



FRANCOPHONE

# ARTS AND CULTURE

IN ONTARIO

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White Paper

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# SUMMARY

Ontario's Francophone arts and culture sector includes a significant number of artists and arts and culture organizations, working throughout the province. These stakeholders are active in a wide range of artistic disciplines, directly contribute to the province's cultural development, allow Ontarians to take part in fulfilling artistic and cultural experiences, and work on the frontlines to ensure the vitality of Ontario's Francophone communities. This network has considerably diversified and specialized itself over the years, so much so that it now makes up one of the most elaborate cultural ecosystems in all of French Canada.

However, public funding supporting this sector has been stagnant for years, and the province's cultural strategy barely takes Francophones into account. While certain artists and arts organizations have become ambassadors for Ontario throughout the country and the world, many others continue to work in the shadows under appalling conditions. Cultural development, especially, is currently the responsibility of no specific department or agency of the provincial government. This means that organizations and actors that increase the quality of life and contribute directly to the local economy have difficulty securing recognition or significant support from the province.

This White Paper, drawn from ten regional consultations held throughout the province in the fall of 2016, examines the current state of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario, and identifies five key issues.

- **Supporting artists and strengthening the capacity of artistic and cultural organizations**
- **Updating and expanding the network of Francophone cultural spaces throughout the province**
- **Increasing the reach of Ontario's Francophone arts, culture and cultural products**
- **Enlisting the education community as a leading partner in Ontario's Francophone cultural vitality**
- **Remedying the lack of data on Ontario's Francophone arts and culture community**

Based on these issues, this paper proposes a series of priority measures that will reinforce the Francophone arts and culture sector in Ontario and ensure the long-term cultural vitality of Francophone communities.



# BACKGROUND

The development of the French language in Ontario is intimately tied to the vitality of Francophone arts and culture throughout the province. Seeking to better understand this connection, the Ontario government undertook a series of studies on the cultural sector over the years (Saint-Denis in 1969<sup>1</sup>, Savard in 1977<sup>2</sup> and RSVP in 1991<sup>3</sup>). Each of these studies chronicles a sector in full upswing, that is constantly diversifying and specializing itself.

When the Saint-Denis report was published, it identified no single Francophone organization devoted exclusively to professional arts in Ontario. At the time, the major stakeholders in the field were local organizations wearing many hats (culture, sports, economic development, education, etc.), and Francophone artists were mostly presented in church and community halls. Ontario's Francophones now enjoy a network of over one hundred arts and cultural organizations, including a province-wide network of professional Francophone cultural spaces.

Over the years, Ontario established a series of measures to support this rapidly growing sector, but they mostly consisted of one-offs. Ontario never adopted a horizontal policy in terms of Francophone culture. Unlike other sectors (education, health, French language services, etc.), Ontario's approach to arts and culture relies on a range of individual programs and limited initiatives, rather than an integrated strategy.

The partial exception remains the Ontario Arts Council's Francophone Arts Office, which has built strong relationships with the sector for nearly 45 years now, and which has truly played a role in establishing and sustaining the long-term development of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario. It is a relationship far beyond that of a typical client and funder. But even this office, whose field of intervention is dictated by a single provincial cultural agency, has a limited impact.

Ontario's approach likely halted the cultural development of the province's Francophone minority, which found itself without a central coordination that could have acted as a liaison between the various ministries and provincial agencies. Such coordination could have capitalized on potential synergies between the provincial and federal government, or developed relationships with other provinces and countries interested in Ontario's Francophone artists, artistic organizations and cultural products.

Some may recall that in 2006, Ontario and Quebec signed a collaboration agreement on culture. Both parties further reiterated their commitment to this agreement in 2016. But to this day, the sole concrete action to stem from this agreement has been an artistic residency program devised by both provinces' arts councils, whose annual investment does not exceed \$50,000. Otherwise, the governments of the two provinces that are home to the two largest French-speaking populations in North America have done nothing together in terms of arts and culture.

1 Comité Franco-Ontarien d'enquête culturelle, *La Vie culturelle des franco-ontariens*, 1969.

2 *Rapport sur les arts dans la vie franco-ontarienne*, 1977.

3 Groupe de travail pour une politique culturelle des Francophones de l'Ontario, *RSVP*, 1991.



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Unfortunately, nowhere is the gap between the provincial government's interest and its actions regarding arts and culture more obvious than when it comes to the new *Culture Strategy for Ontario*, introduced in 2016. This strategy, a first for Ontario, only mentions Francophones on eight occasions.

Indeed, only one of its recommendations pertains specifically to Francophones. This recommendation, which encourages the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture to better work together when it comes to Francophonie, echoes a recommendation made by the *Rapport Saint-Denis* nearly fifty years ago, and which the government evidently did not follow up on.

And yet, the Francophone arts and culture sector has grown in leaps and bounds over the past decades. The arts community has endowed itself with artistic associations, cultural centres, festivals, book fairs, community radios and newspapers, theatre companies, artist-run centres, art galleries, publishing houses, bookstores, etc. Francophone artists are networked and federated.

Furthermore, artistic practices have multiplied and diversified as a reflection of the changing face of Ontario's Francophone community, which is now one of the most diverse in North America. While the *Rapport Saint-Denis* accounted for singer-songwriters, community theatre groups, craft makers and storytellers, Ontario is now also home to a strong artistic community of world music professionals, media artists, contemporary dancers, established novelists and poets, publishing houses, nationally renowned theatre companies, and the list goes on.



Jean Marc Dalpé and Marcel Aymar, *La Nuit sur l'Étang*, 2012. Photo : Joël Ducharme

Three generations of Franco-Ontarian artists have set out on Ontario's roads since Robert Paquette undertook his first tour. Among them, regardless of discipline, many have had distinguished careers: Clément Bérinni, Shahla Bahrani, Lise Beaudry, Le Théâtre la Vieille 17, Patrice Desbiens, Jean Marc Dalpé, Brigitte Haentjens, Robert Dickson, Daniel Poliquin, Marguerite Andersen, le Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario, les Éditions Prise de Parole, CANO, Paul Demers, Breen Leboeuf, Brasse Camarade, Chuck Labelle, Véronique Dicaire, Damien Robitaille, Andrea Lindsay, Corpus Danse, Mehdi Hamdad, YAO, Katherine Levac, etc. The success that these artists have known, both as ambassadors for Ontario's Francophone community and as leaders of their respective artistic disciplines, is a major source of pride for all of Ontario's Francophones.



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Progress has been plentiful in this sector over the decades, but the current situation remains disturbing. Over the last two years, the Ontario Trillium Foundation has reviewed its programs; the Ontario government launched a cultural strategy that largely ignores its Francophone community; and both the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council have undertaken significant administrative transformations, with no indication of their plans for Ontario's Francophone community. All this happened while core funding has remained capped for over a decade, at both the provincial and federal levels. Working conditions for artists continue to stagnate, the power of community networks is eroding, and – despite obvious good faith and substantial efforts – the sector continues to struggle to open itself up and be more inclusive of culturally diverse artists and organizations.

This is the context in which l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO) has developed a *White Paper on Francophone arts and culture in Ontario*. This document, grounded in an in-depth analysis of the current situation, suggests a vision for the future that will position and prioritize public investments and policies. With this White Paper, the AFO seeks to define the current state of affairs, identify long-term priorities and offer concrete and specific measures to ensure the growth of the Francophone arts and culture sector in Ontario.

Over the fall of 2016, the AFO led 10 public and 12 individual consultations, bringing together nearly 150 stakeholders from Ontario's Francophone arts and culture sector. They spoke about the issues, needs and priorities required that would ensure a future for Francophone arts and culture in Ontario. In order to prepare this White Paper, we have compiled and analyzed the comments provided by participants during the consultations, studied documents provided by the stakeholders after the consultations, and reviewed over thirty studies and reports dealing with the artistic and cultural sector as a whole, or more specific aspects of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario.

This White Paper does not account for the heritage sector, whose needs and concerns warrant a specific treatment, and only discusses Francophone media within their relationship with the artistic and cultural community. Although Francophone media are key players in the promotion of arts and culture, we have limited our comments since the media sector will be the subject of another report.

This White Paper on Francophone arts and culture in Ontario comes from the community, and is based on the vision, the reality and the needs of people who work on the ground in the arts and culture field.



