and active system of organizations across the country working to develop this market, and our membership is a driving force. The Provincial and Territorial Craft Councils run Craft shops, galleries, seasonal festivals, special sales, and they work with government and other corporate agencies to conduct retail and wholesale markets. These are not international corporate franchises,

they are Canadian organizations promoting Canadian made products. They work to promote Canadian Craft outside our borders, as the international art market is a great export opportunity. The appreciation for Fine Craft internationally is much higher than that found in North America, so it is prudent and practical that Canadian Craft artists receive exposure on an international scale. This expands the market, increasing demand for and sales of Canadian Craft.

Craft artists, Makers and Designers – no matter what terminology you use – are industrious people working towards the same end goal: to produce unique, quality products. Whether it's a jewellery maker selling their wares through an urban boutique, a furniture designer producing custom designed goods from their rural studio, or a glass-blower presenting works of sculpture in an international exhibition, artists create works to sell, contributing to the GDP of the country.

Artisans working in ceramic, glass, textiles, metal, wood and many other materials create works made in Canada. The industry supports Canadian jobs in production, design, marketing, sales and other cultural outlets. Their work is an integral part of the domestic and international art and design market, sold in galleries, museums, boutiques, tourism centres, online, and elsewhere. Our ties to the tourism industry are clear. Whether it's Canadians themselves or international visitors, those looking to commemorate their travels take home with them a piece of Canada; a handmade object - a work of Canadian Craft. Visitors want more than a t shirt or key-chain to remember their unique experience, and it is often the work of Canadian artisans which stands to represent us, our culture, our style, our tastes, aesthetics and our values as Canadians.

INTRODUCTION

It is important to note that Craft is a major player in the thriving cultural marketplace. The industry is a skilled, professional sector filled with producers who have spent their lives dedicated to craftsmanship. We do not mean hobbyists or those who dabble in Craft on a recreational basis – these are trained, skilled, dedicated individuals, often highly educated in their field.

A majority of these professional Craft workers are self-employed; whether they are the designer, maker or seller of Craft objects. Individuals create and sell their work directly, small business owners run their own shops and galleries, and curators organize exhibitions of Fine Craft for display and sale (increasing the public's appreciation for and the perceived value of finely crafted works of art). In many cases these entrepreneurs hire others, creating jobs in and outside of the cultural sector. Like any business they require accountants, sales associates, marketing professionals, shipping assistance, etc. When possible, apprenticeship allows an emerging artist to assist a professional producer, a training opportunity that not only supports the business in production, but develops the skills of another cultural worker.

It is a worthy investment to support the craftspeople of Canada, and that of all visual artists, as they contribute to a thriving cultural industry. This industry has “a labour force of 539,000 employers and workers across the country, and an economic impact of \$39 billion or 3.1% of GDP.”⁴ Further studies suggest that despite the global recession, “the reduction in culture sector employment is expected to be smaller than the reduction in employment for the overall Canadian economy”⁵, indicating that cultural sector jobs are more likely to weather the storms of future economic downturns. Therefore, CCF/FCMA would argue that investment in cultural sector training and support for culturally based

employment is a low risk venture as the sustainability of these jobs is steadier than other sectors.

As the government seeks to achieve a sustained economic recovery and to create quality sustainable jobs, the CCF/FCMA highly recommends investment in skills and training for cultural workers, support for small business owners and entrepreneurs, and assistance for artists in the production of their works – all of which support the entrepreneurial Craft sector and the Cultural Industry in general. Small businesses are leaders in job creation, as from 1993 to 2003, they accounted for 80% of net job creation.⁶ Craft based businesses are professional contributors to the entrepreneurial landscape in Canada. As we face a lengthy recovery from the global economic downturn, and potential further difficulties as the current financial climate predicts, “entrepreneurship is a powerful force driving innovation, productivity, job creation and economic growth. Countries with a high level of entrepreneurial activity tend to be better off economically.”⁷

At a time when the government is cutting federal jobs in a wide variety of sectors⁸, investment in arts and culture is a direct and logical investment in job creation. In our field specifically, the percentage of Canadians who are self-employed is more than twice that of self-employed people in the overall economy (26% vs 12%).⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

“An economic recovery that doesn't include strong investments in arts and culture isn't a real plan”¹⁰
- James Moore, Minister of Culture

1. Provide access to funding for skills and training, particularly through apprenticeships.

The business of Craft can be financially lucrative and artistically fulfilling, but there are many hurdles to overcome in a misunderstood genre of art. Though there are great difficulties in the start-up of any business, leaping from formal arts education or self-taught skill based work to entrepreneurial activity is a particularly difficult manoeuvre. Many schools teach arts-based business skills, but it is typically a single course; with the vast majority of time and effort spent on the development of hands on skill in design and creation. It takes years to master the techniques of any given medium in Craft, and studies have shown the estimated number of hours to gain expertise in a given skill is 10,000, approximately ten years.¹¹ This mastery of skill is essential in the development of a lasting career in the arts.

