



01 April 2020

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The Honourable Lisa Macleod
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture Industries
By email: minister.macleod@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Macleod:

I am writing to thank you most sincerely for your advocacy on behalf of your Ministry's many and varied stakeholders: as you've emphasized in your town hall meetings, Ontario's heritage, sport, tourism, and culture industries are the proverbial canaries in the coal mine, feeling the impact of the public health measures required by COVID-19 both early and deeply. Thank you for that acknowledgment.

I'd also like to introduce my organization and the organizations and artists on whose behalf we work. I am executive director of Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada, the national association for Canadian orchestras. We have 130 member orchestras across Canada, and an astonishing sixty-nine of them are based here in Ontario. The diversity of Ontario's orchestras (ranging from internationally-renowned ensembles that engage skilled professionals to perform at home in Ontario and on the world stage, volunteer-driven groups performing for neighbours and friends, our vibrant youth orchestras, seniors' groups, big-city and small-town orchestras alike, from Thunder Bay to Ottawa, from Timmins to Windsor) is unique in Canada.

Each one of these charitable, not-for-profit groups is a source of pride to its community, and the **1366 live concerts** that they performed last year – in venues ranging from concert halls to prisons, schools to parks – reached over **860,000 Ontarians**. Ontario orchestras paid almost \$42 million in artist fees in 2018-19; as well, they engage administrators, fundraisers, marketing personnel, and production crews as well as an army of volunteers to ensure that concerts happen, and that the public is well served.

In normal times, Ontario's orchestras benefit from healthy and diverse revenue streams: our 2018-19 data confirms that orchestras **earned 38.3%** of their annual revenues (through ticket sales and sold services); **raised 42.9%** of their annual revenues (through charitable donations, sponsorships, and special fundraising events); with **government** funding (municipal, federal, and provincial) making up the final

18.7% (including **5.2% from provincial sources, principally the Ontario Arts Council**). Ontario orchestras' revenues in 2018-19 was almost \$76.5 million; expenses (75% of which involved payments directly to people) totaled \$74.3 million.

The measures necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19, in combination with the impact of turbulence in the stock market, have combined to create a perfect storm for our province's orchestras: we've effectively lost access to over 80% of our revenues and while the full impact will likely be felt across two fiscal years (at a minimum), it is - and will be - significant.

Absent these revenues, orchestras with some cash reserves or borrowing capacity may be able to compensate contracted artists and administrators in the short term, but profoundly compromise their ability to re-open the doors with engaging programming when public gatherings are safe again; orchestras without cash reserves simply cannot pay their skilled artists and administrators, risking future access to these skilled professionals and delaying (perhaps permanently) their re-launch.


We've been following federal announcements about COVID-19 relief measures, and OC is encouraging our members to participate as appropriate. We've also been following the province's work, and we have some additional thoughts on the role that the Province of Ontario, through your Ministry and others, might play in softening the impact of COVID-19 and ensure that our orchestras are ready to welcome Ontarians – indeed, the world! – back to arts venues across the province when the time is right.

In brief, we ask that you:

1. **Ensure that the Ontario Arts Council can expedite grant payments** to the organizations and artists that have been awarded grants, including multi-year commitments. If the OAC currently receives its allocation from the province quarterly, consider providing the OAC with at least 50% of its annual allocation now, so that grants can be released quickly. We also urge you to **consider supplementary funding for the arts through the OAC.**
2. Help **broker relationships between the intrepid Ontario arts organizations** (including orchestras) that have developed wonderful, curriculum-linked on-line educational resources **and the Ministry of Education**, so that existing on-line education materials can be refreshed and made available to Ontario learners.
3. **Include representatives from the not for profit arts sector in your round table consultations** on immediate mitigation measures and recovery-oriented initiatives, whether industry-specific or regional. While we have much in common with artists and companies on the commercial side of the sector, and with the other stakeholders served by your Ministry, our needs and contributions are distinct – and we'd value the dialogue with you and with colleagues across the province.

Again, Minister Macleod, Ontario's orchestras value the work that you, your team, and the Government of Ontario are doing, and we look forward to continued and productive exchange. Many thanks.

Sincerely,



Katherine Carleton, C.M.
Executive Director

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