Espoir/Espwa, Théâtre Français de Toronto, 2016. Photo : Djennie Laguerre



# STATE OF THE FIELD

While other sectors are built around major poles, or in a continuum perspective, the arts and culture community is more of an ecosystem. This vision places artists, artistic and cultural organizations, cultural workers, students, patrons, funders and audiences on common ground, in constant dialogue and exchange. In this perspective, the challenges of some halt momentum for the entire sector, while the progress of others marks a step forward for all.

Nearly five decades after the Rapport Saint-Denis was published, the Francophone artistic and cultural ecosystem in Ontario has come a long way. The province now boasts a network of over one hundred artistic organizations (theatre companies, publishers, etc.), arts service organizations (Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario, etc.) and cultural development organizations (cultural and community centres, etc.).

The latter promote concerted action in the community and offer personal development opportunities and services to artists and cultural workers to support them in their initiatives. The artistic and cultural ecosystem also includes cultural industry businesses (publishing, music production, film and television production, etc.). It is worth noting that these businesses (record labels, agencies, television production companies, etc.) already contribute – increasingly so – to Ontario's cultural economy, and will be essential for the long-term consolidation of Canada's Francophone cultural industries.

Indeed, the number of existing producers and cultural media businesses make Ontario one of the country's most important hubs when it comes to Francophone music, film and television production. Recent investments from the province supporting the promotion of the music industry have been particularly helpful in making this sector more competitive and reinforcing support structures (agencies, production companies, record labels, etc.).



Shahla Bahrami. Photo : Clémence Labasse





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While the federal government looks to adopt a strategy to strengthen the creation, discovery and exporting of Canadian content in a digital world, Francophone cultural industries keep running into contextual barriers. Ontario's television productions are shown regularly on Canadian airwaves, and television series are often shot in the province. However, French books are not systematically available on digital platforms, and feature-length fiction films are practically unheard of in French Ontario. While digital is opening the door to a worldwide market, production, promotion and distribution expertise remains to be developed.

The core of the organizational network is made up of groups throughout the province that are involved in cultural activities or artistic disciplines. Local organizations, juggling different roles, continue to be key players in cultural development for Francophone Ontario. These include multidisciplinary presenters, naturally, but also cultural and community centres involved in presenting artistic performances, although it is not their main activity.

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	NUMBER	COMMUNITY
ART SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS	12	Ottawa
MULTIDISCIPLINARY PRESENTERS	18 <sup>4</sup>	Alexandria, Chapleau, Hamilton, Hawkesbury, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Kingston, London, North Bay, Orléans, Oshawa, Ottawa, Penetanguishene, Sturgeon Falls, Sudbury, Toronto and Timmins
THEATRE COMPANIES	8 <sup>5</sup>	Ottawa, Sudbury and Toronto
PUBLISHERS	8 <sup>6</sup>	Ottawa, Plantagenet, Sudbury and Toronto
ARTIST RUN CENTRES	4	Ottawa, Sudbury and Toronto
FESTIVALS	5	Alfred, Ottawa, Toronto, Lafontaine and Sudbury
BOOK FAIRS	4	Sudbury, Toronto, Hawkesbury and Hearst
MUSIC PRODUCERS	17	Various
TELEVISION, FILM AND MULTIMEDIA PRODUCERS	9	Ottawa, Sudbury and Toronto

4 Réseau Ontario, [www.reseauontario.ca/fr/diffuseurs/diffuseurs-pluridi](http://www.reseauontario.ca/fr/diffuseurs/diffuseurs-pluridi)

5 Association des théâtres de la francophonie canadienne, [www.atfc.ca/index.cfm?Voir=menu&Repertoire\\_No=-589634889&M=4108](http://www.atfc.ca/index.cfm?Voir=menu&Repertoire_No=-589634889&M=4108)

6 Regroupement des éditeurs canadiens-français, [www.avoslivres.ca/editeurs/](http://www.avoslivres.ca/editeurs/)



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It is also worth noting that a great deal of artistic community groups (theatre groups, choirs, etc.) also favour artistic involvement at the provincial level. Among these groups, few are those who benefit from any kind of provincial support.

For most of the stakeholders in this arts and culture organizational network, the main source of core funding from the province is the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). The OAC's granting budget has been slightly reduced over the past few years (a grant reduction of \$1,140,921; 2.2% since 2009–2010). Because of this reduction, the expansion of the arts and culture community and the increase in the cost of living, the OAC and the francophone arts community are now under considerable financial strain. The OAC has attempted to mitigate the impact of these pressures on the artistic community through a series of internal measures, but overall the OAC's programs as a whole have nonetheless seen their budgets reduced.

The OAC's grant success rates are one indicator of increased financial pressure. The overall OAC success rate (grant requests vs. grants approved) has gone from 32.5% in 2012–2013 to 29.8% in 2015–2016. The success rate for grant requests submitted in French decreased by 5% between 2009–2010 and 2015–2016. However, it is important to note that the success rate for grant requests submitted in French (60.7% in 2015–2016) remains significantly higher than the OAC's overall success rate.

Increased financial pressure at the OAC has also led to reduced buying power for stakeholders. Accounting for inflation, the francophone arts and culture community is currently underfunded by 1,390,020 \$ and the sector's buying power has decreased by 5.7% since 2009–2010.

Recently, during the tabling of the provincial budget, it was announced that the OAC budget would increase by 5 million dollars for each of the next two fiscal years. This is a step in the right direction and should help alleviate funding pressures in the foreseeable future.

In 2015–16, some 72 organizations, groups and artistic collectives split \$2,321,953 in funding from the Ontario Arts Council's Francophone Arts Office. Grants to Francophones have remained stable since 2009–2010 (\$3,480,747 in 2009–2010; \$3,481,157 in 2015–2016), while the OAC's overall budget was reduced by 2.2%. In 2009–10, grants to Francophone organizations (\$2,646,201) made up 6.3% of the OAC's total grants to organizations. In 2015–16, grants to Francophone organizations had slightly increased (\$2,750,667), making up about 6.7% of total grants to organizations. These investments, which have a direct impact on the financial and human capacity of Francophone organizations, have been stagnant for several years.



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ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL FUNDING : 2010-2016 <sup>7</sup> [IN DOLLARS]							
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Grants to Francophone organizations (Francophone Arts)	2,282,852	2,410,040	2,424,408	2,395,722	2,370,070	2,383,817	2,401,940
Grants to Francophone Organization (Other programs)	363,349	376,512	327,787	370,927	390,855	340,605	348,727
Total OAC grants to organizations	2,646,201	2,786,552	2,752,195	2,766,649	2,760,925	2,724,422	2,750,667
Total OAC grants to organizations	359,268	456,900	464,020	429,090	411,550	327,803	436,183
Grants to Francophone individuals (Arts francophones)	475,278	345,051	203,691	294,819	269,878	281,591	294,307
Grants to Francophone individuals (Other programs)	834,546	801,951	667,711	729,909	681,428	609,394	730,490
Total OAC grants to Francophone individuals	41,886,995	42,672,838	43,114,829	42,590,591	42,568,688	42,398,116	41,228,681
Total OAC grants to Francophones (Francophone Arts and other programs)	51,761,353	52,282,576	52,781,579	52,124,444	52,124,649	52,053,379	50,620,432
Total OAC grants to organizations	59,469,365	71,879,388	72,036,631	67,152,302	60,993,622	61,131,919	61,605,358

For nearly fifty years, the OAC has been an essential source of core funding for most of the Franco-Ontarian cultural and artistic organizational network. Note one important exception: cultural centres. Many of these organizations receive some funding from the OAC to support the presenting of Ontario's professional artists. But for the vast majority of the recipients, the funding is only for one-off projects, not core funding.

Indeed, no provincial department or agency is currently mandated to ensure core funding for cultural centres, whose mandate exceeds arts presentation in most cases. Rather, these organizations rely on multiple sources of project funding and, in some cases, on programming grants from the federal government which have no provincial counterpart.

This lack of core support for cultural development, led by not only multidisciplinary presenters but by the whole of the province's Francophone cultural and community centres, has already decimated the community. In 2006, the Assemblée des centres culturels et communautaires de l'Ontario (Ontario Assembly of Cultural and Community Centres) held its dissolution assembly.

