

The Honourable Rod Phillips  
Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor  
95 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z1

October 7, 2020

Dear Minister Phillips,

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) thanks the government of Ontario for their leadership during the pandemic. In particular, timely release of heritage and museum funding grants was welcomed.

On behalf of Ontario's museum sector, the OMA brings forward three budget recommendations to address the impact of the pandemic; ensuring that museums can continue contribute to the province's economy, education, and employment.

With months of closure, increased costs, and decreased ability to generate revenue, Ontario's museums—vital assets in every town across the province—need support to contribute to the province's recovery, re-opening to serve the public and their communities.

During the pandemic, museums can contribute to rebuilding tourism, offering safe, hyperlocal experiences—“staycations”; they can also support the Ontario education curriculum with quality learning experiences linked to digitized collections.

Museums have a high ROI; offering \$3.70 in benefits for every dollar invested<sup>1</sup>. An immediate public investment will ensure greater museum contributions to Ontario.

The Ontario Museum Association has Three Key Recommendations for Ontario's Fall 2020 Budget:

1. **An Ontario Museum Relief Fund of \$8.5million**
2. **A Digital Response Fund of \$10million over three years, and a**
3. **A Renewed Funding Model of operating funding to a total of \$15million annually**

#### 1. An Ontario Museum Relief Fund

To support museum contributions to the province's recovery, the OMA recommends the province provide relief funding of 10% of museum annual operating expenses —matching the federal “COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Heritage Organizations – Museums Assistance Program” at \$8.5million.

This Ontario Museum Relief Fund can address the immediate and significant impact of loss of revenue from admissions, public programs and fundraising events, and increased costs to operate safely.

## Appendix B

### 2. A Digital Response Fund

Digitalized museums can support Ontario government priorities in pandemic response and recovery through significant contributions to online education, safe, local tourism planning and community engagement.

A \$10million investment over three years in digital transformation for Ontario museums is essential to sustained, equitable access to the benefits that museums offer Ontarians. Pre-pandemic, museums attracted 112.8 million online visits annually, nearly 4 per second: this funding will enable museums' digitalization by building digital skills, increasing resources, and expanding digital infrastructure.

### 3. A Renewed Funding Model

Ontario needs a modern and effective museum funding model to ensure the significant contribution of museums to the province and all communities; fostering success through strong support mechanisms.

The OMA recommends an initial increase in operating funding for **community museums** to a total of \$15million annually, reaching beyond urban centres to more than 300 communities across Ontario. This increase, towards an average of 15% of their operating budget, will open the Community Museum Operating Grant program to more of Ontario's achieving and eligible community museums and increase the number of Ontarians that museums can serve. This investment recognizes that the 50% of operating funding provided to provincial museums and agencies is key to their success.

The Ontario Museum Association stands ready to work in partnership with the Government of Ontario to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Marie G. Lalonde  
Executive Director

Cc: The Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
Vincent Ke, Parliamentary Assistant (Culture and Sport)  
Billy Pang, Parliamentary Assistant (Tourism)

Stan Cho, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance

Paul Robertson, President, Ontario Museum Association (City Curator, Cultural Strategies, City of Kingston)



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