

## SUMMER OUTREACH ADVOCACY BRIEF

During the House of Commons summer recess, Members of Parliament return to their ridings to connect with constituents, making it an opportune time to meet and foster relationships. This brief is meant to give an overview for successful meetings and events. If you would like any additional support, please don't hesitate to contact Nick Tracey, chair of PACT's Advocacy Committee: [NTracey@YoungPeoplestheatre.org](mailto:NTracey@YoungPeoplestheatre.org)

### MEETING PROCESS

#### Outreach and Invitation:

- Reach out to your MP's constituency office asking for a meeting, to attend an upcoming performance, or if applicable, take a tour of your facility. This may take a few follow-up emails/calls. [Find your MP by postal code.](#)
- Provide a brief overview of your organization, and highlight that you are a constituent from their riding.
- Once a meeting is confirmed, please let PACT / Nick Tracey know; [NTracey@YoungPeoplestheatre.org](mailto:NTracey@YoungPeoplestheatre.org)

#### Hosting and Meetings:

- Prepare for the meeting by reviewing the Meeting Framework. If there are two or more people in the meeting, discuss beforehand who will be saying what.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early for your meeting in order to respect the time of the MP. If you are hosting at your space, try to meet them at the entrance.
- Be sure to recognize and appreciate contributions from office administrators and advisors. If they sit in on the meeting be sure to include them in the discussion.
- Address Members of Parliament (MP) as "MP [LAST NAME]" and address a Minister as "Minister" - not Mr. or Ms. Minister.
- Don't presume their positions on topics based on their political affiliation; approach the discussion as an interested member of the community who wants to discuss solutions to issues of importance to Canadians.
- Try to find a personal connection to the theatre – a family member's involvement, a favourite show, etc.
- Keep in mind that most politicians will afford only 20-30 minutes for meetings, so be brief and to the point.

#### Conclusion / Follow-Up:

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

## KEY MESSAGES

### Message Framework:

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

### The Current State of Canadian Theatre:

- Member theatres report a 35-41% increase in operating expenses since 2019 including a 17% rise in facility operating costs, and 23% in artistic expenses;
- Audience participation remains 46% below 2019;
- Philanthropic donations in the arts in 2023 were down 45%;
- Government funding for the arts has not grown with the sector, leading to significant inflationary devaluation.

### Opportunity & Impact:

- Canada enjoys a world-class theatre sector, with amazing professional work being produced every day across this country, by companies large and small, rural and urban. Most years, over 8 million Canadians (25%) attend a live theatre production. Over the last three years behaviours have shifted, and we need to remind people what they've been missing, and as such theatres need a longer runway of support.
- With studies reporting a national rise in feelings of loneliness and isolation, Canada's theatres offer an opportunity for connection as places for community members to come together, to share, and be inspired.
- Theatres are aware of price sensitivity with the rising cost of living, with nearly all theatres having a robust portfolio of accessibility programs and community outreach.
- Canada's theatres employ 26,711 people.
- Cultural tourists stay longer and spend nearly *three-times more* while they're here, supporting other local businesses.

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

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