Historically, artisans honed their skills through apprenticeship, an extremely practical and effective method of learning. Contemporary practitioners also benefit from these opportunities, though they are extremely limited and not financially supported by federal skills or training systems. While apprenticeships are supported in other, often closely related trades (such as welding, carpentry and iron work) these more industrially aimed skills are supported over the more refined artistically aimed skills. It is an unfortunate bias that furniture makers are not covered but cabinet makers are – glassblowers are not covered but glaziers are – metalsmiths and jewellery makers are not covered but metal fabricators are. The differences between these are broad in the finished product, but the basic skill sets required are extremely similar. It is not a simple bias or ingrained elitism that backs this claim, it is an understanding of the realities of these positions and the skills required. The Red Seal tradesmen receive federally funded grants for taking and completing apprenticeships, and equally if not higher skilled artisans working in very similar fields do not.

The provision of and support for skills development and training in any field is essential to the growth and success of a sector. The CCF/FCMA asks that the federal government ensure that matching funding to the Red Seal Trade grant program is accessible to Craft artists, and that Craft apprenticeship programs be developed. Such programs would benefit emerging artists working to learn the skills of business management and the refinement of their technical practice, and would also benefit the mentor, who would receive assistance and support for their business. The CCF/FCMA would make it our priority to work with the government to develop such a program.

2. Maintain, and if possible, increase the budget of the Canada Council over three years to reach \$300 million.

The Canada Council for the Arts is an established, viable, honoured institution. The programming they support through grants, awards and sponsorship helps Canadian artists and organizations to execute quality projects and programming – programming which the public accesses to improve the quality of life for all. Numerous studies the world over have found that exposure to the arts benefits education²², community development²³, health²⁴ and much more.

The Craft sector is currently supported by the Canada Council for the Arts through project and long-term grants to Craft artists, curators and organizations. Assistance is available for travel, research, development, publications and presentation, all essential to the development of a Craft career in a geographically large country. Craft organizations such as the CCF/FCMA and our members (the Provincial and Territorial Craft Councils) access funding for programs and operational costs, as well as professional development to ensure the organizational representatives of our sector are well prepared to provide support to the industry.

Investment in the Council would be a direct investment in the quality artists and arts organizations of our country. After a 2010 federal financial review of the Canada Council for the Arts, the institution was described by Minister of Culture James Moore as being “in line with the priorities of Canadians”. This review resulted in no cut to the institution, despite being faced with the potential for a 5% rollback.²⁵ This, combined with its successful history of arts development and support in Canada give credence to our recommendation for further funding of the Canada Council for the Arts.

3. Invest \$40 million of new money into domestic touring and the development of foreign markets.

The international market for professionally handmade goods holds enormous potential outside the domestic market for Canadian Craft practitioners. Projects that boost the reputation and sales of Craft artists worldwide are essential in expanding export activity, whether through the exchange of exhibitions, the sale of works in an international market or the display of Canadian Craft in countries where the handmade is better appreciated than in the North American sensibility. Access to this international market is a pricey venture, with capital up front that most small businesses and non-profit organizations simply do not have. With assistance from the federal government, these dedicated marketers of Craft would tap into an export market that in previous years reached near \$100 million dollars²⁶ – back when export and touring funding was available from the now defunct PromArt and Trade Routes programs.

Projects which display Canadian Craft in international venues, or even in regions outside the home market of the maker, expose their works to a broader audience. This is absolutely essential for Craft artists who wish to break out of their limited local market. Organizations like the Provincial and Territorial Craft Council and market specific groups such as Craft Alliance and the CCF/FCMA have all worked towards trade missions and international exposure for exactly this purpose – to shine a spotlight on the quality goods of the Canadian Craft industry. Without Trade Routes and PromArt, or a new and more streamlined cost-effective federally funded program, this international activity is daunting, expensive and extremely unlikely to take place.

The Canadian population is relatively low, and spread far across a geographic expanse. Touring and export support is essential to the development of our industry, but has benefits to other areas of the economy – namely, tourism. By exposing the work of Canadian artisans to the world, new viewers get a taste of our culture, and are intrigued by our country. Those who see an exhibition or sale of Canadian Craft ask who are the people of Canada? What makes them unique? How do they live, what do they do, and what is it like to live there? Just as the archaeologists of ancient cultures study the objects a civilization used, wore, made and collected to understand a community – learning about modern culture is much the same, but through contemporary Craft.

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