

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

February 9, 2022

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) recognizes the challenges that the Ontario government has faced over the past two years, and thanks the government of Ontario for their leadership during the pandemic. For example, the expedited release of existing heritage and museum funding grants was important to those museum recipients. Some of the available provincial programs have provided partial support for Ontario museums.

Ontario's museums need targeted provincial financial support to survive and to participate in the province's economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

On behalf of Ontario's museum sector, the Ontario Museum Association is pleased to Submit to Ontario's 2022 Budget, and recommends three priority solutions to help mitigate the revenue losses and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; aligned with the government's efforts towards recovery:

1. An Ontario Museum Relief Fund, valued at \$10 Million, in immediate response to the impacts of COVID-19—to support museums' survival during periods of closures
2. A Digital Response Fund, valued at \$10 Million over three years
3. Increased support for community museums by \$10 Million per year to reach 300 communities across the province—towards stabilizing operations and local recovery (see Appendix A for list of communities that would benefit).

More than 700 museums, galleries, and historic sites are located across the province in every community—urban, rural, Northern, Indigenous, east and west—and serve as vital community-building infrastructure. Museums are heritage assets, key to education, employment, culture, and tourism. As trusted public institutions, museums foster social wellbeing and visitor engagement through high-quality, authentic experiences and connections. They also deliver a \$3.70 return-on-investment for every \$1 spent on museum operations.

The Government of Ontario must prevent the loss of Ontario’s museums and the programs and services they provide to hundreds of communities across the province. Ontario’s irreplaceable heritage is at risk—now is the time to act. As the province aims to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic, museums can play a vital role in rebuilding and reconnecting Ontario, both socially and economically.

Museums are key community assets and contribute to economic, educational, cultural, and social vitality; they are at risk of permanent closure without targeted funding. Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, museums have exhibited resilience and delivered valuable engagement, serving their communities where possible. Only with adequate and stabilizing government support can they continue.

Investing in Ontario museums means they can be strong partners in the implementation of government strategies, with greater combined impact to restore Ontario to its pre-pandemic state and beyond. By offering safe, hyperlocal experiences—“staycations”—they contribute to rebuilding the province’s tourism industry, while simultaneously offering support for Ontario’s students, teachers, and the wider public with quality learning experiences linked to digitized collections.

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

We thank the Ministry for its work and consideration of the Ontario Museum Association’s submission.

Sincerely,



Marie G. Lalonde

Executive Director / Directrice générale

cc: The Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

Appendix A: Ontario Museum Association Provincial Budget 2022 Submission to Ontario’s Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs



Ontario Museum Association 2022 Budget Submission

Investing in Ontario museums for community recovery

Ontario's museums, with targeted provincial financial support, can survive the current wave of closures to participate in the province's economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

The more than 700 museums, galleries, and historic sites across the province are located in every community—urban, rural, Northern, Indigenous, east and west—and serve as vital community-building infrastructure. Museums are heritage assets, key to education, employment, culture, and tourism. As trusted public institutions, museums foster social wellbeing and visitor engagement through high-quality, authentic experiences and connections.

With targeted provincial financial support, museums can recover and strengthen their service to communities across Ontario.

For every \$1 spent on museum operations, museums deliver a \$3.70 return-on-investment.¹

Ontario Museum Association Recommendations:

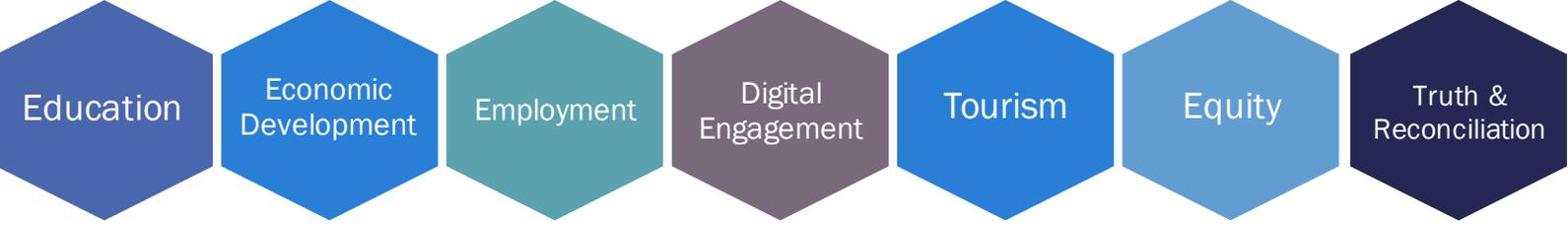
The Ontario Museum Association recommends three priority solutions to help mitigate the revenue losses and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. **An Ontario Museum Relief Fund**, valued at \$10 Million, in immediate response to the impacts of COVID-19—to support museums' survival during periods of closures
2. **A Digital Response Fund**, valued at \$10 Million over three years
3. **Increased support for community museums** by \$10 Million per year to reach 300 communities across the province²—towards stabilizing operations and local recovery

*An investment in Ontario's community museums was recommended by the **Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs** early in the pandemic:*

"Bolster the Community Museum Operating Grant Program Funding...[to] strengthen [museums'] role as custodians and interpreters of the province's irreplaceable Heritage collections."³

Investing in Ontario museums means investing in:



Education

Economic
Development

Employment

Digital
Engagement

Tourism

Equity

Truth &
Reconciliation

¹ Value Study of GLAMs in Canada, Oxford Economics, 2019.

