

Funding cuts cripple national arts organization

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Alain Pineau (c), National Director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts is seen here with Raymond Legault (l), president of the Union des artistes, and Sylvain Masse (r), president of the Quebec Association of Theatre Critics in this file photo. (SIRA CHAYER/QMI Agency)

OTTAWA — The director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts is hoping for a miracle.

After 67 years representing Canadian artists and groups, the arts advocacy organization is shutting its doors Wednesday, the result of its funding being eliminated completely by the government.

“The best we can hope for is to leave behind at least a shell of the corporation to a caretaker and preserve its charitable status,” Alain Pineau told QMI Agency.

When the government moved to have the CCA self-finance, the organization accepted the challenge, Pineau explained, and asked for \$500,000 over two years to help with the transition. The government gave them \$195,000.

“We’re disappointed that having embraced the government’s position that we should not rely on them, having accepted that, worked hard to try to make it work, that it hasn’t,” he said.

He’s not the only one saddened by the news.

NDP Heritage critic Pierre Nantel said the CCA’s funding removal was political.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the Conservatives are punishing CCA for being a strong voice for the cultural community against the government’s changes to copyright legislation,” he said in a statement.

“When you look at the Conservatives’ track record so far, you notice fierce actions toward all groups that oppose [them].”

A spokesperson for Heritage Minister James Moore said the government has “delivered unprecedented levels of support to the arts”.

“For over 35 years this organization has received up to 60% of its budget from the government, including this year,” Sebastien Gariepy said. “We will continue to invest in affordable, effective programs that support culture in Canada.”

In the meantime, Pineau hopes for a saviour.

“We’re putting the bottle in the sea and hoping someone will pick it up,” he said. “Really, we’re hoping for a miracle.”

POLL

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- No, artists deserve more.
- No, artists deserve less.
- My taxes shouldn't be going to the arts at all.

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