<sup>7</sup> According to annual reports and financial statements of Ontario Arts Council, from 2009 to 2016.





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CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS: GRANTS TO FRANCOPHONE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN ONTARIO <sup>9</sup> [IN DOLLARS]					
OFFICE	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
MEDIA ARTS	8,250	87,000	89,250	1,500	51,800
VISUAL ARTS	67,500	63,000	47,000	56,500	46,000
DANCE	149,800	164,900	183,950	214,535	273,240
LETTERS AND PUBLISHING	501,705	481,210	457,705	435,670	361,700
MUSIC	46,300	46,500	17,200	8,030	24,500
THEATRE	619,991	661,245	610,055	604,390	568,505
TOTAL GRANTS TO FRANCOPHONES IN ONTARIO	1,393,546	1,503,855	1,405,160	1,320,625	1,325,745
TOTAL CCA GRANTS	141,329,897	133,685,894	134,107,386	132,301,411	135,354,859

In 2004–2005, this assembly had 28 members in good standing, and over thirty Francophone cultural centres could be found in total throughout the province.

Since then, centres in Ottawa, Rockland, Ste-Catharines, Chatham and elsewhere have either closed down, dramatically reduced their activities or put an end to their cultural projects. During the community consultations, many centres reported a worrisome financial fragility and a general exhaustion among staff. These factors could mean that even in regions where Francophones are in the majority, activities could cease over the next three to five years. The situation is dire, to the point that unless there is an immediate intervention, opportunities to gather around Francophone arts and culture in Ontario will only exist in major centres. It is urgent that the province step in to put an end to this downfall that could set Ontario's Francophone cultural development back several decades.

The cap in public funding has also led to a significant loss of historic gains for other stakeholders, namely in the publishing community. While French Ontario used to be home to ten Francophone



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publishing houses, some no longer receive public funding from the province, and others have drastically reduced their activities or ceased them altogether.

At the federal level, successive governments have laid out measures to support the cultural vitality of official language minority communities (OLMC). This support comes through the Ministry of Canadian Heritage and its various agencies (Canada Council for the Arts, Musicaction, National Film Board, Telefilm Canada, etc.). Waves of policies, measures and investments from the federal government have helped support Ontario's Francophone arts and culture network, namely through funding from the Official Languages Support Program.

However, federal funding is one area where Ontario's Francophone community clearly differs from the majority language's artistic community. At the national level, the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) is the artistic community's biggest funder. But, aside from those in theatre, writing and publishing, very few Franco-Ontarian artistic organizations benefit from CCA funding beyond complementary funding for one-off projects.

From one year to the next, between 2007 and 2012, CCA funding in support of Franco-Ontarian arts has rarely matched even 50% of the OAC's funding for the same sector. Over this same period, grants to Franco-Ontarian arts represent about 1% of the CCA's total grants, while in 2015–2016, the CCA awarded approximately 47 million dollars in Quebec (roughly 32% of total grants). It's therefore hard to claim that the largest Francophone artistic sector in Canada, after Quebec, in a province where over half of the country's Francophone population outside Quebec lives, receives its fair share of funding from the Canada Council for the Arts.

Artistic activity, on the other hand, has never ceased to increase. Each year sees approximately one hundred titles published in a range of genres (novels, poetry, plays, etc.); nearly 50 musical releases; a dozen new theatre productions; and visual art exhibitions.

Francophone artists in communities all across Ontario are responsible for all this activity and all this networking. A recent study found some 3125 Francophone artists among Canada's Francophone communities<sup>8</sup>. Although no comparable study exists for Ontario, the relative weight of the Franco-Ontarian population in regards to Canada's Francophone population allows us to assume that an important portion of these artists live and work in Ontario.

Note that access to funding is no easier for individual artists than it is for Franco-Ontarian artistic organizations. In 2009–2010, the OAC granted \$834,546 to individual Francophone artists (8.54% of its total grants to individuals). In 2015–2016, grants to Francophone individuals had diminished to \$730,490 (7.8% of the OAC's total grants to individuals).

Add to this the fact that a lack of specific comprehensive, -data, available to the public- from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and its agencies (OAC, Trillium Foundation and OMDC)

8 FCCF, *Chiffres à l'appui : Portrait du financement des arts et de la culture dans la francophonie canadienne (2007-2012)*.

9 Robineau, Anne, et al., *Un regard actuel sur la situation des artistes dans la francophonie canadienne : Sommaire de l'étude*, Institut canadien de recherche sur les minorités linguistiques, September 2013, page 2.



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regarding financing for Francophones, making it difficult to track the evolution of the province's investments towards Francophone arts.

Indeed, a near-total absence of basic data (number of artists, number of organizations, investments on behalf of provincial cultural agencies, pay scale for cultural workers, economic impact of Francophone arts and culture, size of volunteer engagement by the community, Francophone cultural participation habits, etc.) is flagrant.

Moreover, although the *Ontario Cultural Strategy* mentions 69 municipal artistic and cultural plans<sup>10</sup>, it is not currently possible to determine how many of these plans take Francophones into account or suggest specific strategies for Francophones, nor is it possible to track the implementation of these numerous plans. It is obvious that the province needs to double down on efforts to ensure greater transparency, better document the Francophone arts and culture sector in Ontario, and better track its evolution. It's no longer enough to launch a study every twenty years and claim they are listening.

This dearth of data often creates a situation where organizations keep evolving and the government keeps investing, without either truly being aware of what the other is doing.

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<sup>10</sup> Gouvernement of Ontario, *La Stratégie ontarienne pour la culture : Raconter nos histoires, faire croître notre économie*, 2016, page 19.



# STRATEGIC ISSUES AND PRIORITY RECOMMANDATIONS

Given the current state of affairs, a certain number of issues were deemed as being of capital importance during the community consultations. The highly diversified and specialized nature of the sector makes it so that the needs of the artists can differ from those of the presenters, the producers, or the audiences. However, the range of issues and identified measures mostly account for the interdependency between the various arts and culture stakeholders.

**The five strategic issues are:**

- **Supporting artists and strengthening the capacity of arts and culture organizations;**
- **Updating and expanding the network of Francophone cultural spaces throughout the province;**
- **Increasing the reach of Ontario's Francophone arts, culture and cultural products;**
- **Enlisting the education community as a leading partner in Francophone Ontario's cultural vitality;**
- **Remedying the lack of data on Francophone arts and culture in Ontario**

Inspired by what we heard during the community consultations, the analysis below relates a certain scan of the environment, and formulates a series of recommendations, each tied to a specific issue, to improve the long-term health of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario.



Mique Michelle. Photo : James Park



### 1. Supporting artists and strengthening the capacity of artistic and cultural organizations

The core funding awarded to the Francophone arts and culture associative network has been stagnating for years. Faced with a core funding cap, the fiscal wiggle room and human capacity of organizations have withered away, especially considering that the administrative burden has only increased. Applications are multiplying, and the funders' appetite for growth and novelty keeps increasing. Add to that the fact that the current trend makes it so that the accountability outweighs the sums obtained, as well as the human capacity of artistic and cultural organizations for whom preparing grant applications and rapports has become an onerous task.

Nowadays, organizations regularly have to abandon successful initiatives that could contribute to the ongoing cultural development of the community, in order to invent new projects that will allow them to access funding. Many cultural workers have admitted that the better part of their time at the office is dedicated to managing grant applications and reports for one-off projects. In the current climate, cultural worker is synonymous with "professional grant writer".

Yet a great deal of Franco-Ontarian cultural and artistic organizations operate with a very small team (one or two full-time employees), and rely on volunteers and unpaid overtime from employees. During the community consultations, many workers noted that the salaries offered by arts and culture organizations hadn't changed in recent memory, and that these salaries were clearly inferior to the average annual salary in Ontario. There is room for a systemic investigation to accurately diagnose the situation, but the government of Canada and the government of Ontario need to consult each other and reinforce the existing associative network's capacity by ensuring adequate stable core funding.

The Ontario government must also recognize the value of the cultural development work performed by local organizations (presenters, cultural centres, etc.). These organizations bring life to their communities, and ensure that those who live there can experience cultural activities in French. Their services enhance our communities' cultural vitality, foster the integration of newcomers, develop identity building and promote Francophone identity. Their very presence helps transform certain communities into cultural hubs, attracting employers, investors and tourists. The cultural workers who lead these organizations are in tune with their surroundings, and dedicated to their communities. They are true ambassadors for French, and their devotion to their respective communities commands respect and recognition.

