



February 9, 2023

PROVINCIAL PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0. ABOUT LONDON ARTS COUNCIL

London Arts Council (LAC) is an incorporated non-profit, charitable umbrella Arts Council/Service Organization dedicated to enhancing quality of life and creative vitality in London. **LAC** works with public, private, and community partners to build and sustain Londoners' awareness of, involvement in, and support for all artistic disciplines across the city.

LAC is a leader in program development, implementation, and subsequent delivery of services. **LAC's** programs in education, health & well-being, and community development, provide paid contract opportunities for professional artists to create and deliver artist lead programming in the community.

On behalf of City of London Culture Services, **LAC** manages and administers the City of London's Community Arts Investment Program (**CAIP**) which provides investments in artist's creation and presentation projects and provides annual investment support to arts organizations in London. **LAC** also administers City of London's Public Art and Monument Program through a public process that is professional, fair, and equitable.

LAC promotes the importance of the arts and the arts sector by working collaboratively with other sectors, arts councils, organizations, coalitions, and institutes to maximize our advocacy efforts and impact.

LAC educates and informs governments, elected officials, the public, and the media about the critical roles that arts organizations, artists, and arts professionals play in fostering a vibrant, prosperous, creative, innovative, healthy, diverse, inclusive, and equitable society.

2.0. INTRODUCTION

In this document, we recommend policy and investment options to ensure the ongoing rebuilding, sustenance, and resiliency of Ontario's arts and culture sector, while also leveraging its benefits for health, tourism, and economic growth.

Our goal is to continue investing in the works of local artists and the broader arts sector:

- to maintain access to the artists and arts workers who power our work and breathe life into the communities we live in;



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- to inform and educate key stakeholders and community members about the various ways the arts intersect with other aspects of daily living in a critical and crucial manner; and
- to build on the successful digital experimentation and new domestic and international collaborations undertaken by our members and the arts sector in general during the pandemic.

We are deeply grateful to the Province of Ontario for the ongoing support the sector has received as we continued to work tirelessly to support local artists generating paid, meaningful work, while ensuring that the broader communities and individual sectors could lean on the arts for their respective recoveries.

While the sector has repeatedly stepped up to continue delivering vital arts programming to our communities and meeting its commitments despite the lockdown measures, we do require additional ongoing support. As you are aware, arts and culture are an important part of the provincial economy, directly contributing \$25 billion per year and accounting for 3.3% of GDP.ⁱ

These vital contributions are jeopardized, particularly because arts businesses and organizations were among the last to fully reopen. More than any other sector, 41.4% of businesses in the arts, entertainment, and recreation fields have encountered challenges in attracting new or returning customers in the fourth quarter of 2022 (as detailed in our previous briefs). This is the most anticipated obstacle for 2023, with 38.5% of businesses expecting rising input costs to be their most significant challenge.ⁱⁱ

Our recommendations address both short-term needs while also continuing to strengthen the foundation for the sector to rebuild, improve its resiliency, and contribute to the Ontario economy.

3.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

The London Arts Council (LAC) is proposing the following six recommendations:

3.1. Invest an additional \$35M in annual funding to the Ontario Arts Council (OAC):

As both inflation and Ontario's population rise, it is critical that the OAC's base funding rises accordingly. The OAC can continue to ensure the short- and long-term recovery and success of Ontario's arts sector by increasing base funding to \$95 million per year.



The arts community can rely on the organization's established and credible processes for disseminating funds through peer assessment to ensure the best possible use and maximization of every dollar.

Also, special funding must be made available based on need and performance quality, as limiting support based on budget size disadvantages newer and smaller arts organizations in desperate need of support.

3.2. Continue delivering targeted Indigenous, Black, Peoples of Colour and Disability support funding to OAC

While last year's one-time funding for the Arts Recovery Support Fund, Indigenous Arts Fund, and Career Catalyst: Project Grants for New Generation Artists was greatly appreciated, the pandemic continues to have a significant negative impact. We recommend for a long-term commitment to these programs to be continuously designated and delivered through OAC.

