

I was asked to produce a summary of the report *Vivement, pour une culture philanthropique au Québec!*,¹ commissioned by the Quebec government, and I approached the exercise as objectively as possible, despite my avowed bias in favour of public funding of the arts. By way of hypothesis, I posed myself the following questions: If the cultural sector were fully financed by the state, would non-profit artistic and cultural organizations organize events, produce goods and services, and serve as mediators? In any case, are these activities not inherent to the process of cultural production? How can these efforts be enriched by calling on the private sector for financial contributions without completely changing the organizations' primary mission or the nature of artistic activity?

The task force and its mandate

The task force,² chaired by long-time arts patron Pierre Bourgie, received the mandate to "identify why Quebec lags behind in cultural philanthropy, and to propose solutions to encourage private donations and facilitate access to assistance measures for cultural organizations."³ From the outset, the task force stated that the levers proposed to develop private assistance for culture are aimed at altruistic donations and constitute a complement to government funding. This assistance would come from the business sector and individuals. There is no mention of private foundations. Although few foundations support arts and culture, the Quebec arts milieu is greatly beholden to a small number of them, including those of the Bronfman, Bourgie, Greenberg, and Chagnon families, to name a few. The statistics presented in the report indicate that private companies donate less money to organizations than may be supposed. Unlike private foundations and the government, private companies

1 Government of Quebec, *Rapport du groupe de travail sur la philanthropie culturelle*, June 2013.

2 The task force on cultural philanthropy comprised eight members of the business community engaged in the cultural domain: Pierre Bourgie, chair of the task force, entrepreneur, and patron of the arts; Sophie Brochu, president and CEO of Gaz Métro; Jo-Ann Kane, curator of the National Bank Collection; Benoît Desjardins, tax partner at Deloitte; Michel Labonté, former Senior Vice President, Finance, Technology, and Corporate Affairs of the National Bank of Canada; Jacques Parisien, vice-president and COO of Astral Média; Peter D. Simons, chairman and CEO of Simons; and Jonathan Tétrault, partner at McKinsey & Company.

3 Letter of transmission from the task force, *Rapport*, I (our translation).

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are not mandated to make donations. They tend to be cautious: they don't like to fund organizations liable to make waves. Furthermore, private companies are focused on results, whereas cultural organizations are more concerned with the process—with the way things are done. The task force is aware of this cultural divide and has taken it into consideration in its recommendations.

The task force based its study on the conviction that “culture is one of the foundations of Quebec and its identity.” Thus, the marked absence of individuals from First Nations and ethnic communities in the composition of the task force constitutes a blind spot as regards the diversity of cultures that characterize Quebec society and displays indifference toward recent demands by Aborigines for greater cultural and socio-economic recognition. Although it is briefly mentioned that business people of diverse origins should also be made sensitive to cultural issues, the cultural development being sought is founded on an implicit vision of Quebec identity.

An inquiry, a survey, a study: Five levers

The task force broaches the question of private funding in a comprehensive and integrated manner, and proposes action in five areas of leverage. The series of proposals associated with the levers emerge from a range of observations based on a CROP survey, a study by Léger Marketing, data from Statistics Canada, and an inquiry on cultural philanthropy conducted by the task force among 554 cultural organizations (no hypothesis has been put forward to explain the low response rate to the survey: 22 percent, or less than one quarter).

The levers proposed by the task force⁴ are as follows:

1. **Revise, improve, and maintain** the Mécénat Placements Culture program.
2. **Position philanthropy at the heart of the cultural experience**, through the creation of *PArtenaires*.
3. Increase the number of new and major donors by means of fiscal incentives that **promote cultural donations**.
4. **Position culture at the centre of city life** through cultural philanthropy.
5. Invest in youth, by **instituting youth-oriented cultural programs as early as possible**.

