

# **Analysis of Responses to the Strategic Planning Online Survey**

## **Report on Canada Council Strategic Plan Consultation: Part 2**

### Executive Summary

*Prepared by Hill Strategies Research*

In order to identify where the Canada Council should focus its energies and resources between 2008 and 2011 and to guide its future development, the Council has engaged in a strategic planning process. As part of this process, the Canada Council asked for input from the arts community and beyond.

This Executive Summary and the accompanying full report, prepared by Hill Strategies Research, provide an analysis of the 1,182 responses to the Canada Council's online survey regarding its strategic plan. Hill Strategies Research has attempted, as much as possible within the short timeframe for the analysis, to ensure that this report accurately reflects respondents' comments.

This Executive Summary provides a brief summary of comments, while the full report contains more detail and more examples of actual responses. Respondents' comments were analyzed in the language in which they were submitted. However, for this report, French-language comments have been translated into English and noted as (trans).

Respondents commented on the Canada Council's support for the arts, fundamental values and priorities. The findings in this report do not necessarily reflect current or future Canada Council policy.

Respondents provided comments based on a consultation paper drafted by Council staff. The online survey was also designed by Canada Council staff, with no input from Hill Strategies Research.

The Canada Council posted the consultation paper and accompanying online survey on its web site on May 14 and sent email invitations to participate to approximately 20,000 artists, arts organizations, and individuals with an interest in the arts. This distribution included but was not limited to every applicant to the Canada Council in the past three years. The Council encouraged organizations to circulate the invitation through their networks, web sites and newsletters and to consult with their constituents as much as possible.

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The survey was launched on May 14 and closed on June 15. Given some technical difficulties with the online survey, additional email responses were accepted beyond the deadline.

This report complements a separate report, prepared by Canada Council staff, on the stakeholder discussions that took place in May and June with national arts service organizations, arts funders at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels, artists and arts administrators between the ages of 18 and 30, and selected organizations with an interest in the arts and in the Council’s work. Approximately 300 individuals participated in the stakeholder discussions.

### *Response summary*

The survey received a very significant number of responses (1,182). If this were a random survey – which it was not – the 1,182 respondents could provide a reliable snapshot of the entire population of Canada.

In terms of language, 994 responses were submitted in English and 188 in French.

Respondents came from all 13 provinces and territories, as well as a number from outside Canada. As shown in the table below, in general, survey respondents mirrored the overall provincial populations. However, BC and Quebec were slightly overrepresented among the survey respondents, while Alberta and Ontario were underrepresented.

<b>Respondents by province</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>QC</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>NL</b>
Number of respondents	222	68	27	32	339	320	35	54	4	19
Percentage of respondents	19%	6%	2%	3%	29%	27%	3%	5%	0.3%	2%
<b>Comparisons:</b>										
Percentage of population (Statistics Canada, 2007)	13%	10%	3%	4%	39%	23%	2%	3%	0.4%	2%
Percentage of artists (Hill Strategies Research, 2001 Census)	18%	9%	2%	3%	40%	21%	1%	3%	0.4%	1%

<b>Respondents by province (continued)</b>	<b>NU</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>YK</b>	<b>Outside Canada</b>	<b>Un-known</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of respondents	3	4	4	21	30	<b>1,182</b>
Percentage of respondents	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	2%	3%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Comparisons:</b>						
Percentage of population	0.1%	0.1	0.1			

(Statistics Canada, 2007)		%	%			
Percentage of artists (Hill Strategies Research, 2001 Census)	0.2%	0.1 %	0.2 %			

### *Respondents' roles in the arts community*

Nearly one-half of respondents identified themselves as a “professional artist or arts professional”. In descending order of frequency, respondents indicated that they are a:

- Professional artist or arts professional (46% of respondents)
- Member of an arts organization (23% of respondents)
- Arts attendee (13% of respondents)
- Other (9% of respondents)
- Arts patron (7% of respondents)
- Arts funder (1% of respondents)
- Government (1% of respondents)
- International arts funder (0.2% of respondents)

## **Support for the arts**

Based on a careful reading of responses to a question about **what the Canada Council does best**, as well as word counts in the database of responses, the most common themes were:

- support (*mentioned by about half of all respondents*),
- artists,
- fund (and related words “grant” and “finance”),
- organizations, and
- national (“country”, “Canadian”, “Canada”).

