



**Submission to the Ontario
Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs
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Submitted by

**Orchestras
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On behalf of Ontario's orchestras, the communities they serve, the musicians they engage, and their many community partners, Orchestras Canada is pleased to participate in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs' 2023 pre-budget consultations. We appreciate this opportunity and look forward to a continued and constructive dialogue with legislators in the coming months.

Orchestras Canada is the not-for-profit charitable national association for Canadian orchestras. 77 of our 142 member orchestras are based in Ontario. Ontario's orchestras are a unique mix of youth and training orchestras, volunteer-powered community groups, and internationally known professional ensembles. They bring life and pride to our communities, unite people through collective experience, enhance tourism, and contribute to jobs and the economy in towns and cities across the province. Orchestras are part of a \$27 billion arts and culture sector in the province that contributes 3.4% to Ontario's GDP.¹

COVID-19 has presented an existential challenge to orchestras world-wide. The very foundations of our work – live performance in enclosed spaces – were rendered impossible. In response, our orchestras cut costs, pivoted to digital, explored non-traditional spaces, stayed in touch with our public, and worked tirelessly towards the day when we'd be back performing at full strength.

In 2018-19 (our last "normal" season), Ontario's orchestras performed 1200 live concerts for just over 670,000 people and generated revenues from all sources of just over \$76.4 million. In response to lockdowns and capacity restrictions, in 2021-22 Ontario's orchestras performed only 350 live concerts for an estimated 224,902 people and generated revenues from all sources of \$63.6 million.² It has been traumatic. But despite the drop in earned revenue, we survived thanks to donor loyalty, productive negotiations with our artists and their trade associations, and unprecedented levels of government support.

We are grateful but recognize that our most challenging task is yet to be achieved. As of the third quarter of 2022, Statistics Canada data confirms what we are already experiencing: the live performing arts sector is still lagging its pre-pandemic GDP contribution by 10.7%.³ In Ontario, as around the world, audiences remain shy of commitment, and are buying less and buying later. According to recent research, 11% of pre-pandemic ticket buyers in Ontario plan to wait until at least April 2023 or later to return to the arts, and 23% reported that "making plans in advance is more difficult than before."⁴

¹ <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/impact-of-the-arts-in-ontario>

² Orchestras Canada Comparative Report Summaries by Region, 2018-19 to 2021-22

³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610065201>

⁴ <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/research-publications/wolfbrown-covid-19-audience-outlook-monitor-ontario>

Now, in February 2023, without extraordinary pandemic supports and with full awareness of the impacts of inflation, orchestras must reconnect with live audiences and rebuild community confidence in the essential act of public gathering, while exploring new ways that our artists and organizations can contribute to quality of life and economic vitality in Ontario communities.

We ask for the province's collaboration and investment in this essential work.

Orchestras in Ontario

The Province of Ontario has had a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Ontario's orchestras, demonstrated by thoughtful investment through the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). This investment (though proportionally small at 5.2% of Ontario orchestras' overall revenues in 2018-19) plays an important role in the viability and success of our orchestras: the timing of grant announcements allows groups to plan responsibly, and the thoroughness of the grant review processes ensure that applicant organizations are addressing critical issues and are well-placed to succeed on-stage and, in their communities. Public support is seen as a vote of confidence in an organization, helping to leverage private sector investment.

Pre-pandemic, from Thunder Bay to Owen Sound, from Windsor and Timmins to Ottawa, Toronto, and Kitchener-Waterloo, orchestras and the musicians they engage touched the lives of our citizens in meaningful ways that create impact: economically, socially and culturally.

- Orchestra organizations directly **support jobs** in communities around the province through fees paid to musicians and cultural workers. Orchestras are part of a cultural sector that created 3.8% of the province's jobs in 2020.⁵ They spend their money locally, through their relationships with concert venues, media outlets, IT professionals, marketing firms, hospitality and tourism industries.
- Ontario's regional orchestras are **enablers of musical activity**: by attracting skilled professional musicians to the community, they create many points of access beyond full scale concerts. The musicians that orchestras engage are the same people that perform in long-term care facilities, churches, and community centres across the province. They offer music lessons, and support education programs in the schools and community.
- Through their public performances, education and community engagement programming, and extracurricular activities by their musicians, orchestras **make cities and communities more active and attractive places**, leading to happier, more engaged and more productive citizens.⁶ Arts and culture

⁵ <https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2022/06/provincial-and-territorial-indicators-2020>

⁶ <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/research-publications/impressions-of-the-impact-of-the-arts-on-quality-o>

experiences – including orchestral performance - is a significant driver of tourism.⁷ Additionally, orchestras have developed programs that specifically address important facets of our lives, like health and wellness, healthy aging, better learning outcomes, social integration, and newcomer welcomes.

- Orchestras are an acknowledged **part of Ontario’s civic infrastructure**. If a community is not large enough to support an orchestra, its residents still benefit from orchestras’ activities, through touring performances, teaching programs, or digital dissemination.