Faced with job perspectives with little pay and recognition, it's no surprise that young Francophones aren't pursuing careers in arts and culture, and that consequently Francophone cultural workers are growing older. The importance of cultural development work must be recognized, and public investments in cultural development organizations must be renewed. This will allow working conditions for local cultural vitality ambassadors to be improved, and will foster the development and retention of a new generation of art administrators within the



network.

Cultural workers, volunteers and artists have all reported feeling increasingly isolated from the province's program officers. Could it be that, not content with reducing grants to the sector over the year, the government has also reduced its presence on the ground? The case is especially problematic for those in rural areas, away from major centres ... which happens to be the case for many Francophones. Those who work in small isolated communities must settle, in many cases, for service by phone or email. Program officers are based hours away from the artistic or cultural activity, and have often times never even set foot in the community they're dealing with, which can create a major disconnect between the perception and the reality of what is happening in the field.

Furthermore, certain historical inequities exist between different artistic disciplines. Even a quick scan of the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) grant history reveals considerable gaps in terms of funding from one artistic discipline to the next. This phenomenon isn't limited to the CCA, quite the opposite in fact. Certain inequities exist between stakeholders of different artistic disciplines in the eyes of most funders, at all levels of government. The time has come to recognize and redress these discrepancies which have prevented the development of certain disciplines in French Ontario – namely dance and visual arts – for historical reasons, or because of a false language perception.

Over decades, the Franco-Ontarian artistic and cultural network has had its specific needs recognized for artistic work in a certain number of disciplines (music, theatre, literature and publishing). The work of a few Franco-Ontarian authors and singer-songwriters has been a part of Ontario's curriculum for many decades. Over time, the artistic communities, practices and realities of Francophone stakeholders who work in these disciplines have been recognized. The same cannot be said for those who work in visual arts or dance, so-called “language-free” disciplines. A chasm has developed between the funding granted to Francophone stakeholders who work in these disciplines as opposed to what is offered to disciplines where the use of French language is more obvious (song, theatre, etc.).

And yet, the artists who choose to express themselves through visual arts are no less Francophone than their singer-songwriter counterparts. A Francophone contemporary dance troupe's rehearsals and board of director meetings are held in French, just as a theatre company's. The time has come to recognize and right the historical inequities between the stakeholders from different disciplines, and to put an end to the perception that some disciplines contribute more than others to the linguistic vitality of Francophone communities.

Furthermore, it is worth recognizing that certain disciplines now benefit from a very well developed scouting and coaching system for emerging talent. Basic training is widely accessible from an elementary or secondary school level; teachers and cultural facilitators (animateurs culturels) have the tools to spot budding artists; festivals organized by professional associations allow teenagers who dream of an artistic career to take part in intensive training and rub elbows with accomplished artists; and some post-secondary or professional training opportunities are available.



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In short, the winning conditions are in place to foster and support the next generation of artists, but the same cannot be said of all artistic disciplines. Few areas in Ontario can boast about having Francophone contemporary dance or media arts professionals in their midst to spot and nurture emerging artists. If Ontario is serious about the future of Francophone arts and culture, mechanisms and strategies must be put into place to scout and develop up-and-coming artists, across all disciplines.

A recent study confirmed that the average income of a Franco-Canadian artist is roughly \$25,000 (about 32% lower than the average income of the active Franco-Canadian population)<sup>11</sup>. This same study confirmed that **over 40% of Franco-Canadian artists have an annual income of \$10,000 or less**<sup>12</sup>. Knowing that the budgets of the main Franco-Ontarian arts and culture funders have been stagnating or decreasing over the past several years, it's no surprise that their grants to Franco-Ontarians are dwindling as well. The time has come to take real, substantial action to improve the working conditions of professional artists.

Moreover, one particular challenge facing Francophone artists in Ontario is certainly the relatively small size of the artistic community, working throughout an immense territory. A Francophone artist living in a small rural community, far away from urban centres, will most likely have to travel several hours if he wishes to discuss or collaborate with his peers. For many, the cost of such trips far exceeds their means. The Ontario government must therefore foster collaboration between artists and artistic organizations from different disciplines and different areas. Many courses of action are available and appealing, whether it be through travel assistance programs or developing an artist residence network throughout the province.

Finally, Ontario is already home to one of the most diverse French-speaking populations in North America. This growing diversity is a resource to be developed and an artistic and cultural wealth to be treasured. And yet, culturally diverse artists have a hard time finding their rightful place within existing artistic and cultural groups. Their access to public funding is often halted by the decisions of their “peers”, who are not sufficiently familiar with their ethnocultural counterparts or their artistic practices.

The situation is just as challenging when it comes to governance and administration for arts and culture organizations. Few established organizations can boast about having culturally diverse Francophone administrators at their helm, or a diverse board of directors. More often than not, a single person must bear the weight of representing diversity alone. This type of scenario perpetuates the tokenism with which all too many generations of Franco-Ontarians are familiar, as so-called bilingual organizations would ask them to sit on boards and represent the interests of all Francophones. The artistic community must seek out tools and expertise, then develop and implement strategies to foster the true integration of culturally diverse artists, workers and volunteers. This is a sizeable issue. If the arts and culture sector does not succeed in fostering a true integration of diverse stakeholders, a parallel network will develop, which will further fragment resources and halt the progress of the community as a whole.

11 Robineau, Anne, et al., *Un regard actuel sur la situation des artistes dans la francophonie canadienne : Sommaire de l'étude*, Institut canadien de recherche sur les minorités linguistiques, Septembre 2013, page 2.

12 Ibid.





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### With this prognosis in mind, we suggest as priority recommendations:

- that the Ontario government establish a central coordination (deputy minister) responsible for support strategies and measures for the Francophone arts and culture sector, for all provincial departments and agencies;
- that the Ontario government conduct a study on pay scales and working conditions in the arts and culture sector in order to diagnose and improve the situation of Francophone cultural workers;
- that the Ontario government double its core financing to Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations through an investment in the OAC's Francophone Arts programs;
- that the Ontario government grant at least \$50,000 in core funding to each Francophone cultural centre in the province;
- that the Ontario government double parliamentary appropriations for the Ontario Arts Council (OAC), while stipulating that the OAC double its investments in support of creation, research, travel costs within the province and living expenses for Francophone artists; and
- that Francophone Ontario establish a diversity integration strategy for its arts and culture sector.



Tina Charlebois and André Charlebois, Salon du Livre de l'Outaouais 2017





## 2. Updating and expanding the network of Francophone cultural spaces throughout the province

Participation in artistic and cultural activities, arts presentation and the touring of artists and artistic organizations all depend on cultural spaces (concert halls, art galleries, bookstores, etc.) Developing these cultural spaces has been a priority for Francophones for decades. As early as the 1950s, Francophones in the East and the Northeast banded together to acquire spaces that would allow them to meet and share artistic and cultural experiences.

Francophones showed great resourcefulness and ingenuity to establish a network of cultural spaces. They set up significant fundraising campaigns, purchased abandoned schools, etc. This was followed by the opening of Francophone cultural centres across the province, equipped with multipurpose rooms<sup>13</sup>. The theatre community then launched a sustained approach that namely lead to the construction of theatres in Ottawa and Sudbury. Note that the education community played a key role in obtaining Francophone cultural spaces, and that even today, a hall within a French-language school is still often the only space where Francophones can share cultural experiences. This cultural spaces network promotes touring performances, provides access to cultural products and allows Ontarians to come together around Francophone arts and culture.

However, many Franco-Ontarian cultural spaces were built in the 1970s, and funds to upgrade installations or build new cultural spaces are scarce. Even worse, many cultural centres, bookstores and other cultural organizations have closed down in recent years.

In 2005, Réseau Ontario undertook a study to document the state of presenting infrastructure in French Ontario<sup>14</sup>. This study pinpointed a series of technical challenges tied to the presentation of performing arts. The state of existing infrastructure was an obstacle to presenting touring shows, the specification sheets for the presenting spaces weren't always up-to-date or sufficiently detailed, etc. This study grouped presenting spaces into one of four categories: A = Professional, B = Semi-professional, C = Basic and D = Alternative.

