

How to Make your Vote Count for the Arts



by Katie Wilde

GAC Staff

What can I do to make my electoral votes count for the arts?

1. Make sure you're registered to vote, know where your polling station is, and make plans to vote early or get to your station on time.
<http://www.elections.ca/home.aspx>
2. Know your candidates and their parties' positions on the arts.
3. Ask your MP candidates to commit to the arts, to fight for culture in the federal budget, and to speak up to their party leaders on your behalf. Send them a letter, email, or tweet to remind them that, if they are to represent you, they should represent your values - and you've made them aware that arts and culture matter to you.

Not sure how to start the conversation? Here are some key political issues concerning the arts.

Culture is an ECONOMIC issue.

- The arts made the government three times as much money in taxes as they spent on the arts.
- GDP: Culture is a larger contributor to the GDP than the accommodation and food industry, and the agriculture and forestry industry.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/13-604-m/13-604-m2014075-eng.htm>

Culture is an issue of PUBLIC SAFETY.

- You are far more likely to become a victim of local crime than terrorism. Investments in your own community often depend on federal arts funding to create and sustain arts programs for criminal offenders, at-risk youth, and victims of crime. These programs help to foster positive behaviour and coping skills, creating a safer Canada for all.

Arts Education for At-Risk Youth results in Better Academic Outcomes, Higher Career Goals, and More Civic Engagement:

<http://arts.gov/news/2012/new-nea-research-report-shows-potential-benefits-arts-education-risk-youth#sthash.1i6AgiLm.dpuf>

"According to the 2009 GSS, about 7.4 million Canadians, or just over one-quarter of the population aged 15 years and older, reported being a victim of a criminal incident in the preceding 12 months." "In 2013, four individuals were arrested on terrorism-related charges in Canada... Both alleged plots were detected sufficiently early that there was never a risk to the public."

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11340-eng.htm#a>

<http://www.rta-arts.org/impact/research-studies/>

Culture is an issue of CHILDREN, education, and our future.

- Citizens who are children now "will soon be leading Canada's growth in terms of cultural, social and economic development"
- more funding in the arts means parents and schools will have more opportunities, and be better able to afford to give children formative experiences in the arts which instill:
 1. discipline
 2. learning skills
 3. better brain function (cognition, language, math, critical thinking)
 4. teamwork
 5. responsibility
- Mitigate the 'risk' in 'at-risk youth', and give every child a chance

<http://www.canadianartscoalition.com/resources/children-and-the-arts>

<http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/preparing-students-next-america-benefits-arts-education>

Culture is an issue of HEALTH.

People who attend arts activities have been shown to be significantly healthier, have lower anxiety and be less subject to depression.

- preventative measures reduce the burden on our health care system
- happier, healthier individuals contribute to more positive family, school, and workplace environments

<http://jech.bmj.com/content/early/2011/05/04/jech.2010.113571>

<http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/arts-health-and-well-being>

<http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/arts-and-individual-well-being-canada>

Culture is a SOCIAL issue.

"The arts are how we speak to each other across our vast geography. Our arts and cultural organizations express the Canadian values of diversity, tolerance and multiculturalism. They are a critical building block as Canadian children build shared citizenship and understand one another."

<http://www.canadianartscoalition.com/resources/society-and-the-arts>

The arts are a critical avenue to

- Indigenous voices
- understanding our history, our identity, and informing the direction of our future
- free speech and social justice
- multiculturalism
- providing a support system for people living with any degree of poverty or mental health issues

"There are many ways to find out about a given party's stance with regards to

arts and culture. You may explore their past policies, you may scan past statements. You can also ask direct questions to parties and candidates."- CAC