3.3. Enhance Access for Arts Organizations to the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)

While we appreciate the creation of the Resilient Communities Fund, arts and culture organizations have found it more difficult to access the Fund and other grants than other sectors. We recommend that the government provide adequate funding to OTF and confirm that appropriate processes are in place to ensure that arts and culture organizations can apply for and receive grants successfully.

Organizations that have been fiscally responsible in establishing modest reserve funds are penalized in the application process, even though those reserve funds may be locked-in investments that organizations do not have immediate access to in the short term.

3.4. Support the Mental Health of Ontarians through the Arts

Studies from around the world, including those conducted by UNESCO, clearly show that the arts are essential to ensuring good mental health in a variety of populations, including youth, seniors, and people with mental and physical disabilities.

This was never more evident than during the pandemic when citizens were forced to isolate. People turned to books, music, movies, and live-streamed events to lift their spirits, relieve stress, and connect.

Indeed, the Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions spoke about this fact during the first Arts for Mental Health Conference in Canada in October 2021.ⁱⁱⁱ



As the pandemic and its consequences continue to affect Ontarians, we urge the government to establish a dedicated funding program for arts organizations and artists to provide programming and support for Ontarians' mental health.

3.5. Enhance or Develop Programs of Support through the Ministry of Education

To ensure a cross-government approach to pandemic recovery and sector rebuilding and to support our recommendation on mental health, we recommend that the Ministry create arts support programs for schools at all levels of Ontario's education system, such as visiting artists or artists-in-residence. 97% of Ontarians believe that exposing children to the arts is beneficial to their overall development.^{iv}

3.6. Address Precarity in the Sector by Supporting a Federal Basic Income Guarantee

Sufficient investments to alleviate poverty and stabilize precarious workers will result in significantly increased economic contribution and participation, as well as increased innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, while reducing social service spending. Working toward a Federal-Provincial Basic Income partnership will accelerate these trends and is a necessary strategy for reducing Ontario's deficit and rebuilding the economy as we recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

This should include advocating for and collaborating with the federal government on the development and implementation of a Basic Income Guarantee; transitioning existing provincial income support systems to Basic Income principles that require less conditionality and give recipients more autonomy; and implementing an Ontario Basic Income demonstration program that includes low-income artists, gig workers, and other precariously employed Ontarians.

4.0. SUMMARY

During the pandemic, the importance of the arts became more relevant than ever as people relied on arts and culture to cope with the difficulties and challenges such as isolation, poverty, mental health, etc. that arose due to the pandemic. The arts help drive tourism efforts, boost mental health, and help create the conditions that communities need to thrive. COVID-19 continues to devastate arts communities around the world, amplifying the incredible vulnerability of the arts sector due to its precarious nature.^v

The risks and impact are equally devastating regardless of the size of institutions and situations of individual artists. We need continued government support in the short-term, as well as investments into the long-term recovery and rebuilding of the sector. The arts must recover to restore and grow London's cultural ecosystem, and thus the city's vibrancy.



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This is an opportunity for the arts sector to work together with the province to restore the sector, its infrastructure, and supports, so it can thrive and contribute to incubate new ideas, and to continue to enhance Ontario's reputation as a leading province for cultural workers to live and create in, while providing opportunities for residents and visitors to increase the quality of their lives and experiences in Ontario.

Sources

- i. Provincial and Territorial Culture Indicators, 2017 (product perspective), Statistics Canada, 2019*
- ii. Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, fourth quarter 2021, Statistics Canada, 26 November 2021.*
- iii. Media Release: Mississauga Arts Council and Mass Culture's Arts for Mental Health Conference provides hope for Arts Care, Mississauga Arts Council, 15, October 2021.*
- iv. Impressions of the Impact of the Arts on Quality of Life and Well-Being in Ontario: <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/impact-of-the-arts-in-ontario>*
- v. Ontario Arts Council Survey Findings, by Nanos Research for the Ontario Arts Council, March 2017, and Arts and Heritage Access and Availability Survey 2016-2017, Environics Research Group, March 2017.*