Some of the proposed solutions are already in place (the

Mécénat Placements Culture program, tax credits, the Artistes à l'école program). Others remain to be instituted (the *PArtenaires* organization, an awareness campaign, the integration of art into architecture, the integration of art history courses into secondary schools, and other initiatives). The specific target of this overall strategy is to increase donations for culture by 50 percent within four years, bringing donations to a total of \$68 million (\$15 million per annum over four years, plus \$20 million per annum over ten years to fund the new Fonds Avenir Mécénat Culture, which should serve to ensure the continued existence of the program). Based on the results of the inquiry, the task force concluded that the Mécénat Placements Culture program has proven its worth, despite several problems identified by the organizations participating in the study (including waiting periods for matching and for accessing collected funds and a lack of resources for conducting fund-raising campaigns). The capitalization of Mécénat Placements Culture by major companies (see lever no. 1) seems to represent a genuine effort, whilst securing the program's autonomy. Can this approach be seen as a way to maintain and finance other programs, such as those that support artists in schools and in the community, which share the same objectives of rapprochement?

The fiscal incentives proposed in the third lever are valuable for stimulating initial donations as well as those from major donors (as it is clear that there are too few major arts patrons). Nevertheless, the report indicates that fiscal incentives are the measures used the least and that tax credits for charitable donations are underexploited. It would seem that there are other motivations: proximity has been put forward as one of the principal incentives for donations. The creation of links among individuals is central to the development of networks. Also, considering the degree to which the arts and culture milieu is a community of contacts, comparable to the world of business with its associations and chambers of commerce, it is questionable whether the development of new relationships can be forced. **In fact, activating this lever would multiply efforts to bring the horse to water, so to speak.**

The survey reveals that intense competition exists among organizations seeking funding, as many call on the same small pool of donors. It would be interesting to know the proportion of private donations that originate from the cultural milieu itself. The measures suggested in the second lever target the difficulties experienced by

4 *Rapport*, vii.

the organizations surveyed. Proposed is the creation of *PArtenaires*, an independent non-profit consultancy whose mandate would be to stimulate philanthropy by offering guidance, support for governance, a partnering service between organizations and donors, and a platform for micro-donations, also known as crowd funding. The creation of this structure would facilitate the development of lasting relationships, despite the real and perceived barriers that tend to divide the milieus. Mutual recognition of the strengths and weaknesses⁵ of each of the sectors seeking rapprochement would increase the potential for more equitable relations.

Raising awareness: a reciprocal transaction

Statistics on donations by individuals in Quebec, and their distribution across organizational categories,⁶ reveal that Quebecers donate less than residents of other Canadian provinces, with the majority of donations going to the health sector. The CROP survey reveals that Quebecers count on public and community action rather than individual initiative and prioritize aid to the causes and people closest to them (family, parish, and so on). The task force believes that cultural identification with Quebec society must be made into a “cause.” However, if one considers, as the inquiry suggests, that major donors are motivated by the prospect of expanding their personal relationships and give for the love of art, does the idea of a “cause” correlate with what major donors are seeking? The second lever also recommends the organization of an awareness-raising campaign that would invite donors to testify to how culture has changed their lives. Is cultural philanthropy simply another form of charity? Or can other kinds of relationships between art and business be negotiated?

Many professional cultural organizations have already established excellent initiatives aimed at giving Montrealers greater access to arts and culture by means of the Ville de Montréal’s cultural action programs, offered within the framework of the Entente sur le développement culturel de Montréal in partnership with the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. Why not ensure the continued existence of this program in the same way as envisaged for the matching donations program? The creation of a platform for micro-donations, intended for the one-off financing of special projects,

seems coherent with the results of the inquiry and would better meet the need for much-sought-after short-term funding by appealing to an organization’s immediate community. One small Quebec micro-donation enterprise, *Eclodid*, already exists: reinforcing this new, alternative project-funding platform could, at the same time, further its development. The same applies to guidance measures: the Montréal Arts Affaires programs, as well as the Le Conseil québécois des ressources humaines en culture (CQRHC) programs, which offer organizational support through the agency of service organizations (RCAAQ, RAAV, RAIQ, AGAC), could be strengthened and expanded. Many awareness-raising initiatives geared toward art and culture exist that could contribute to creating a public, political forum for exchanging ideas as well as play a role in the development of various aspects of the economy. In return, could cultural organizations also be sensitized to the benefits of fund-raising campaigns? In addition to diversifying their sources of income, this would increase their autonomy, prove to the public sector that the community has faith in what they are doing, influence public opinion, encourage a sense of involvement in artistic or cultural undertakings, and promote individual, organizational, and community empowerment.

