
News Release Communiqué

Cultural Capitals of Canada: Minister Copps Launches a New National Award for Municipalities

HAMILTON, May 31, 2002 -- Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps today announced the Cultural Capitals of Canada (CCC) program at the opening of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' annual convention. Through this program, the Government of Canada is inviting municipalities to develop the potential of their local artistic and cultural life, and to get in line with trends in today's knowledge - and innovation - based society.

"The Government of Canada is committed to making arts and culture accessible to all Canadians and to encouraging creativity, diversity and excellence. With this new program, municipalities can join with the arts and cultural sector to revitalize their communities and improve their quality of life, actively participating in the development of a more attractive environment for residents and visitors," said Minister Copps.

By presenting new national awards, the Cultural Capitals of Canada program recognizes excellence in actions by municipalities and offers them matching funds of up to \$500,000 to help them undertake large-scale activities. An independent jury will make recommendations to the Minister, evaluating the candidate municipalities' achievements and planned projects in the field of arts and culture.

"In partnership with municipalities, it is important to multiply opportunities for cultural expression and to develop closer ties between our communities and regions, and with all of Canada and the world," added Minister Copps.

For program guidelines and application forms, visit the Canadian Heritage Web site at www.canadianheritage.gc.ca under "Forms."

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BACKGROUND

CULTURAL CAPITALS OF CANADA

Arts and culture play an important role in building innovative, attractive, and healthy communities that are known for their quality of life. Many Canadian cities and towns enjoy a vibrant arts and culture scene. Cultural Capitals of Canada recognizes this by giving awards to communities that demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the arts and culture.

These awards provide matching support for a program of special activities that celebrate the arts and culture and build a legacy for the community by further integrating arts and culture into community planning.

Why Cultural Capitals of Canada?

Cultural activities are grounded in a given community, from which they draw resources and to which they contribute life, vitality, creativity, and innovation. Culture and its surrounding environment are mutually reinforcing: arts and culture revitalize communities and enhance the creativity and innovation that are key to survival and growth in today's knowledge-based economy. The arts and culture require a fertile environment in which to thrive, so that, in turn, they may contribute to the community.

A community that celebrates the arts and culture, invests in such activities, and is driven by public and private sector leadership that supports the arts and culture as vital contributors to its quality of life will derive great benefits. Cultural Capitals of Canada will enable communities to celebrate their culture, share it with neighbours near and far, and further integrate cultural activity into their planning processes. Residents and visitors will experience the benefits of an improved quality, quantity, and variety of cultural activities in awarded communities.

Cultural Capitals of Canada is the final initiative arising out of the May 2, 2001 announcement of the Government of Canada's \$500 million investment in Canadian culture. To initiatives in support of creators, artistic training, production and distribution of creative products, improvement of cultural facilities, and preservation of our heritage, the Government now adds an initiative that will encourage celebration of our culture and ensure all aspects of the cultural continuum benefit from an environment in which they can thrive.

How will the program work?

Cultural Capitals of Canada has a budget of \$5 million over two years (2002-03 and 2003-04).

Municipalities choose to apply to one of two types of awards, based on the nature of the proposal submitted and whether the applicant is a single municipality or a group of two or more.

Cultural Capitals of Canada

This award will be given for proposals to celebrate culture and to build a legacy for arts and culture through community planning. Single municipalities or groups of two or more municipalities are eligible to apply.

This Award type is subdivided into three levels based on population size:
total population of 125 000 or more: one award per year, matching up to \$500,000
total population between 50 000 and 125 000: one award per year, matching up to \$500,000
total population of fewer than 50 000: two awards per year, matching up to \$250,000 each

Minister's Award for Innovative Cultural Bridges

This award will be given for proposals of innovative projects involving partnership activities that celebrate community identity through cultural exchanges among communities in at least two provinces. Groups of two or more municipalities of any size are eligible to apply. There will be one award per year matching any amount up to the award maximum of \$500,000.

APPENDIX B

Page 3 of 3

will be one award per year matching any amount up to the award maximum of \$500,000.

An independent jury will evaluate applications and make recommendations to the Minister of Canadian Heritage for the final selection of winners.

Program details and application forms may be obtained on the Canadian Heritage Web site at www.canadianheritage.gc.ca or by phoning (866) 661-0662 (toll-free).