Some examples of actual responses include:

- “Supporting the individual artist, and the arts organizations like the symphony, the ballet and theatre”
- “Providing funding for the arts in Canada”
- "With the support it provides to artists, the Council allows them to carry out different projects while maintaining their invaluable independence." (trans)
- "Support for artists and creators." (trans)

Respondents mentioned funding or support for **artists** almost twice as often as **organizations**. Many respondents also:

- described how the Canada Council conducts its business, through “peer juries” or at “arm’s length from government”  
(e.g., “The most important aspect of the Canada Council is that it operates at arm’s length from the government while distributing funds to artists and organizations participating in arts creation, thereby supporting artists in a fair and transparent manner” and “Support artists through peer juries” (trans))
- felt that Council best “promotes”, “advocates”, “lobbies” or “acts as a voice for the arts” in Canada  
(e.g., “Supports artists and arts projects and promotes arts and culture in Canada”, “Provides representation and a voice for the arts in government policy making” and “Promote arts on a national level.” (trans))
- spoke of support for “creation”  
(e.g., “The Canada Council fulfills its goals best by sustaining the creation of a wide body of Canadian art, enabling the public to have access to a wonderful variety of creative endeavour”, “Encourages pan-Canadian artistic creation”(trans) and “Encourages the development of a national culture, more specifically by supporting the creation, promotion and dissemination of Canadian works from the various arts sectors.” (trans))
- believe that the Council best helps “develop” artistic activities  
(e.g., “I believe that the Council has had a major role in the development of our sector and has contributed politically and socially” and “Gives artists a structure for development.” (trans))
- believe that the Council best establishes standards of “excellence”, “merit” or “quality”  
(e.g., “Consistently fund individual artists of quality, and provide a modicum of secure core funding to proactive arts and publishing organizations” and “Develops excellence in artists from all disciplines and allows them to make themselves known and recognized at the national and international levels.” (trans))

Almost all respondents indicated that **a national arts council is important**. Many indicated that it is “vital”, “crucial”, “extremely / extraordinarily / tremendously / incredibly / very important”.

Why?

- “Without the Canada Council, there would be no arts infrastructure in Canada, nor would there be much exchange, as due to the size of the country the cost of travel is prohibitive, as is travel to the rest of the world.”
- “Vital to the development of Canadian art not only on the national scene but also the international stage. This is accomplished both through funding and promotion.”
- “As the art goes, so goes society. We need a council to direct this and to obtain funding from our government.”
- “For pan-Canadian Francophone culture, it is an immensely important asset.”  
(trans)

- “To ensure the vitality and survival of our culture and our identity.” (trans)
- “To contribute to the legitimization of current artistic practices and to validate the role of art in society.” (trans)

A small minority of respondents had a negative or uncertain response to the question of the importance of a national arts council.

Some key themes in response to a question about **Canada Council leadership** include:

- advocacy,
- the role of the arts in society,
- improving the situation of artists,
- support for creation, innovation, research and experimentation
- international activities,
- arts education, and
- support of excellence.

In addition to these key themes, a number of respondents indicated that the Canada Council already is a leader, while a few others indicated that Council should not be a leader.

A frequent response to a question about whether there is **anything that the Council should no longer be doing** was to indicate that the Canada Council should do **more**, not less.

Respondents were asked if there are **any other trends** that should be added to the **environmental trends** listed in the consultation paper (demographic and social change; changes in public attitudes and society at large; changes in the arts community; changes in governments and among public sector arts funders; and changes brought about by internationalism/globalization).

The most commonly mentioned additional trends were the **decline of arts education** and **technological changes**.

Other significant trends noted by respondents include:

- Decentralized, regional and rural arts activity
- Increasing conservatism in socio-political life
- Increasing number of emerging *older* artists
- Artists leaving the country for better opportunities elsewhere

When asked **what two things the Council could do to improve its support of the arts**, not surprisingly, one theme emerged as an overwhelming favourite – more money. Many respondents indicated that more money was needed in the arts in general, while a few pinpointed specific disciplines or areas that, in their minds, require additional funding.

