



Associated  
Designers of  
Canada

## THE LIVE PERFORMANCE INDUSTRY

We are a coalition of Canada's entertainment unions, representing performers, musicians, designers, and behind-the-scenes artisans and technicians. Our coalition is comprised of the IATSE, Canadian Actors' Equity Association, the Canadian Federation of Musicians, and the Associated Designers of Canada. We represent over 50,000 workers across the entertainment industry.

We have expressed the need for supports that address the uniqueness of the entertainment industry and its workers and have been asked to provide more detail. It is an industry unlike any other: the way it's structured, how and when workers are paid, the financial risks involved in mounting a production, the length of that process, and that - regardless of employee status - the majority of workers are gig workers (i.e., freelancers).

### Employment Relationships

The majority of Canadian production companies are not-for-profits. Larger venues/producers have fulltime managerial and administrative staff. Most of these producers own their building(s) and are almost exclusively not-for-profits. They rely primarily on ticket sales, sponsorships and donors as well as grants from all levels of government. The largest exception in Canada is Mirvish, which is a commercial entity that relies exclusively on ticket sales. Small producers have little or no fulltime staff, rent venues to mount shows, and are largely dependent on government grants.

Regardless of size or (non) profit status any producer, those producers with staff have been able to make use of the wage subsidy. It's important to understand that only the fulltime staff would have been eligible. Those *not eligible* make up the majority of a producer's payroll, which are the hundreds of actors, musicians, designers, and technicians/artisans required to mount a production. **All of these workers are gig workers (i.e. freelancers) – even though some are employees and some are self-employed.**

Of the self-employed, some (like designers) are paid in lump sum payments throughout the process - prior to production, midway through the process, and at opening. Others are self-employed workers (like actors and musicians) and are paid throughout the rehearsal period and then throughout production. The majority of stage managers/technicians/artisans are employees, and are paid weekly for work performed the previous week.

The self-employed (like designers or actors) either have individual employment contracts that exist between the worker and the employer or work under the terms of a collective agreement. The technicians, though freelance, do not have individual contracts. When in a workplace, these

employees work under the collective agreement negotiated between their local union and the employer. These employees regularly work at a venue under one collective agreement on one day, and at a second venue under a different collective agreement the following day. Jobs can last for as long as a production is running or as little as 4 hours – the minimum call guaranteed under all IATSE collective agreements.

### **Process & Time Frame Required to Mount a Production**

Due to concerns about the lag time between whenever the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit is terminated and when live performance workers can start earning income again, we are providing more detail on the process and time frame required to mount a production. The standard play creation schedule has a large degree of variation from company to company and from project to project, depending on the budget, complexity, and scale of the production. Laid out below is what could reasonably be expected as a timeline at a standard regional theatre in Canada. Some of the bigger companies will take significantly more time whereas some smaller, more nimble companies might be able to condense this timeline.

**The process of producing a show usually begins over a year before opening night.** It involves the selection of the play that the company wishes to produce, followed shortly thereafter by inquiries to the rights-holders of that script and a negotiation of the terms of production. This typically includes a time-limited window in which the company is granted the rights to perform a script. This is an important component, because theatre closures or show postponements push shows outside of their windows of rights permissions. Upon successful acquisition of the rights to a script, theatre companies typically spend the next few weeks coming up with a marketing strategy for the show.

**7-10 months before the opening of the show:** The producer/engager begins to review candidates, interview, and hire the creative team, which includes the director and the designers. Initial discussions around the seating layout in the theatre would happen around this point so that marketing can begin to build a box office and plan the ticket sales.

**5-8 months before opening night:** Directors and designers begin planning and discussions on their ideas for the show. Auditions for actors may also start. At this point, marketing materials are usually created and made available, which contain the names of key artistic personnel. Subscriptions and single tickets may start to go on sale.

**3-4 months before opening night:** Preliminary set and costume designs are usually due. A budgeting review is conducted by the Technical Director, Head of Props, Head Scenic Painter, and Head of Wardrobe. Two to three weeks later, the final set design is due, whereupon the Technical Director will prepare technical drawings to be used by the shops (theatre building workshops) to build the sets and/or props.

**6 weeks before opening night:** The stage management contract begins a week before rehearsal starts and functions as their prep week.

**4-6 weeks before opening night:** Rehearsals begin for actors, stage management, directors and designers. The building of sets begins. Prop building typically starts at the same time. Depending on the complexity of the costumes and whether or not they need to be built or bought, the costume building process will start either around this time or shortly before rehearsal begins.

**1-2 weeks before opening night:** “Load-in” happens. This is the period when all of the stage crew, scenic carpenters, dressers, lighting & sound board operators, electricians, and riggers begin installing the show into the theatre, including hanging the lighting and sound equipment.