Keep artists in the city centre

The fourth lever aims at “positioning culture at the centre of city life,” which would affect urban infrastructure such as buildings and premises intended for artists’ studios and cultural institutions. This avenue is strongly influenced by the development of Le Pôle de création et de diffusion de Gaspé, a hub for creation and dissemination in Montreal’s Mile-End neighbourhood. This recently launched project has received funding on the order of \$1.8 million and aims at keeping artists in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification due to real-estate speculation. The task force recommends that the government address the recommendations outlined in the report produced by Montréal, métropole culturelle, including a survey of buildings in Quebec’s major cities, an essential step toward better integration of artist studios and cultural organizations into the urban landscape. Across Quebec, several real-estate projects are at various stages of development. It would be interesting to take stock of the impact of these projects on the community (taking into account all users of the facilities). Other proposals are to raise the value of donations of works of public art and to integrate art into all building projects, a measure

5 François Deck, “Reciprocal Expertise,” *Third Text* 18.6 (2004): 617–32.

6 *Rapport*, charts 12-16, 59-63.

modelled on the well-established integration of arts with architecture policy. The use of architecture competitions for the design of new buildings should also be encouraged by offering subsidies covering half of competition costs, and a prize for architects and designers should be created. The injunction taken out by the arts community concerning the artwork destined for the Esplanade Financière Sun Life at the Parc Olympique, which had not been subjected to the provisions laid down for the acquisition of public artworks, is still fresh in our collective memory, and the task force makes clear that all such measures should respect the process set in place by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC).

Cultivate philanthropy in schools

The last lever introduces measures that impact education. A program that matches funds raised through chocolate-sales campaigns and parents' contributions would enable the number of cultural activities offered in primary schools to be increased by means of cultural action programs, such as the one mentioned above, offered by the Ville de Montréal in partnership with the MCC. The introduction of art history courses in high schools is very welcome; in fact, it is astonishing that these courses are not already on the curriculum formulated by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, given the wealth of Quebec's artistic and cultural heritage! Another recommendation would be to reduce the admission price for Quebec's public museums to \$1 for all primary- and secondary-school students (and why not extend this reduction to college and university students?).

An integrated and reciprocal approach

Does the current economic climate discourage the business and cultural sectors from recognizing each other's value? Several of the measures proposed by the task force are already in place but are not yet coordinated. The strength of the report is that it opts for a strategic, coherent, and sustainable vision, by proposing that the business community become more involved in the cultural sector. Wouldn't development of more equitable relations between the worlds of business and culture be easier if awareness-raising efforts were made in both directions?

According to the inquiry on cultural philanthropy, 76 percent of organizations are dissatisfied with the level of funding that they receive, and donors give for the love of art. There seems to be

the potential in this equation for a genuine mutual recognition of everyone's strengths and weaknesses, with a view to a more fruitful form of relationship. Could this so-called business relationship even transcend the collection of material artworks and extend to a truly altruistic form of patronage among cultural and artistic organizations of all kinds? In short, the costs of the "added" measures mentioned in the report should diminish proportionally in relation to growing investments by the business sector within four years. These benefits should enhance rather than reduce public financing: micro-organizations, whose contribution to the cultural milieu cannot be measured in terms of numbers of visitors or sales figures (which are expedient because they are quantifiable), will be encouraged to cultivate alliances with the business community in order to mutually explore new frontiers and propose new forms of exchange without making too many compromises. These are the stakes that have been set—a matter to be scrutinized and re-evaluated in four years' time.