



March 4, 2021

Dear Minister MacLeod,

Thank you for the invitation to share our thoughts and recommendations on your thoughtful White Paper, *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader*.

The content herein is a distillation of discussions and agreement amongst members of the Provincial Arts Service Organizations/Organisations Provinciales de Services aux Arts de l'Ontario (PASO/OPSA) coalition.

PASO/OPSA is a coalition of Arts Service Organizations with an Ontario mandate or chapter. Together, we strive to strengthen the environment for the individuals and institutions that create and disseminate the arts in this province, and for the public's access to the arts. A list of our coalition's membership is attached. Collectively, we are a powerful conduit to over **272,000 creative workers across the province**, as well as the thousands of organizations, large and small, that create and support artistic expression in Ontario.

Informed by our observations as leaders within Arts Service Organizations, the coalition actively advocates for changes in legislation that will benefit the cultural sector's organizations, artists, performers, as well as for making the arts more accessible for all Ontarians.

We will start with a general comment and then address the action items that are most relevant to the arts, culture and heritage sector.

Firstly, we would like to commend the Minister on her consultative approach, which is much appreciated. We would urge you to continue this post-COVID, and to ensure that the voices of artists and smaller organizations (not just core or key ones) are included. We too believe that the only way to rebuild and reinvigorate the sector in a post-COVID world will be through working together both within and across all sectors.

We recognize the breadth of the portfolio of your ministry and are hoping for an opportunity to explore synergies within the different areas of the Ministry, for example Tourism. Additionally, this presents an excellent opportunity to work in partnership across other ministries.

Our first comment is an obvious one and will, we are certain, be answered as various programs roll out. We look forward to getting more clarity around the specific funds mentioned in the White Paper (e.g. Community Building Fund, the \$180.5 million for employment services and training programs, support for OAC and OTF, etc.). We are looking for more details on targeted support for the arts, culture and heritage sector and how to access it. Many of our comments are posed as questions to be answered in areas where we are seeking more detail.

Following are more specific comments by action item:

1. **Ontario Place** - We would like to ensure that the redevelopment plan includes appropriate support for artistic programming across multiple disciplines, not just for the initial re-launch, but on an on-going basis.
2. **Stronger Communities** - Community Building Fund - We are looking forward to hearing more details, but would like to ensure that the Fund clearly states that the arts and culture sector is eligible; that the support for stream one embraces digital infrastructure and initiatives; and that the second stream (support for infrastructure rehabilitation and renovation) includes eligibility for facilities run by arts and culture organizations, including artist-run centres.
3. **Restore Confidence and Strengthen Inclusivity** - Will there be encouragement /incentives for key arts and cultural institutions to work with smaller ones on best practices and training? Will there be sufficient financial support for required PPE? Will there be an opportunity for individual artists/creative workers and smaller organizations to have a voice at the table?

We continue to advocate for an investment of \$10 million for an Indigenous Culture Fund. This would provide much-needed support for Indigenous cultural production and economic stimulation within Indigenous communities.

4. **Compete for Global Festivals, etc.** - How much new money will there be for this? What is the impact on current programs? When will there be details around how the centralization process will work? There is some urgency for organizations like Celebrate Ontario in order to maintain consistency in providing services.
5. **Strengthen Commitment to Creative Industries** - Tax Credits - We would like to see the exploration of a regime of tax credit solutions to assist in the recovery of the arts sector, for example with consideration of how such solutions might impact commercial theatres. Live commercial theatre has fallen through the cracks and is not recognized by any government as a major contributor to arts, culture, heritage, economy or tourism, and is therefore not considered in any of the relief programs announced as recently as this week.
6. **Skills Development** – We are looking forward to hearing details of how the \$180.5 million will be structured. Will there be funds specifically targeted to the arts, culture and heritage sector? We want to ensure that eligibility is not too narrowly focused on the company/industry side of the sector, but includes artists and creative workers who are freelance, gig workers, etc. We want to ensure that internships and experiential work placement programs are included.
7. **Capitalize on Emerging Creative Industries Markets** - We are very supportive and also want to ensure that the importance of live and non-digital creative content/initiatives are not devalued/forgotten, particularly as these are jobs that will resist automation.

8. **Protect Core Cultural Institutions** - We also want to ensure that there is direct support for individual artists and the many grass roots organizations that are an integral part of the arts ecology. Will there be any incentives for core organizations to work with smaller community organizations? We want to ensure that there is a transparent process in the current consultation base that is inclusive of BIPOC individual creative workers and smaller organizations.
9. **Reconnect Ontarians** - Ontario's Action Plan - There is a current focus on 2021 which raises concerns that this will only benefit organizations with outdoor events in the short term. We recommend that the focus should go beyond 2021 and include 2022, given the continuing challenges of the pandemic. We want to ensure that eligible expenses will include travel and the cost of tickets/access to arts and culture destination/events as well as PPE support for those destinations.
10. **Develop a Globally Competitive Suite of Products** - In that arts and culture initiatives underpin many tourism destinations, we confirm that we are eager to be part of the planning for this exciting opportunity and are looking for more detail. We want to ensure that there is consideration given to programming support.
11. **Open Ontario up for Business and Visitors** - Will there be an opportunity for the arts, culture and heritage sector to work with the modernization plan for the Ontario Travel Information Centres to ensure that the Centres have on-going access to information on arts, culture and heritage initiatives to share with visitors?

Again, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the conversation. We are passionate believers in the arts, culture and heritage sector and its huge contribution to Ontario's double-bottom line. We stand ready to continue contributing insights going forward.

Sincerely,

PASO-OPSA's co-chairs:



Zainub Verjee - Executive Director,
Galleries Ontario / Ontario Galleries



Ruth Burns - Executive Director,
Ontario Culture Days

cc. PASO/OPSA Members: Diane Davey, Executive Director, WorkInCulture; Jacoba Knaapen, Executive Director, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)

PASO/OPSA Coalition Members

Alliance culturelle de l'Ontario

Artist-Run Centres & Collectives of Ontario (ARCCO)

ArtsBuild Ontario

Association des auteures et auteurs de l'Ontario français

Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique (APCM)

Association for Opera in Canada

Bureau des regroupements des artistes visuels de l'Ontario (BRAVO)

Canadian Alliance of Artists – East Chapter

Canadian Artists' Representation / Le front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC Ontario)

Canadian Music Centre

Choirs Ontario

Craft Ontario

Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO)

Dance Ontario

Dance Umbrella of Ontario

Directors Guild of Canada (Ontario)

Folk Music Ontario

FUSION – The Ontario Clay and Glass Association

Galleries Ontario / Ontario Galleries (GOG)

Ontario Culture Days

Ontario Presents

The Association for Opera in Canada (Opera.ca)

Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada

Réseau Ontario

Théâtre Action

Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)

WorkInCulture