**1 week before opening night:** This is “tech week.” It is the first stage of the process where all workers necessary to mount a production are involved. It occurs the week before preview/opening and is when the rehearsals move from the rehearsal hall onto the stage. It is the final week of rehearsals with all technical elements (such as costumes, lights, sound, set, hair/wigs, and makeup) in place. This allows the actors to become familiar with the set and costumes, and the designers and technical crew to finalize things like cues, scene/set changes, or costume adjustments.

Clearly, live performance functions very differently from all other industries. Bars and restaurants may be able to open back up very quickly, but the length of time it takes to get from “capacity limits have been lifted” to “Curtains up!” is a much longer process.

### **Wage Loss and Worker Exodus**

In October 2021, the IATSE asked their local unions provide numbers to demonstrate whether there has been any decline in membership since 2019 (i.e. pre-pandemic). Below is a sampling from across the country, but we must make clear that these numbers 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 IATSE’s 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 when work is available. Because most local unions 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 (Glace 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 IATSE members will establish themselves in film and not return to live performance. It is also worth noting that permittees are typically younger - and often more diverse – and this is where the exodus is coming from. They typically 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. Canadian Actors’ Equity Association conducted a survey of their membership that yielded similar results, which we are happy to provide upon request.

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 necessitated some projections for the latter part of this year, but most agreements are signed months in advance so there wouldn’t be significant change.)

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%

Below are different metrics, again using the period from Aug-Dec 2019 vs Aug-Dec 2021, and again, incorporating some projection, unless otherwise indicated.

Organization	Aug – Dec 2019	Aug – Dec 2021	2021 vs 2019
IATSE Local 56 (Montreal)	Wages: \$4,616,783.00	\$1,627,498.00	- 65%
IATSE Local 118 (Vancouver)	Wages: \$3,327,260.00	\$917,000.00	- 72%
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IATSE 471 (Ottawa)	Wages: \$3,195,343.26	\$864,629.00	- 73%
Canadian Actors’ Equity Association	Earnings (Aug/Sept only): \$12,205,252.07	\$5,128,161.62	- 58%
Associated Designers of Canada	Contracts filed/signed: 248	Contracts filed/signed: 28	- 88%

It's a stark picture and it will be a slow and long recovery. The live performance industry and its workers need help.

### **Individual and Industry Supports**

With all freelance workers NOT eligible for wage subsidies (regardless of whether they are "employees" or "self-employed"), we urge the federal government to offer benefits that ensure they do not fall through the cracks. The Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit could be tweaked in two ways. First, the "capacity limit" eligibility should be extended until the regular benefit is terminated. Second, the "capacity limit" eligibility language must be broadened. As it stands, it excludes live performance workers in Saskatchewan - where capacity limits were not introduced yet no productions are running. Broadened language must contemplate that, once capacity limits are lifted, it will take producers months to mount a production and live performance workers must have some income support in the interim.

A modification of the wage subsidy could also help. Given that the Tourism and Hospitality sector, and specifically the Live Arts and Culture industries, use independent contractors as front-line workers (performers, musicians, performers, certain kinds of creatives, etc.) we would ask that the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program allow for the wage subsidy to be applicable to anyone on regular payroll (i.e. those issued either a T4 or T4A) and not just traditional, fulltime employees. This would both incentivize the industry to get back to work while underwriting risk, and put money directly into the hands of workers. It would also not discriminate between not-for-profit vs commercial theatre. Further, the current system supports only organizations who are seeing year-over-year revenue declines, so it is self-correcting in terms of lowering as need reduces. Best of all, the wage subsidy already exists and is targeted, so little legislative change or budget pressure would be necessary.

### **Live Performance and the Economy**

The financial contribution of the arts is a significant one every city in which a venue is located, and these venues must be supported. For *Come From Away* alone, Mirvish Productions stated that more than one million patrons saw the show during its run - February 13, 2018 to March 13, 2020 and December 15 to 22, 2021, at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. Broken down:


- Box office sales surpassed of \$115 Million including over \$15 Million in HST
- Estimated economic impact to the Toronto economy of \$920 Million
- The show created 9,000 employment weeks for cast, stage managers, musicians, crew members and front of house team members

Clearly, culture is a huge driver. "As a proportion of Canada's overall GDP, culture GDP accounted for 2.7% in 2017. This represents \$1,448 per capita," according to the Culture Satellite Account. StatsCan reveals that Culture GDP in 2017 (\$59 billion) was larger than that of

agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (\$39 billion), accommodation and food services (\$46 billion) and utilities (\$46 billion). Further, according to 2016 census data, the number of cultural workers (726,630) in Canada is greater than the labour force in automotive manufacturing (146,200) and the utilities sector (136,400).

The live performance industry isn't just about supporting the arts. It's also sound economic policy. We are grateful to the Government of Canada for all your efforts and the opportunity to propose solutions. We welcome the opportunity for further discussion.

Sincerely,



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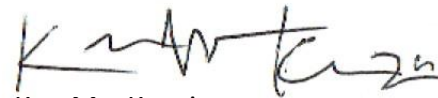
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