At the time the study was published, nearly 75% of spaces fell in the “C” or “D” category. Only three spaces owned by Franco-Ontarian presenters could be considered “A” (professional) grade<sup>15</sup>. Such a study, were it updated and accompanied by a list of criteria to reach “A” level, would be priceless not only for the arts and culture community, but for the funders looking to consolidate the Francophone performing arts presenting network in Ontario.

Over a decade after this inventory of physical infrastructure, a number of performance hall construction projects have been completed. The following spaces can be considered “A” level halls in French Ontario.

13 Farmer, Diane, *Artisans de la modernité : les Centres culturels en Ontario français*, Collection Amérique française, Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1996.

14 Réseau Ontario, *L'état des infrastructures de diffusion en Ontario français*, 2005.

15 Ibid.



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- La Nouvelle Scène, Ottawa
- Centre des arts Shenkman, Orléans
- Théâtre L'Octave du Centre Culturel Frontenac, Kingston
- Salle de l'Alliance française de Toronto, Toronto
- Salle André-Paiement du Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario, Sudbury
- Salle de spectacle du Collège Boréal, Sudbury
- Salle Lina Payeur du Conseil des arts de Hearst, Hearst



Milva Ménard in *Un vent se lève qui éparpille*. Photo : Marianne Duval

In the last decade, the number of “A”-level performance spaces has gone from three to seven, a remarkable feat. Add to this list construction and renovation projects that could eventually add “A” level halls to the list.

- Renovation of the Mouvement d'implication Francophone d'Orléans (MIFO), Orléans
- Construction of La Place des arts, Sudbury
- Construction of the Centre culturel La Ronde, Timmins

Note that the future of Théâtre L'Octave in Kingston remains uncertain. It is an “A” level hall within the walls of École secondaire Marie Rivier high school, which could be moved or destroyed in the near future.

Physical infrastructure projects are costly, need to be prepared well in advance, require massive community support and financial partners, and must favour access to Francophone arts and culture for many years. The three levels of government must focus on arts and culture construction and renovation projects, and prioritize these projects when the time comes to invest in infrastructure. All too often, one level of government is slow to invest, which delays the beginning of the project and increases costs for real estate projects. Governments must finance upgrades for existing Francophone cultural spaces, as well as the construction of new spaces, in order for a true network to develop.

Although the addition of professional presenting spaces has done wonders for the arts and culture community as a whole, it is worth mentioning that, even when taking into account likely construction and renovation projects in the near future, access to professional spaces remains mainly restricted to large centres. A great deal of Francophone communities continue to partake in artistic experiences under less than optimal conditions. Francophones will need to continue being creative, namely by negotiating access to high-end spaces that mainly serve the majority community, where Francophone spaces do not exist.

Cultural spaces dedicated to disciplines other than the performing arts are in an even more alarming situation. Bookstores in Toronto and Sudbury have closed their doors, and subsidiaries



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in Sudbury and North Bay have also disappeared in recent years. There are currently six Francophone book stores in Ontario.

- Librairie du Soleil, Ottawa
- Librairie du Centre, Ottawa
- Le Coin du livre, Ottawa
- Librairie Mosaïque, Toronto
- Il était une fois, Oakville
- Librairie du Nord, Hearst

Even if a certain number of digital libraries and similar services provide online access to cultural products (books, albums, etc.), Franco-Ontarian products are drowned in a sea of Quebecois and international offerings.



Salon du livre de Toronto. Photo : Salon du livre de Toronto

The book fairs held in Toronto, Sudbury, Hearst and Eastern Ontario are also important cultural spaces. Though they are transitory by nature, given that they are events rather than physical spaces, book fairs are important access points and marketing opportunities for French-language books in Ontario. However, these events remain fragile, as they depend on limited public grants.

The literary community has been demanding for over a decade that Ontario adopt a book and reading policy that would foster the development of the Francophone book industry as a whole. Similar policies exist in Quebec and New Brunswick, and greatly benefited their respective literary communities.

Fragile is also the best way to describe visual and media arts spaces (galleries, artist-run centres). Francophone artist centres operate in Toronto (Le Labo), Ottawa (Voix visuelle) and Sudbury (Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario). Each of these organizations receive core funding from the PAC, but only one of these grants exceeds \$50,000. This amount contributes significantly to operating costs, as it helps cover part of a competitive salary, rent and basic operations. It serves as a funding floor for core funding that the province must ensure.



**With this prognosis in mind, we suggest as priority recommendations:**

- that the governments of Ontario and Canada jointly finance a study on the state of Francophone cultural spaces in Ontario, including a needs evaluation and cost analysis to optimize arts presentation conditions;
- that, when the times comes to select the beneficiaries of physical infrastructure project funding, the governments of Ontario and Canada prioritize projects related to arts and culture, namely those led by Francophone groups;
- that the Ontario Ministry of Education refuse to support any project that would reduce access to Francophone arts and culture;
- that the provincial and federal funding bodies (OAC, CCA, Canadian Heritage) recognize the particular role book fairs play as access points to Franco-Ontarian books and authors, and that they double their investments to support these organizations;
- that the government of Ontario, in recognition of the limited number of Francophone literary spaces, conduct an action research to consolidate the book store and book fair networks at a provincial level;
- that the government of Ontario adopt a policy on books and reading, including a buy local policy that would namely apply to the Ministry of Education, school boards and French-language schools; and
- that the government of Ontario ensure that all Francophone artistic organizations that receive core funding from one of its cultural agencies receive a yearly sum of at least \$50,000.



Mehdi Cayenne. Photo : Joël Ducharme



### 3. Increasing the reach of Ontario's Francophone arts, culture and cultural products

Culture is important to Ontarians, and even more so to Francophones. Approximately 151,187 of them attended performances and workshops offered by presenters in the Réseau Ontario network in 2015–2016<sup>16</sup>. Data from previous years shows that attendance for activities presented by Ontario's largest Francophone performance arts presenter network exceeds 100,000 audience members each year since 2009–2010<sup>17</sup>.

A more inclusive overview of attendance of Francophone arts activities must also include the 54,510 people who attended a francophone visual arts activity<sup>18</sup> and the 20,294 people who attended a francophone book fair in 2015–2016<sup>19</sup>. Clearly, Francophone arts and culture have a considerable reach in Ontario.

And yet, the vast majority of Francophone artists in Ontario are wallowing in obscurity. Even with the creation of events such as the Gala des Prix Trille Or, that serve to promote artists to audiences, even with cultural space attendance throughout the province, and even with a clear will to integrate arts and culture into the school curriculum, few Ontarians could name one, let alone two Franco-Ontarian artists.

From one year to the next, Francophone artists from Quebec and elsewhere in Canada set out on twice as many tours as Franco-Ontarian artists within the network of Réseau Ontario presenters. This data confirms a long-standing problem that artists from elsewhere are better known and tour more extensively in Ontario's communities than the Francophone artists that live here. The phenomenon can be partly explained by the fact that public funding, from other sources, favours the presence of these artists. The Quebec government, for example, invests considerable amounts to support tours for Quebec artists beyond la belle province. The government of Canada, for its part, requires that Ontario presenters showcase artists from at least two other provinces in order to access federal funding from the Canada Arts Presentation Fund. These public financing conditions create a disadvantage for Ontario's Francophone artists and their peers in the rest of French Canada.

The situation is especially problematic in Quebec as it provides Quebec artists, already better known and better funded, with a better access to the Ontario market than Franco-Ontarians could ever dream of.

In return, when an artist or artistic organization from Ontario is invited to perform in Quebec, they must do so at lower artist fees than those we would offer Quebec performers presenting in Ontario. The government of Ontario should correct this situation and empower our artists and artistic organizations so that they can better compete with their counterparts from other jurisdictions.

16 Réseau Ontario, *Rapport Annuel 2015-2016*, page 12.

17 Réseau Ontario, *Rapport Annuel 2012-2013*, page 16.

18 AGAVF, *Fréquentation des activités des centres d'artistes franco-ontariens et de BRAVO en 2015-16*, avril 2017.

19 AAOF, *Fréquentation des Salons du livre 2011-2016*, avril 2017.





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Notwithstanding the partial data that indicates Francophone performing arts attendance is stable, artists and presenters must address the future of public participation in the arts in Ontario. Many presenters in every corner of the province, brought it up during the community consultations: audiences are getting older, Francophones between 20 and 45 are rarely seen, and it's always the same people attending every activity.