In addition to more money, a wide variety of other responses were received. Some of these pertain to:

- **Advocacy**, awareness, promotion, “making the case”, and informing the public (e.g., “Be an advocate and spokesperson for the relevance of our artistic traditions to today’s realities.” and “Lobbying the regional MPs across the country to promote art in their respective regions.” (trans))
- **Regional** funding, communication and supports (e.g., “Make regional diversity a priority just as cultural diversity and Aboriginal culture are.”, “Open a western branch office. ”, “more support for Atlantic Canada”, “Support rural artists, despite the trend toward urbanization. Do not abandon the rural or remote artist!” and “Regionalize the points of contact with the arts community.” (trans))
- **Processes at the Canada Council**, including ongoing dialogue with the arts community, having more than one deadline per year, simplifying application forms, and instituting more flexible granting categories (“be more flexible” and “increase support to multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary arts”). In addition, a number of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the recent supplementary funding.
- **Equity of support**, in various guises (e.g., “Be impartial and fair in all forms of expression.” (trans))
- **Arts education** (e.g., “Have more funding for art education.”, “Support music education in private/public schools so that the next generation can continue to share in and profit from what we are creating today.”, and “Bring artists and writers into schools (and churches, cafes, bars, municipal events) all over the region.”)
- **Taking over important functions** that government departments are no longer fulfilling (e.g., “Take up the slack of Foreign Affairs in representing Canadian arts internationally” and “Make the case to for certain programs at the Department of Canadian Heritage to become the responsibility of the Council, such as the Museums Assistance Program.”)

From a careful reading of responses, it appears that there were some areas of disagreement among respondents:

- The balance of funding between individuals and organizations.
- The balance of funding between risk-taking, research, innovation and experimentation (on one hand) and activities that are presented and have community impact (on the other).
- The balance of support between emerging and established artists.
- The balance of support between new and established organizations (as well as small and large organizations).

When asked **where the Council should be spending more of its resources and where it should be spending less**, many respondents either ignored where to spend less or indicated that nothing should be reduced.

Some respondents indicated that funding could be reduced for larger organizations, established artists, Ontario and Quebec, and administration.

Regarding **where to spend more**, a few respondents wanted more money for all disciplines and sectors, but a much larger number recommended that Council spend more in a particular discipline. Among disciplines, the media arts were mentioned quite frequently, although all disciplines and sectors were mentioned by some recipients. Quite a few respondents indicated that funding for individual artists should be increased. A number of respondents indicated that the Canada Council should provide greater support for creation, distribution and dissemination.

Other points that were commonly mentioned by respondents, but not as commonly as the above major themes, include support for regions, organizational stability and capacity, international activities, and children and youth.

## Fundamental Values

*This next series of questions relate to the Council's fundamental values.*

*As an organization, the Canada Council:*

- *maintains an **arm's length relationship** from government, which allows the Council to develop policies and programs and make decisions without undue political pressure or influence.*
- *supports **freedom of artistic expression** from control or dominance by external forces such as governments and markets, a value reinforced by the arm's length relationship.*
- *believes in **government investment in the arts as a public good** enabling the arts to contribute to peoples' lives, encouraging arts development across Canada, and freeing art from complete reliance on the marketplace.*
- *seeks to **develop excellent art in Canada** by focusing on **professional artistic activity by individuals and organizations**, respecting **artistic excellence** as the primary criterion in providing grants, and relying on **peer assessment** as the best method for determining comparative merit in a national context.*
- *believes in the **value of a national perspective of the arts**, to enrich knowledge within the Council and the arts community, foster attitudes inclusive of all art forms and artistic traditions, and provide national and international leadership.*
  - *respects Canada's **official languages** and recognizes the need to support professional artistic activity by both French- and English-speaking Canadians.*
  - *respects the **regional diversity** of Canada and recognizes the need to support professional artistic activity in all parts of the country.*
  - *respects the histories, traditions, languages and contemporary practices of **Aboriginal Peoples** and seeks to foster the development of Aboriginal artists and organizations.*
    - *respects artists and arts organizations from **diverse cultural and racial backgrounds** and traditions and seeks to develop the work of these artists and organizations.*

Because of the survey design and the variety of descriptions of values used by respondents, Hill Strategies Research was not able to precisely count the number of times that specific values were mentioned in response to a question about **what respondents value most about the Council**. Despite this limitation, a careful reading of responses found that there is significant support for the values – and for the Canada Council in general – from many respondents.

Frequent mention was also made of:

- freedom of artistic expression,
- artistic excellence,
- support for artists,
- independent, non-commercial focus of public funding,
- arm's length funding and peer review,
- importance of art, and
- Canada / Canadian identity.

Some respondents expressed dissenting opinions, while a number indicated that the proof is in how the values are put into action.

A strong majority of respondents indicated that **all of the values listed are still relevant**.

Although many respondents indicated that the list of values was complete, a larger number provided detailed comments about **potential additional values**. Additional values that were frequently mentioned include:

- gender equity,
- access and participation,
- transparency,
- improving the situation / status of artists,
- citizenship and democracy,
- international efforts,
- disability arts, and
- youth audiences and interest.

