



INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, MOVING PICTURE TECHNICIANS,
ARTISTS AND ALLIED CRAFTS OF THE UNITED STATES, ITS TERRITORIES AND CANADA

Affiliated with
the AFL-CIO, CLC

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November 26, 2021

STATS & SUPPORT FOR LIVE PERFORMANCE INDUSTRY WORKERS

As the largest union representing workers in Canada's entertainment industry, the IATSE would like to express our gratitude for the Government of Canada's efforts to support our industry and the people who work within it. For our part, that's the technicians and artisans. The IATSE does not represent the actors, writers, or producers, but the skilled crew behind the scenes. Amongst other things, our 30,000 Canadian members are the lighting board operators, makeup artists, carpenters, wig builders, ushers, aerial riggers, props people, dressers, and scenic artists who create your favourite concerts, ballets, and theatrical productions.

The Government of Canada has been responsive and supportive of our industry, and we are grateful for that. We have also been repeatedly assured that Canada highly values its arts and cultural sector and wants to ensure the sector is supported. We have been advised that a new program to assist live performance workers is being created. We would like to provide information and context so that the Government is able to build a program that would be the most beneficial to these workers - who are still completely or largely unemployed due to COVID.

We have repeatedly stated that the ideal program would be one structured virtually identically to the CRB - offering the same level of income support, launching immediately, and continuing until the industry is up and running to full audiences. We have been advised that this will not happen, and that what is being contemplated is "emergency relief" rather than "income support." Given that, we will do our best to help advise on such a program.

We have been asked to provide numbers to demonstrate whether there has been any decline in our membership since 2019 (i.e. pre-pandemic). We have gathered numbers from local unions across the country, but we must make clear that they are not an accurate indicator of what is happening. In most industries, an employee is hired at a workplace and becomes a member of the union simply by virtue of having been hired. In the freelance world of entertainment, workers typically work at their crafts and train on new skills for years before they're qualified enough to be offered a union card. Once attained, very few ever give it up - even if they leave the industry. The vast majority choose to continue paying dues to remain "active" members until they retire. Because their membership is so important to them, in many cases, members even choose to pay reduced dues in retirement so that they can keep their cards and stay involved with their union.

A better (though still not accurate) indicator is our permittee lists. Permittees are workers who are offered work once all available members of a local union have been placed. This process of placing workers on calls (both members and permittees) happens daily. Because most locals have not been busy enough to get into their permittee lists with any regularity

(or at all), the figures they provided are best estimates. This is a sampling from across the country:

IATSE Local Union	Members vs 2019	Permittees vs 2019
IATSE Local 63 (Winnipeg)	Unchanged	- 15%
IATSE Local 105 (London)	Unchanged	- 10%
IATSE Local 118 (Vancouver)	Unchanged	- 25%
IATSE Local 168 (Victoria)	- 2%	- 48%
IATSE Local 680 (Halifax)	+ 8%	- 25%
IATSE Local 906 (Charlottetown)	- 7%	- 29%
IATSE Local B848 (Gloucester Bay)	- 37%	N/A

The larger cities are film production hubs, so many live performance crew have taken their skills over to that sector of the industry. Though they will hang on to their IATSE cards from the stage locals, there are still valid concerns from these local unions that many members will establish themselves in film and not return to live performance. It is also worth noting that permittees are typically younger workers who work alongside more seasoned professionals in order to learn and hone these highly specialized skills, and then acquire their membership. It is highly concerning that permittees are beginning to leave the industry because as our members age out and retire, we are losing the next generation of technicians.

Wages are the most accurate reflection of the current status of the industry and its workers. The chart below illustrates the industry's continued depression, using the period from August – December of 2019 vs August – December of 2021. (This necessitates some projections for the latter part of this year, but most agreements are signed months in advance so we don't anticipate things will change much.)

IATSE Local Union	Wages Aug – Dec 2019	Wages Aug – Dec 2021	Difference
IATSE Local 56 (Montreal)	\$4,616,783.00	\$1,627,498.00	- 65%
IATSE Local 118 (Vancouver)	\$3,327,260.00	\$917,000.00	- 72%
IATSE Local 295 (Regina)	\$1,220,286.00	\$337,802.00	- 72%
IATSE 471 (Ottawa)	\$3,195,343.26	\$864,629.00	- 73%

It's a stark picture. Live performance workers need help *now*. Though the majority of our members are employees, they are ALSO gig workers. As gig workers, they are not eligible for the wage subsidies offered through either the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program or the Hardest-Hit Business Recovery Program. They have paid into EI throughout their careers and have maxed out their claims. While we appreciate the assistance these programs provide our employers to keep their doors open, wage subsidy programs do not assist the majority of the people who make their living in the arts.

Because we were recently advised that any support for arts workers will be restricted to “emergency relief,” we strongly recommend that the Government of Canada work with The AFC (formerly The Actors’ Fund of Canada) to provide the type of assistance being contemplated. As a registered charity, The AFC exists solely to provide emergency relief to all arts workers, regardless of craft or union affiliation (or lack thereof). This is the sole purpose of the organization, and they have been adjudicating claims and providing this service for decades. Thousands of arts workers have kept the lights on and had their rent paid because of emergency assistance from The AFC. We have had discussions with The AFC and, while they would need more detail on how such a program would work, they are willing to have that discussion with Government, and potentially manage the program.

We are grateful to the Government of Canada for all your efforts and thank you for your consideration. We would welcome the opportunity for further discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Lewis".

John Morgan Lewis
Director of Canadian Affairs
International Vice President