The arts and culture sector needs to focus on public participation and implement supported development, diversification and audience loyalty initiatives. The good news is that, thanks namely to social media, artists and arts organizations can get involved in promoting touring productions more than ever. Furthermore, artists and artistic organizations are more and more aware of the fact that they are competing with a wide variety of cultural experiences, many of which are easily accessible from your couch with a simple flick of a button. Partnerships and collaborations are the way to go to make sure audiences are waiting when Ontario's artists go on tour.

It's impossible not to recognize, when discussing artist circulation, that Ontario has its share of difficulties from a geographical standpoint. For an artist or artistic organization from Northern Ontario, for example, it would cost less to tour in Montreal, or even Europe, than it would to tour the Southwest of Ontario. The situation is just as problematic for a theatre company that wants to tour the North. Several hours of driving each day, thousands of kilometres to travel, only to be met with meagre audiences upon arrival. On the other hand, presenters in rural areas are met with artist fees that they can't afford, or producers that go on tour without fully understanding the distances and technical limitations that await them.

The possible courses of action the Ontario government can take are numerous. For one, drawing inspiration from one-off initiatives such as the festivities surrounding the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's passage through Ontario, the federal and provincial governments could support an awareness and promotion campaign for Francophone arts and culture in Ontario.

The creation of cultural tourism circuits, connecting Francophone communities throughout the province is also worth exploring. It would foster increased public participation from Ontarians, and nurture Francophone cultural development, which remains in its infancy. Given that Ontario has just obtained observer status at the International Organisation of La Francophonie, the province would be well advised to seize the opportunity to further develop cultural tourism and draw in Francophone tourists from across the world to Ontario's Francophone communities.

The provincial government could also do what no artists, producers or artistic sector associations can: insist that the culture exchange between Ontario and Quebec be done in the spirit of reciprocity, rather than systematic dumping. Negotiating agreements allowing Francophone artistic exchanges with other provinces and territories would be opportune.

Beyond policies between governments and within governments, we need to develop cultural industries and businesses that can support and promote Franco-Ontarian arts and culture. Within the province, you'll only need two hands to count the number of book stores, agencies, record labels, production studios and other stakeholders that can support Francophone artists



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and artistic organizations. OMDC needs to take on a leadership role in this matter, as the SODEQ has done, to better support an emerging Francophone arts and culture industry in Ontario.

There's room to extend the reach of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario. Unlike other provinces (Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador), Ontario lags far behind when it comes to exporting arts and integrating culture to its foreign relation efforts and international trade development. The Bureaux du Québec, located in cities throughout the international Francophonie, support the promotion of Quebec arts and culture abroad, and have been doing so for decades. These satellite offices, staffed with communication and promotion experts, have ensured that Quebec's cultural brand is recognized throughout the world.

Acadia has, for its part, been relying for nearly twenty years on the *Stratégie de promotion des artistes acadiens sur la scène internationale* (SPAASI). This strategy to promote Acadian artists on the international stage administers investments from the Maritime provinces and the Canadian government to support artists, artistic and cultural organizations, as well as small and mid-sized cultural businesses in accessing foreign markets, namely France, Belgium and Switzerland. The Maritime provinces international Francophone cultural missions bring together cultural stakeholders, economic development and employability networks, tourism and Francophone spokesperson organizations from each of the participating provinces. To this day, Ontario has never undertaken a similar project.



Franco-Fête de Toronto. Photo : Franco-Fête de Toronto.

Moreover, when it comes to the increased recognition of arts and culture, the media (television, radio, etc.) should be natural allies. Even more so in Ontario, where a considerable amount of public (Société Radio-Canada, TFO), community (radio members of the Mouvement des intervenants en communication radio de l'Ontario, newspapers members of the APF, etc.) and



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private (TV5-UNIS, Le Droit, Radio Le Loup, etc.) Francophone media stakeholders have been active for many years.

Admittedly, these stakeholders help increase recognition of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario, each in their own way, to varying degrees. But it would be worth revisiting government investments and strategies supporting these stakeholders, to reinforce their impact on increasing recognition of Ontario's Francophone culture.

When it comes to public and private media, the governments should clarify their expectations in terms of producing and presenting Franco-Ontarian content. Government policies must foster Franco-Ontarian productions and the presence of Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations on the airwaves. The licences granted to these instances must clearly state that a significant amount of the content that makes it onto the airwaves must be produced by Franco-Ontarian companies and feature artists, artistic and cultural organizations and other stakeholders from French Ontario.

When it comes to community media, governments must recognize that Francophone stakeholders are faced with particular circumstances, where the number of listeners and readers is limited, as are opportunities to raise own-source revenue. Francophone community radios and newspapers require core funding from both governments to ensure the quality of their work and their long-term viability.

Allow us to add a particular note concerning Société Radio-Canada. In each of our community consultations, the SRC was one of the last subjects, if not the last subject of the day. Canada's public broadcaster no longer seems to be front of mind for Ontario's Francophone arts and culture stakeholders. And yet, for decades, the only French voices and faces Franco-Ontarians could hear or see on the airwaves came through the SRC. Generations of French-Canadian artists made their first recordings or received their first professional fees thanks to the SRC. Regional stations played a key role as allies of Francophone artists at the local level, and as the missing link connecting local talent with the national network.

But while the French-language media offer has increased exponentially in recent years, the SRC's support to Canada's Francophone artists and artistic and cultural organizations has drastically declined. Many positions have been abolished in regional stations and the number of local productions that makes it onto the airwaves has clearly been reduced. The SRC has practically abandoned in-house productions focusing on local artists, does not produce any regional variety shows and only rarely broadcast important programs from Francophone Ontario.

For the past few years, the SRC's higher ups have chosen to focus on presenting content through a multiplatform strategy, which increasingly relies on digital solutions. Simultaneously, they gutted regional stations. The workforce in regional stations has been reduced so badly that they can no longer ensure a presence during community cultural events and play the role of talent scouts, as they once did. One exception stands out... CBON Sudbury continues to shine bright among the SRC's regional stations, and is a source of important programming (such as Grands Lacs Cafés) that addresses Francophone arts and culture with passion and finesse.





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For many Franco-Ontarian listeners, the SRC is nothing more than a French source for news. Those who tune into the national public broadcaster only rarely hear their reality depicted, and rarely hear voices from Ontario. The SRC's single-minded focus on Montreal is such that Franco-Ontarian listeners are much more likely to hear about traffic jams on Quebec highways and construction updates on the Champlain Bridge than they are to discover a Franco-Ontarian author.



Vincent Poirier, Gala des Prix Trille Or 2017. Photo : APCM



**With this prognosis in mind, we suggest as priority recommendations:**

- that the Ontario Arts Council double its investments supporting touring in Ontario and circulation of Ontario artists and artistic organizations towards the rest of Canada, and prioritize its support to Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations;
- that the government of Ontario and the government of Canada invest in multi-year audience development initiatives that favour artist/producer and presenter partnerships in order to create unique, attractive cultural experiences for audiences;
- that the government of Ontario recognize the obstacles to Francophone arts in certain isolated regions (North, South-West) and increase its grants to artists and artistic and cultural organizations in those areas through additional funding;
- that the government of Ontario develop and lead a multi-year promotional campaign of Francophone culture throughout the province;
- that the government of Ontario collaborate with Ontario's Francophone municipalities to develop cultural tourist experiences in Francophone communities throughout the province;
- that the government of Ontario insert a clause on the reciprocity of artistic and cultural circulation in its *Entente concernant la culture* with the government of Quebec;
- that the government of Ontario, through the OMDC double its investment in Ontario's Francophone cultural industry;
- that the government of Ontario develop and establish a promotional strategy to present Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations abroad;
- that the government of Canada continue to reestablish its funding of Société Radio-Canada while ensuring that SRC reestablish its francophone teams in its regional stations and renew its role as a true partner of arts and cultural activity in Francophone communities throughout Ontario; and
- that the government of Canada ensure that two seats on the SRC's board of directors are held for residents from Francophone communities outside Quebec, including at least one Francophone from Ontario.



