

February 11, 2021

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance

Dear Minister,

On behalf of Ontario Presents, a non-profit network representing over 130 performing arts presenters, artists, and performing arts professionals in Ontario, I would like to thank your government for your support of Ontarians throughout this pandemic.

As Minister McLeod has emphasized, arts and culture sectors were the first to close and will be among the last to reopen. The touring and presenting subsector, dependent as it is on large gatherings and travel, has been particularly devastated. Municipally-owned performing arts centres have been even further affected, as centres with large overhead costs and little to no access to federal and provincial emergency supports.

Drawing on our strong relationships with our members and colleagues, and the urgent needs of our sector, we would like to put forward the following recommendations for Budget 2021:

1. **Funding to support live arts presentation:** Thus far, many presenters have not been eligible for emergency support of any kind, and no funding has been available for programming. This funding is urgently needed to ensure the survival of live arts touring in Ontario. Pre-pandemic, presenters often took financial risks in order to bring art to their communities through their performing arts presentations. With the intense effects of the pandemic on performing arts venues, many are now being pressured to devote their resources only to venue rental. This would be a great loss to cultural offerings and economic stimulation in Ontario communities, as well as to employment opportunities for artists, agents, and arts workers.
2. **Funding for PPE and HVAC upgrades:** Even as their revenues have been decimated, performing arts presenters face increased costs in order to keep their staff, artists, and audiences safe. Funding to support the purchasing of PPE equipment and upgrading of HVAC systems is essential for the survival of performing arts venues.
3. **Funding to support digital programming:** Numerous surveys and reports indicate that digital programming is not only a viable option to employ artists and arts workers until live events reopen, but will remain a part of the arts and cultural milieu long after

the pandemic. However, venues and artists are not currently set-up to support digital work. Funding is needed to support the purchasing of equipment for livestreaming/digital offerings, and training of staff to run such events.

4. We support the four key recommendations laid out by the PASO/OPSA coalition:
 1. **An increase of \$25 million in base funding to the Ontario Arts Council, to be distributed at the discretion of the OAC**
 2. **Increased COVID-19 relief support for individuals**
 3. **Paid sick leave**, a critical tool for fighting this pandemic and ensuring that Ontarians can begin to gather once again.
 4. Funding for PPE and HVAC upgrades (see above)
 5. An investment of \$10M for an **Indigenous Culture Fund**

We would be happy to provide further information on the above recommendations, and to provide information and insight from our sector at any time.

Sincerely,



Warren Garrett
Executive Director, Ontario Presents