

Dear Members of the Selection Committee for Soulpepper Theatre,

We write as long-standing members of the arts community. We have worked for and been audience members of your organization over many years and value the place this institution holds in our industry. As you are aware, the Department of Canadian Heritage is now looking closely at the mandates of non-profit arts institutions to better serve and reflect their stakeholders.

It is essential in a search for artistic and executive directors that you, the board, and the selection committee, are seen to do your due diligence in consulting a wide range of stakeholders: those who work for the company, its audience, and the arts community to help you define what that leadership should look like.

To ensure that you access as wide and diverse a range of suitable candidates you must consider internal and external candidates with equal vigour, while recognizing that the playing field has not been fair or accessible for everyone. Selection committees must also allow less experienced candidates the opportunity to move into round two of the interview process. A future leader will learn invaluable skills and the members of the selection committee will have the opportunity to be exposed to more ways of creative thinking.

It is imperative that as an industry we invest not just in succession planning but also in the development of our future leaders. Only when our arts institutions cultivate tomorrow's diverse leadership will the sector, as a whole, survive. If each institution and company commits to succession development, then all of our arts institutions can access a rich pool of qualified individuals who are capable of taking on their managerial and artistic positions.

To support your final decision, we encourage transparency to the community in how your choice serves the mandate and vision of the company. At the announcement of your final choice for artistic director and/or executive director, we ask that you share the priorities and values that guided your decisions. Such an action will form a valuable connection between the arts organization you support and the community.

An excellent template is the Canadian Stage Company's recent announcement of the appointment of Brendan Healy as Artistic Director. The board chairs gave a clear description of the company's vision and mandate and the reasons why Mr. Healy was chosen for imaginative, inclusive and collaborative leadership.

This letter will be posted on the Got Your Back Canada web page and Facebook page for artists across the country to read and sign. We will continue to send the letter to all theatre companies in the process of looking for new leadership.

We are all responsible for the growth, vitality and inclusivity of our arts organizations. We thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Martha Burns

Briony Glassco

Jennifer Wigmore

Marcia Johnson

Maev Beaty

Chantal Ford

Ruby Joy

Kristina Nicoll

Derrick Chua

Michela Washburn

Thalia Kane

Valerie A. Planche

Fiona Reid