Normand Fortin, Clément Bérini, Colette Jacques, Maurice Gaudreault  
et Laurent Vaillancourt, *Perspectives 8*, 1991.  
Photo : Laurent Vaillancourt



### 4. Enlisting the education community as a leading partner in Ontario's Francophone cultural vitality

The education community is widely recognized as a key player in ensuring the linguistic vitality of Ontario's Francophone communities. In many smaller communities, school is often the only gateway to a cultural life in French. It is where the community comes together, where young Francophones take part in their first artistic and cultural activities, where you discover the artists, authors and creations that touch you the most, that make you want to live in French.

But it's not enough to just build a French school and fill it with students if you want to ensure a community's linguistic vitality. You have to fill it with unforgettable moments that inspire a passion for the arts. Cultural activities must be identity-affirming experiences. Artistic performances should be viewed as opportunities to explore the creative process, not opportunities to catch up on grading papers. Schools must be pillars of culture, in tune with the community, rather than standalone islands. Otherwise, they contribute to the perception that Francophone culture, identity and day-to-day living only occur within the walls of the school. Teaching staff, principals, parents, school boards and the Ministry of Education should recognize and invest in the school's cultural mandate.

The arts and culture community believed the education community had recognized the importance of its cultural mandate when it announced its *Politique d'aménagement linguistique* (PAL) in 2003. This policy favoured integrating culture into school life in order to foster each student's personal growth. It favoured partnerships between schools and their communities, as a means to develop positive long-term ties between students and their environment. It renewed the education community's investment in terms of cultural animation, knowing that cultural facilitators (*animateurs culturels*), who are often professional artists themselves, were taking an active role in the cultural awakening and identity building of the students.

But now, years after it was initially put into place, cultural and artistic stakeholders throughout the province agree that the PAL did not succeed in transforming French language schools into true cultural spaces. Indeed, the arts and culture community benefitted very little from PAL investments that rarely made their way down to their intended audiences. Artist fees for touring artists and artistic organizations have barely increased in decades. Teachers, who have a million responsibilities and too little time, remain unequipped to teach artistic subjects and are often caught off-guard when it comes to assuming their role of "*passeurs culturels*" (cultural transmitters). These teachers have, for generations, been Francophone leaders in Franco-Ontarian communities. And yet, many stakeholders have claimed that school staff are not often seen in Francophone artistic and cultural spaces.



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From the arts and culture community's perspective, the PAL's implementation increased the number of cultural activities within the school, and allowed for the hiring of a few extra staff without necessarily transforming the student's experience. The PAL will have served to generate more registrations and further position schools as being the main contact point for life in French within a minority community. Even with the best intentions in the world, the education community's approach convinced two generations of students that living in French in Ontario can only be done at school.

French Ontario is one of the rare jurisdictions where most artistic presentations are held at school, namely in gymnasiums and cafeterias. These are spaces where you often can't make the room fully dark, where amplified sounds bounce between concrete walls, where the floors make safe dancing impossible. The quality of the experience we present young Francophones is often heavily compromised, leaving kids unsatisfied. Is it such a wonder then that so many of these students, given the abundance of options they have as digital cultural consumers, choose something other than the tepid Francophone activities they saw at school? Why, in communities that have professional level artistic installations, are artists still being presented in schools rather than bring students to a professional space where they will benefit from an optimal experience? Students, and artists, deserve better.

New opportunities are defining the future when it comes to cultural leadership within the education community. More and more, the importance of a French-language education continuum throughout life is being recognized. A network of French-language colleges is now firmly established throughout the province. Bilingual universities continue to state the important role they play in the growth of Ontario's Francophonie, and we hope to see the creation of the very first Franco-Ontarian university in the near future. Partnership opportunities are plentiful between these institutions and the arts and culture community.

Some programs are already building tomorrow's professionals in the artistic community, such as the technical support and stage management program offered at Collège Boréal in Sudbury. Other such connections between the community's needs and the programs offered by Francophone post-secondary institutions are highly recommended. For example, an eventual Franco-Ontarian university could fulfill the needs of many artistic stakeholders that have trouble affording physical space in Toronto's expensive market.

The future needs to see the education community fully commit to its cultural mandate. Learning spaces must become partners in the artistic and cultural ecosystem, an ecosystem that extends far beyond the school. Of course, the education community should continue to invite artists into the classrooms and offer artistic activities and performances, but they must recognize their limitations and open up to the local cultural life.



**With this prognosis in mind, we suggest as priority recommendations:**

- that the Ontario Ministry of Education adopt a book and reading policy that regulates the purchase of cultural products in order to favour the purchase of books written and published in Ontario;
- that the Ontario Arts Council increase its funding of the Francophone components of its arts education programs, in order to increase the presence of Franco-Ontarian artists in French-language schools;
- that when French-language schools have a professional concert hall nearby, performances be held in that venue, rather than at the school, so as to enhance the artistic experiences that are offered;
- that Francophone post-secondary institutions throughout Ontario develop and offer artistic programs aligned with the professional development needs of arts administrators and cultural workers;
- that 50% of the financing for the implementation of the Politique d'aménagement linguistique be redirected towards Ontario's Francophone cultural and artistic community organizations;
- that the Ministry of Education collaborate with the leadership of the school boards, the schools and education unions, in order to increase the involvement of professionals in their community's cultural life;
- that teacher training be reviewed to increase education when it comes to artistic disciplines and Francophone culture; and
- that the Ontario Ministry of Education adopt standards in terms of cultural animation and ensure that all staff holding these positions receive a standard training throughout the province.



*Les Souliers d'Angélie, 2013. Photo : Tara Luz Danse*





### 5. Remediating the lack of data on Ontario's Francophone arts and culture community

How many Francophone cultural workers are there in Ontario? What is the Franco-Ontarian arts and culture sector's economic impact? What is the average age of a Francophone author in Ontario? What is the average salary of a Francophone cultural worker in Ontario? What is the profile for audiences that take part in French-language artistic activities in Ontario? The answers to these questions and many more would help to understand the state and the needs of Ontario's Francophone arts and culture sector, but they remain unanswered.

Research on the Franco-Ontarian arts and culture scene is far from abundant. This research is led, in other jurisdictions, either by the provincial department responsible for culture, one of its agencies, or artistic and cultural organizations working at the ground level. In Ontario, research published by ministries and provincial agencies rarely deals specifically with Francophone arts and culture.

Over the last five years, the Ontario Arts Council published a series of studies on a range of subjects, namely: volunteers and donors within artistic and cultural organizations (2016), the educational background of artists (2015), a statistical profile of artists and cultural workers in Canada (2014), artists in municipalities in Canada (2014). Each of these studies could have provided a wealth of information on the Francophone arts and culture community. However, none of the OAC's studies contain specific data pertaining to Francophones. As such, each study is a testament to missed opportunity.

On their end, artistic organizations, namely arts service organizations, conduct one-off studies in their respective disciplines. But only one provincial organization, the Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario (ACO), which represents many artistic disciplines and stakeholders within its membership, could have as its mandate to conduct studies on the sector as a whole. However, the ACO is limited in size and means, and could not lead research projects without considerable financial support.



Stef Paquette and Le Paysagiste, La Nuit sur l'étang 2016. Photo : Joël Ducharme





**With this prognosis in mind, we suggest as priority recommendations:**

- that the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, through the Ontario Arts Council, establish a research fund for Francophone arts and culture in Ontario, and that this fund be made available to artistic and cultural organizations, independent researchers and cultural agencies throughout the province;
- that Réseau Ontario update its study on the needs of Francophone performing arts presenters in Ontario and evaluate the renovation and purchase costs that would allow for an increase in “A”-level halls in the next ten years;
- that the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport analyze municipal cultural policies throughout the province to determine which ones account for Francophone culture, and ensure that municipal cultural policies in Ontario are carried out;
- that the Alliance culturelle de l’Ontario keep a watch on Francophone arts and culture investments in Ontario and ensure that the province’s departments and agencies that finance Francophone arts and culture finance this study and share their data;
- that the Ontario Ministry of Education conduct a census of teachers specialized in the arts in French-language schools throughout the province;
- that Réseau Ontario conduct a study to document the evolution of artist fees paid to artists and artistic organizations by presenters and French schools in Ontario;
- that l’Assemblée de la francophonie de l’Ontario conduct a study to document the salary ranges of cultural workers in Francophone Ontario;
- that the Ontario Arts Council finance a research program that documents the working conditions of artists, the financing plan, human capacity, working conditions and financial needs of Francophone artistic and cultural organizations in Ontario; and
- that the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport evaluate the need for additional funding from artists and artistic and cultural organizations in isolated areas (North and South-West) of Ontario.