² See Appendix A.

³ 2020-September - 03 Third Interim Report: Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Culture and Heritage Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Ontario museums contribute to:

Economic Development: Estimated \$1.6 Billion in total economic value annually

- For every \$1 spent on museum operations, museums deliver a \$3.70 return-on-investment
- Integral partners in recovery with tourism, education, libraries, arts, and culture, in the \$75 Billion portfolio of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

Tourism: Part of the hardest-hit sector contributing \$34 Billion to Ontario's GDP, with 19.4 Million in-person visits annually pre-pandemic

Education: Estimated \$600 Million in value of formal school visits per year

- Before pandemic-related closures, Ontario museums were recording 113 Million online visits per year—nearly 4 per second!

Employment: Employing 11,000 people across the province

Equity: Fostering social cohesion and engaging all communities

- Supporting equity & accessibility
- Producing local, culturally-relevant programming and exhibits

The Government of Ontario must prevent the loss of Ontario's museums and the programs and services they provide to hundreds of communities across the province. Ontario's irreplaceable heritage is at risk—now is the time to act.

As the province aims to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic, museums can play a vital role in rebuilding and reconnecting Ontario, both socially and economically.

Museums are key community assets and contribute to economic, educational, cultural, and social vitality; they are at risk of permanent closure without targeted funding. Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, museums have exhibited resilience and delivered valuable engagement, serving their communities where possible. Only with adequate and stabilizing government support can they continue.

Investing in Ontario museums means they can be strong partners in the implementation of government strategies, with greater combined impact to restore Ontario to its pre-pandemic state and beyond. By offering safe, hyperlocal experiences—“staycations”—they contribute to rebuilding the province's tourism industry, while simultaneously offering support for Ontario's students, teachers, and the wider public with quality learning experiences linked to digitized collections.

The Ontario Museum Association's recommendations for Ontario's provincial budget 2022-2023 call for strategic government investments to ensure that museums across the province—vital tourism assets and cultural infrastructure—survive the pandemic and are able to safely re-open for the benefit of their communities and all Ontarians.

Implementing these recommendations will help to preserve the gains and successes that museums have been able to achieve, a few of which are highlighted below, and will bring the benefits of strong museums to more communities across Ontario.

Investing in Ontario museums means:

- **Boosting Local Economic Development**
- **Improving Tourism**
- **Retaining Skilled Jobs**

Ontario museums are vital local tourism assets in every community across the province. Prior to the pandemic, museums, galleries, and historic sites had increased their visitorship by 13% over five years. Museums are experts at providing authentic and quality experiences that showcase their local areas for tourists from anywhere. For government programs encouraging “staycations” to be effective, museums and critical tourism infrastructure in every community need to be supported to survive and safely re-open.

Museums are facing drastically reduced or nonexistent revenues alongside increased costs to operate safely.

Across Ontario, museums employ 11,000 skilled workers in their local areas, and museums as cultural and heritage assets assist municipalities in attracting skilled workers of all types.⁴

An Ontario Museum Relief Fund will ensure that museums survive in order to safely welcome tourists on their “staycations” and are part of a recovered tourism industry.



The **Canadian Automotive Museum** in Oshawa leveraged available relief funding for greater impact. They were able to maintain their operations, retain skilled workers, and stay connected to their volunteers and community while continuing to produce high-quality tourism experiences.

The Museum pivoted to safe outdoor walking tours and a virtual speaker series—covering topics like: The Canadian-made sports car the Bricklin, Driving While Black, and Early Electric Cars of Canada.

Their award-winning exhibition *Oshawa’s Automotive Community* sought to tell a more complete story and examined the vital role of women workers in a predominantly male-dominated industry from the 1890s to the present day. The exhibition presented authentic oral histories from female auto employees, people of colour, and the recent immigrants who formed much of GM’s employee base in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. This exhibit traced the origins, growth, and community impact of Canada’s largest automotive assembly plant, the GM factory. *Oshawa’s Automotive Community* is an impressive example of an exhibition created through an innovative reimagining of the Canadian Automotive Museum’s long-held narrative.

