



**Submission to the Ontario Standing Committee
on Finance and Economic Affairs
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Submitted by
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On behalf of Ontario's orchestras, the audiences they serve, the musicians they engage, and the enterprises they work with, Orchestras Canada is pleased to participate in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs' 2022 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. 76 of our 141 member orchestras are based in Ontario. They include youth and training orchestras, volunteer-powered community groups, and internationally known professional ensembles. It's a unique mix. Ontario's orchestras bring life and pride to our communities, they unite people to build skills and promote community celebration, and they contribute to jobs and the economy in towns and cities across the province. Orchestras have been a good news story for our province: pre-pandemic, every dollar invested by the Ontario Arts Council in operating grants to not-for-profit arts organizations (such as orchestras) was complemented by an average of \$15.58 in private sector revenue (ticket sales, fees, donations, and sponsorship); furthermore, every dollar invested by the Ontario Arts Council in operating grants enables \$21.60 in spending, including \$12.26 on fees and salaries to Ontarians.

However, COVID-19 has presented existential challenges to our orchestras. The foundations of our work - bringing mid-sized groups of skilled people together (some of them breathing deeply and moistly) to work in close proximity in an indoor setting for the delight of a much larger group of people seated in close proximity in an indoor setting – have been challenged. Still, we have evolved best in class strategies to keep artists and audiences safe. We've pivoted to digital and explored new venues and new ways of sharing our work. Audiences new and old have responded. But we have been shut down or under strict restrictions since March 2020. We work for the day when this is all far behind us.

The 2018-19 concert season was our last "normal" season. That year, Ontario's orchestras performed 1200 live concerts for just over 670,000 people and generated revenues of just over \$57,350,000. 38.7% of that came from box office, 43.7% from fundraising, and 17.6% from all levels of government. In 2020-21, our first full COVID season - Ontario's orchestras performed 156 concerts live and 1278 events online for over 1.4 million people. Relative to 18-19, Ontario's orchestras' revenues had dropped down to just under \$40,667,000 – a drop of 29% - with box office making up 7% of the total, fundraising staying the course at 43.5% and government at 49.5%. We balanced our books by cutting expenses, but this was achieved on the backs of freelance artists and cultural workers, people early in their careers, the venues we rent, and the suppliers we work with. Everyone is hurting.

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, our last pre-pandemic season) 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, as well. 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.

- Orchestras **support jobs** in communities around the province, directly through fees paid to musicians and related personnel, and indirectly, in their relationships with concert venues, media, print media, IT professionals, marketing firms, hospitality, and tourism industries.
- The musicians that orchestras engage are the same people that perform in long-term care facilities, churches, and community centres. They offer music lessons, and support education programs in the schools and community. If there's no orchestra, the musicians disperse, and these many contributions are lost.
- 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. Tourism operators call orchestras "destination enhancers". 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 2018-19, grants to smaller-budget orchestras from the Ontario Arts Council ranged between \$8000 and \$17,000. In pre-COVID times, 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 allowed 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 in 2018-19, 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 across the province and represent us effectively across the country and around the world, online and live in person, when conditions permit.

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. To do this well, we suggest a two-stage process: short-

term, one-time investment in immediate needs, and longer-term investment in a stronger future.

Short term

Help us stay safe. As long as COVID-19 is with us, orchestras and other live performing groups will need access to cost-effective rapid tests for artists and workers, to ensure that our workplaces are safe. Across our sector, labour and management have worked together tirelessly and collaboratively to ensure the health and safety of our people. Without access to rapid tests, we've lost an important tool in this work.

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 viable way of relaunching their public programs. This Quebec program incentivizes live arts groups to present concerts and events by providing formula-based subsidy for unsold tickets: both the tickets that cannot be sold because of temporary venue capacity restrictions, and the tickets that are unsold because patrons aren't yet ready to return. Concerts and events are as safe as we can make them, but our sector needs some runway to build consumer confidence without further eroding our somewhat fragile financial positions. Such a program would do exactly that.

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:

- I. **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're looking for a minimum increase to the Ontario Arts Council's core budget of \$15 million and a 3-year \$25 million donation matching program managed through the Ontario Arts Foundation.

Stable, adequate investment from a trusted arms-length agency like the Ontario Arts Council will benefit arts organizations and individual professional artists in all parts of the province, in a broad array of artistic disciplines. The Ontario Arts Council 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. An additional \$15 million to their General Grant from the Province of Ontario would strengthen the OAC's ability to deliver on its mission, "to foster the creation and production of art for the benefit of all Ontarians."

We also envision a role for the Ontario Arts Foundation (OAF). The OAF is a non-governmental

charitable foundation established in 1991. Between 1998 and 2008, the OAF partnered with the Government of Ontario on the Ontario Arts Endowment Fund program – a \$60 million investment that matched private sector giving to charitable arts organizations. The funds were then pooled, and carefully stewarded by the OAF. While the Ontario program ended in 2008, donors' enthusiasm for this kind of matching funds program remains high: an equivalent federal program, in place since 2001, has been consistently over-subscribed. Groups large and small participated enthusiastically in this program and continue to benefit today. A short-term investment in donation matching had remarkable results then and it can have remarkable results again. The Ontario Arts Foundation is ready to play its part.

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: now, more than ever, we need the province to 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.** Our orchestras are passionate about arts education and have a role to play in engaging youth in musical exploration, creativity, and skills development. 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. At a time when so much has been taken away from school-aged Ontarians – including hands-on opportunities for artistic creation, skills development, and community-building with peers - we are ready to give back.
4. **Create a home in government for the nonprofit sector** to reduce red tape and leverage our collective power across ministries. As the Ontario Nonprofit Network has noted, thousands of nonprofits have connected individually to a range of provincial ministries during the pandemic. It's an inefficient, decentralized approach that detracts from our ability to work effectively with you to make Ontario a better place to live and work.

Thank you for considering Orchestras Canada's recommendations for Budget 2022. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process.

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