André Paiement, Gaston Tremblay and Denis Courville,  
Moé J’viens du Nord Stie, 1971. Photo : CRCCF



# CONCLUSION

Ontario's Francophone artistic and cultural sector has seen considerable progress over the past several decades. Artistic activity has never ceased to increase; many communities have gained cultural centres which allow them to come together and share artistic and cultural experiences; Franco-Ontarian artists and their creations are featured in the curriculum, and some of our creators have gone on to gain provincial, national and international recognition.

But the conditions in which our artists are forced to perform don't always do them justice. Artists from neighbouring provinces take to Ontario stages more often than Francophone artists from Ontario. Those who work in disciplines where language is less prominently displayed are often treated as second-class artists. Cultural development work remains unrecognized. Culturally diverse artists, artistic organizations and stakeholders are still having a hard time being heard, seen and accepted. Our understanding of the factors that influence our artistic and cultural community, its realities and its benefits remains too limited. The inextricable link between the cultural vitality of Ontario's Francophonie and the growth of the French language is all too often left unacknowledged.

It's been nearly 50 years since the publishing of the *Rapport Saint-Denis*, the first in-depth study of Francophone arts and culture in Ontario. That report's first recommendation led to the creation of a Franco-Ontarian arts bureau within the OAC, which had a determining impact on the community's long-term success. The current state of the field and many of the priority measures recommended by this White Paper are signs that little follow-up was granted to many of the other recommendations made over five decades ago. The time has come to position culture at the forefront of the issues and political demands of Ontario's Francophones.



YAO at the Centre national des Arts, 2017. Photo : Joël Ducharme



# ANNEXE 1 – RECOMMENDATIONS AND COURSES OF ACTION

## 1. Supporting artists and strengthening the capacity of artistic and cultural organizations

- That the Ontario government establish a central coordination (deputy minister) responsible for support strategies and measures for the Francophone arts and culture sector, for all provincial departments and agencies;
- That the Ontario government conduct a study on pay scales and working conditions in the arts and culture sector in order to diagnose and improve the situation of Francophone cultural workers;
- That the Ontario government double its core financing to Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations through an investment in the OAC's Francophone art support programs;
- That the Ontario government grant at least \$50,000 in core funding to each Francophone cultural centre in the province;
- That the Ontario government double parliamentary appropriations for the Ontario Arts Council (OAC), while stipulating that the OAC double its investments in support of creation, research, travel costs within the province and living expenses for Francophone artists; and
- That Ontario's Francophone community develop and implement a diversity integration strategy for its arts and culture sector.



Les Moutons, La Nuit émergente 2016. Photo : Joël Ducharme



## 2. Updating and expanding the network of Francophone cultural spaces throughout the province

- That the governments of Ontario and Canada jointly finance a study on the state of Francophone cultural spaces in Ontario, including a needs evaluation and cost analysis to optimize arts presentation conditions;
- That, when the times comes to select the beneficiaries of physical infrastructure project funding, the governments of Ontario and Canada prioritize projects related to arts and culture, namely those led by Francophone groups;
- That the provincial and federal funding bodies (OAC, CCA, Canadian Heritage) recognize the particular role book fairs play as access points to Franco-Ontarian books and authors, and that they double their investments to support these organizations;
- That the government of Ontario, in recognition of the limited number of Francophone literary spaces, conduct an action research to consolidate the book store and book fair networks at a provincial level;
- That the government of Ontario adopt a policy on books and reading, including a buy local policy that would name apply to the Ministry of Education, school boards and French-language schools; and
- That the government of Ontario ensure that all Francophone artistic organizations that receive core funding from one of its cultural agencies receive a yearly sum of at least \$50,000.



Les murs de nos villages, 1980. Photo : Théâtre de la Vieille 17.





### 3. Increasing the reach of Ontario's Francophone arts, culture and cultural products

- That the Ontario Arts Council double its investments supporting touring in Ontario and circulation of Ontario artists and artistic organizations towards the rest of Canada, and prioritize its support to Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations;
- That the government of Ontario and the government of Canada invest in multi-year audience development initiatives that favour artist/producer and presenter partnerships in order to create unique, attractive cultural experiences for audiences;
- That the government of Ontario recognize the obstacles to Francophone arts in certain isolated regions (North, South-West) and increase its grants to artists and artistic and cultural organizations in those areas through additional funding;
- That the government of Ontario develop and lead a multi-year promotional campaign of Francophone culture throughout the province;
- That the government of Ontario collaborate with Ontario's Francophone municipalities to develop cultural tourist experiences in Francophone communities throughout the province;
- That the government of Ontario insert a clause on the reciprocity of artistic and cultural circulation in its Entente concernant la culture with the government of Quebec;
- That the government of Ontario, through the OMDC double its investment in Ontario's Francophone cultural industry;
- That the government of Ontario develop and establish a promotional strategy to present Franco-Ontarian artists and artistic organizations abroad;
- That the government of Canada continue to reestablish its funding of Société Radio-Canada while ensuring that SRC reestablish its francophone teams in its regional stations and renew its role as a true partner of arts and cultural activity in Francophone communities throughout Ontario;
- That the government of Canada ensure that two seats on the SRC's board of directors are held for residents from Francophone communities outside Quebec, including at least one Francophone from Ontario.



### 4. Enlisting the education community as a leading partner in Ontario's Francophone cultural vitality

- That the Ontario Ministry of Education adopt a book and reading policy that regulates the purchase of cultural products in order to favour the purchase of books written and published in Ontario;
- That the Ontario Arts Council increase its financing to the Francophone components of its artistic education programs, in order to increase the presence of Franco-Ontarian artists in French-language schools;
- That when French-language schools have a professional concert hall nearby, performances should be held within that hall, rather than at the school so as to enhance the artistic experiences they are offered;
- That Francophone post-secondary institutions throughout Ontario develop and offer artistic programs aligned with the professional development needs of arts administrators and cultural workers;
- That 50% of the financing for the implementation of the Politique d'aménagement linguistique be redirected towards Ontario's Francophone cultural and artistic community organizations;
- That the Ministry of Education collaborate with the leadership of the school boards, the schools and education unions, in order to increase the involvement of professionals in their community's cultural life;
- That teacher training be reviewed to increase education when it comes to artistic disciplines and Francophone culture; and
- That the Ontario Ministry of Education adopt standards in terms of cultural animation and ensure that all staff holding these positions receive a standard training throughout the province.



Liaison Magazine Readers, 1984. Photo : CRCCF





### 5. Remedying the lack of data on Ontario's Francophone arts and culture community

- That the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, through the Ontario Arts Council, establish a research fund for Francophone arts and culture in Ontario, and that this fund be made available to artistic and cultural organizations, independent researchers and cultural agencies throughout the province;
- That Réseau Ontario update its study on the needs of Francophone performing arts presenters in Ontario and evaluate the renovation and purchase costs that would allow for an increase in "A"-level halls in the next ten years;
- That the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport analyze municipal cultural policies throughout the province to determine which ones account for Francophone culture, and ensure that municipal cultural policies in Ontario are carried out;
- That the Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario keep a watch on Francophone arts and culture investments in Ontario and ensure that the province's departments and agencies that finance Francophone arts and culture finance this study and share their data;
- That the Ministry of Education conduct a census of teachers specialized in the arts in French-language schools throughout the province;
- That Réseau Ontario conduct a study to document the evolution of artist fees paid to artists and artistic organizations by presenters and French schools in Ontario;
- That l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario conduct a study to document the salary ranges of Francophone cultural workers in Ontario;
- That the Ontario Arts Council finance a research program that documents the working conditions of artists, the financing plan, human capacity, working conditions and financial needs of Francophone artistic and cultural organizations in Ontario; and
- That the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport evaluate the need for additional funding from artists and artistic and cultural organizations in isolated areas (North and South-West) of Ontario.



## ARTS AND CULTURE



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**L'ASSEMBLÉE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DE L'ONTARIO**

Tel.: (613) 744-6649 | Toll Free: 1-866-596-4692 | Fax: (613) 744-8861  
1490 Star Top Road, Ottawa (Ontario) K1B 3W6