Ontario’s investment in orchestras

In 2021-22, grants to smaller-budget orchestras from the Ontario Arts Council ranged between \$5000 and \$17,000.⁸ These relatively modest investments might have made the difference between an organization’s ability to mount a community engagement program, or not; might have covered a part-time wage to an administrator to coordinate the orchestra’s activities, or not; might have allow the orchestra to engage a skilled professional music director, or not. Relatively modest investments have major impact at the community level.

OAC investment in larger-budget orchestras, while greater in dollar amount, still represented on average well under 10% of the funded groups’ annual revenues. These larger orchestras create a significant number of jobs for professional musicians from Thunder Bay to Windsor, Toronto to Kingston and Ottawa. They represent us effectively across the country and around the world, online and live in person.

Looking forward

Ontario’s orchestras are keen to get back to work, to apply what we’ve learned during the pandemic, and play a role in the province’s recovery. We share the following recommendations:

Short term

Help us bring our audiences back. A short-term program, inspired by a tested and successful model from Quebec (part of the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec’s Plan de Relance), could offer live arts groups a life-line as they work to bring audiences back⁹. This Quebec program – which has evolved significantly since its launch – helps live performing arts groups continue to pay artists, technicians and workers by providing a formula-based subsidy that makes up for lower ticket revenues through this recovery period.

⁷ <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/research-publications/newsflash-%E2%80%93-ontario-arts-and-culture-tourism-profi>

⁸ <https://www.arts.on.ca/grants/general-granting-information/grant-results>

⁹ <https://www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/mesure-particuliere-la-diffusion-de-spectacles-quebecois-avril-2022-mars-2023>

It has provided Quebec-based groups with some runway to build consumer confidence, while sustaining jobs in the sector. A similar Ontario-based, short-term program would help us do the same.

Longer term

Orchestras, like any other enterprise, thrive when they have access to stable, adequate resources to plan with confidence, develop long-term relationships, and make meaningful commitments to workers, whether artists, administrators, or production personnel. In turn, they contribute to communities, our education system and our economy. Accordingly, we recommend that the province of Ontario:

1. **Leverage Ontario's existing and excellent arts investment structures and expertise** namely, the Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Arts Foundation, and Ontario Creates, and resource these structures appropriately. Each of these structures has a specific role to play in the health and vitality of a diverse and exciting arts and culture sector – and they need the resources to do their work effectively as we come out of this crisis.

Specifically, **we request that the Province of Ontario sustain the Ontario Arts Council's funding at \$65 million for 2023-24**, consistent with the OAC's total budget in 2022-23. To be clear, more is needed: but we know the province is hard-pressed to respond as we'd like. However, sustaining the current year's investment will help the OAC deliver on its new strategic plan by supporting Indigenous arts, recognizing sector-leading work in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, arts sector renewal, fair compensation for artists, artist-driven innovation, and leveraging partnerships.¹⁰

Stable investment from a trusted arms-length agency like the OAC will benefit arts organizations and individual professional artists in all parts of the province, in a broad array of artistic disciplines. The OAC is an effective, transparent, trusted, and accountable agency with province-wide reach, well-regarded assessment protocols, and a long-standing commitment to evolving its work and practices as the province evolves.

2. **Step up investment in cultural infrastructure.** Safe, flexible, ready-for-digital cultural infrastructure – buildings and equipment – will be central to the confident return of live arts in Ontario. According to ArtsBuild Ontario, we entered the pandemic with an estimated \$300 million cultural infrastructure gap in Ontario. Statistics Canada data from 2020 on the state of publicly owned performance spaces in Ontario revealed that 33% of them were in very poor to fair condition.¹¹ Now, more than ever, we need the province to

¹⁰ <http://communications.arts.on.ca/T/OFSYS/SM3/262/2/S/F/1029/3223029/VW80kcgC.html>

¹¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220927/dq220927a-eng.htm>

play its part, and help us leverage federal investment as well.

- 3. Work with the arts and culture sector to envision and deliver on a new role for Ontario's artists and arts organizations in education.** At a time when school boards, teachers and students are re-building and re-engaging, orchestras are ready to help. Our orchestras are passionate about arts education and have a role to play in engaging youth in musical exploration, creativity, and the development of emotional intelligence and teamwork skills.

There is an integral connection between the quality of arts education (including music) in the province's publicly funded schools and the vitality of local musical culture. Orchestra leaders acknowledge that strong school music programs (with relevant and visionary curricula, qualified teachers, and collaboration between local arts organizations and school arts programs) are necessary for strong community-based music organizations, today and in the future.

Orchestras are eager to play their part in introducing students to the power of live performance, thereby strengthening school programs, reducing barriers to arts access and participation, and expanding the work that they are already doing in their communities.

Thank you for considering Orchestras Canada's recommendations for Budget 2023. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process.