

March 18th, 2020

**Open Letter to the Federal and Provincial Ministries of Labour, Ministry of Canadian Heritage and Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada**

The Canadian Crafts Federation / Fédération Canadienne des métiers d'art (CCF/FMCA) calls for the urgent creation of emergency assistance funding for Canadian artists affected by the COVID 19 crisis. We stand in solidarity with the many arts and culture organizations requesting this support across the country.

The CCF/FCMA works with our regional partners to create connections and celebrate artists working in the craft sector through collaborative action, networking, and community development. Representing more than 5300 independent craft artists and organizations across Canada, we recognize that the craft sector includes countless independent practitioners within our membership and beyond who are experiencing the direct social and economic ramifications of the COVID-19 virus.

Craft artists operate small businesses, and like many freelancers and contract workers in the modern “gig economy”, they have been immediately impacted by travel restrictions, event cancellations, and closures. The cutoff of sales, lack of commissions and orders, cancellation of workshops, festivals, fairs, showcases, exhibitions and other events where craft artists planned to teach, showcase and sell their work, has had a devastating impact on those whose livelihood depends on a functioning arts and culture market.

The CCF/FCMA understands and respects the unprecedented measures being taken in the name of safety and health for all. These necessary steps have directly affected and will continue to affect the craft community as the impacts are felt in culture, tourism, education, and many other cross-sectoral fields where the arts are key contributors.

Individual craft artists, collectives, co-ops, small businesses, shops, galleries, and arts organizations alike are facing non-recoupable losses. We ask that craft artists be explicitly included in and supported within the emergency measures being developed in response to this crisis.

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As with many other Canadian industries and communities, the cultural sector requires support in the form of:

1. waivers to restrictions regarding the timing and eligibility for EI benefits, including:
  1. changes to the EI Special Benefits for Self Employed people to allow access for those who experience loss of work or income as a result of COVID-19 impacts
  2. waiving the 12-month waiting period
  3. reducing the 700 hour requirement for casual and part-time workers
2. revenue recovery for cancelled events and orders
3. financial assistance to stimulate and revitalize the industry in the wake of this international crisis
4. a concerted effort to provide ongoing support for social and financial strength for all people in Canada - particularly those who are most at-risk when difficult and unexpected challenges arise.

We applaud the early measures already taken and encourage further steps to support individuals and industries in the arts. The CCF/FCMA encourages all Members of Parliament, federal, provincial and territorial policy-makers, and all those in positions of power to consider the deep psychological, financial, and social benefits of the cultural sector when creating short and long term responses to this crisis.

The craft sector is a significant contributor to the Canadian economy (according to Statistics Canada's 2017 Cultural Satellite Account craft contributes more than \$2.2 billion to the GDP). The sector is a logical, creative, and healthy partner in our communal efforts to rebuild from this crisis. In the new normal, the arts can play a significant role in the rebuilding of social interaction and a healthy society - but not if our artists are left financially devastated through the recovery period.

In Solidarity,



Maegen Black  
CCF/FCMA Director

CC Kimberly Bent, CCF/FCMA President