The most common additional comment on values was that the proof is in how the values are put into action.

## **Priorities**

*In this next series of questions, we ask you to consider these priorities and where the Council should focus both attention and resources. These five priorities reflect major trends in the environment as well as the priorities identified in recent Council planning exercises. They are aspects of the Council's work that need special measures, focused attention and concerted effort if they are to be fully achieved and fully integrated into the Council's operations.*

- *Aboriginal Arts*

- *Capacity and adaptability in arts organizations*
  - *Cultural diversity*
- *Dissemination and public engagement*
  - *Emerging practices*

A **majority of respondents agreed with the five priorities**, although many provided qualified support. A number of respondents agreed but indicated that the proof would be in the actions taken by Council.

While agreeing in general, a number of respondents added an additional priority. The additional priorities that were commonly mentioned include:

- improving the situation of artists,
- arts education and youth audiences,
- artistic excellence,
- gender equity,
- age or intergenerational equity,
- support for established artists,
- disability arts,
- support for regional and rural artists and groups, and
- support for minority-language artistic activity, especially Francophones outside Quebec.

Some respondents who disagreed with the five priorities indicated that:

- “No. Priority should be relative to the excellence of the work alone.”
- “No. I do not think age, race, has priority, young or old, native / non native, diverse or not projects should stand on the artistic merit of the Artistic project...not by some politically correct "study" recommendations.”
- “I think the Council is trying to do too much and is spreading itself thin over these priorities, and creating more confusion than anything else. The actual heart of what an arts council should be is lost. An arts council should be funding artistic excellence as a priority. The Arts Council must realize that it cannot do 'everything'. If it tries, as it has been, it loses its vision, its reason for existence, which I believe has happened.”

When asked about the importance of each of the priorities, **all priorities received significant support**, with about three-quarters or more of respondents indicating that each of the listed priorities is either “important” or “very important”. More than one-half of respondents indicated that “dissemination and public engagement” and “capacity and adaptability in arts organizations” are **very** important. (See the table below for further details.)

<i>Please tell us how important each of the following priorities is for the Canada Council’s 2008-2011 Strategic Plan.</i>	Very important	Important	Some-what important	Of little importance	Not a priority
Dissemination and public engagement	61%	27%	9%	2%	2%

Capacity and adaptability in arts organizations	51%	30%	13%	3%	2%
Emerging practices	48%	30%	16%	2%	3%
Cultural diversity	42%	33%	17%	4%	4%
Aboriginal Arts	35%	39%	19%	3%	4%

When asked to elaborate on their choices, the level of positive and negative feedback reflected the “very important” priority rankings above. Respondents provided some interesting responses for and against the importance of each of the priorities. These are provided in the full report.

When asked to respond to specific increases or decreases in the Canada Council’s parliamentary appropriation, many respondents referred back to their answers to previous general questions about where the Council should be spending more of its resources and where it should be spending less. In fact, among those who did respond to the new questions, the most common response was some variation of “see above” or “already responded”. Because of these issues, the responses to the new questions did not provide sufficient new information to be analyzed separately.

When asked for **further comments on priorities**, a number of respondents made comments about the value of consultation and listening. Some commented on the lack of a priority regarding new technologies: “There is no mention of new technologies, which are already impacting the arts immensely and will do so even more in the future.”

Other respondents, relatively small in number, disagreed with the planning process or other aspects of Council’s functioning.

Many other comments and concerns that have been explored elsewhere in the survey were reiterated in response to this question. Some important themes include:

- improving the situation of artists,
- the value of arm’s length funding and peer assessment,
- artistic excellence,
- arts for youth and arts education,
- gender equity,
- age or intergenerational equity,
- disability arts,
- support for regional and rural artists and groups,
- support for minority-language artistic activity, especially Francophones outside Quebec,
- advocacy, and
- the role and value of the arts in society.

Many respondents provided input into a **long-term vision for the Canada Council** that would incorporate many key themes already highlighted in previous questions. Some of these themes include improving the situation of artists, the value of arm’s length funding and peer assessment, artistic excellence, and many other themes outlined previously. Other interesting comments related to:

- Regional support
- The need to “consolidate, catch up and renew”
- Culture as the wealth of a nation
- Artistic excellence
- Young artists
- Audience development
- Canadian identity / identities
- A better understanding of the arts in society
- Public engagement in the arts
- Artistic excellence
- Promotion of Canadian artists
- Leadership
- Defending and promoting artistic expression
- International support and promotion
- The need to respond to change
- Improving the situation of artists

Further details are provided in the full report.