

## Intro to panel, keeping the arts infrastructure in balance

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Over the last few days, we've seen that there is no such thing as a strictly physical infrastructure for the production, presentation and promotion of the arts in Canada: over and over again, we've seen that humans, organizations and knowledge stand at the heart of this infrastructure.

In fact, looking at the latest available numbers from Statistics Canada, operating funding accounts for over 93% of government expenditure on art (data includes performing arts, visual arts and craft, and concerns municipal, provincial and federal spending combined). Capital funding accounts for no more than 7% of total expenditures, between 2000 and 2004. The Canada Council also knows, through data from the arts organizations supports, that 70% of operating expenditures goes towards fees and salaries. Therefore, the human capital is the most important ongoing cost within the arts infrastructure. Capital costs turn out to be like the tip of an iceberg, sitting above a huge mass of human costs.

The Canada Council for the Arts intends to show both the tip and the underwater mass of the iceberg through a mapping project to be conducted in collaboration with

- National Arts Service Organizations
- provincial and territorial funders
- cultural policy research experts

The Canada Council's Action plan for 2008-2011 discusses this mapping project – it is posted on the web. This mapping of the Canadian arts infrastructure is to consider:

- *artists*
- *arts organizations that support, employ, present, exhibit, publish or provide other resources for artists*
- *audiences*
- *public*
- *funding and public policy environment*
- *facilities for the practice of art'*

With this project, we hope to develop a shared and balanced understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's arts infrastructure. What makes this huge, variegated ecosystem produce and disseminate really good art, what makes it *continue* to do it over the years – and what stops it from doing it, in the best possible way, across our entire territory?

Today's panel will provide us with their insights about this human, productive side of the arts infrastructure. You will hear two cultural policy research experts who both did a lot of hands-on work in arts organizations, and one artistic director who will tell us how his organization, the Mermaid Theatre, helped him shape, and project his artistic vision in interesting, and seldom reached corners of his community.