⁴ Policy Statement on Social-Economic Development. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, March 2016.

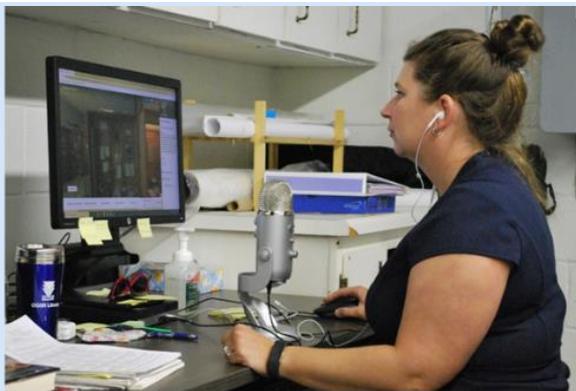
Investing in Ontario museums means:

- Supporting High-Quality Education
- Building Social Cohesion and Wellbeing
- Expanding Digital Engagement

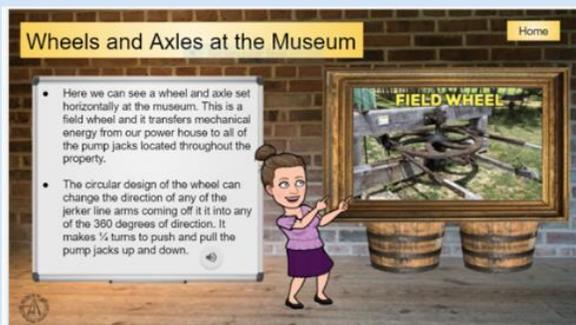
Even before the pandemic-led shift of many exhibits and programs from in-person to online, demand for online content developed by Ontario museums has grown continually. Pre-pandemic, museum websites had seen a 40% growth in visitorship over two years to 113 million online visits per year—nearly 4 per second—and the demand has only grown, particularly for educational content.

Whether visits are online or in-person, museums across Ontario are key assets to the province's educational system, with usual formal school visits contributing \$600 million in value to the province each year. During pandemic closures and online learning, museum workers across the sector developed engaging, educational, and entertaining content. Where possible, museums accelerated their digital transformation and created social media activities, online exhibits, virtual panel discussions, downloadable activities, and community memory repositories. For the museums that were able, these online activities helped them to safely reach students from across the province, regardless of school budgets or locations.

Investments in Ontario museums' digital response will provide more quality educational experiences for more of Ontario's students.



Since March 2020, the Oil Museum of Canada's educational content has reached over 10,000 people through curriculum-linked school programs, YouTube videos and 360° tours of the Museum. The offerings are accessible to at-home learners, virtual classrooms, and the wider at-home public through several online platforms. Over 4,000 students in 403 classes have participated in live programs online, while over 3,000 educators have accessed and downloaded curriculum-linked programs from the website, either as a visitor or as part of an organized educational program. The programs have had an impact beyond the local school board, with Live Sessions delivered across 17 different school boards in Ontario, and 3 in Alberta.



With a small investment of Digital Capacity funding from MHSTCI, the Oil Museum of Canada invested in a laptop, lighting, cameras, website upgrades, and software in order to enhance the quality of their educational programs and outreach. The museum was able to leverage this investment for wide-reaching impact.

The Oil Museum of Canada has been able to reach a greater audience and engage schools, overcoming the transportation barriers of their local schools and the rural area of Oil Springs.

Investing in Ontario museums means:

- **Social Return on Investment**
- **Advancing Truth & Reconciliation**
- **Supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility**

As trusted public institutions, museums have a role in fostering social wellbeing and building better communities across the province. Museums, beyond their contributions to economic development, deliver a social return on investment that makes our communities vibrant and vital places to live, work, visit and invest. As community hubs and vital infrastructure, especially in smaller places, museums provide access to the benefits of culture, heritage, and local vitality.

Museums are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Skilled museum workers interpret the diverse and multifaceted stories that make up our shared heritage, rooted in their connections to their communities and objects in their collections.

Museums work with local residents to produce accessible and culturally relevant programming and exhibits—representing, reaching, and showcasing diverse communities. Museum programs, volunteer opportunities, and exhibits build local community engagement and have wide-reaching benefits—such as combatting social isolation among older adults.

Strong museums build strong communities. With funding, Ontario museums across all communities—including rural, Northern, and Indigenous—would be able to serve and engage more Ontarians, strengthening connections and offering high-quality visitor experiences.

At the **Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre** in Stratton, *Collections at Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung* was a project born out of a desire to enhance access to Anishinaabe culture and knowledge for members of the Rainy River First Nations. The project involved reclaiming the centre's spaces—a collection room was displaced by a boardroom 10 years before—as a place for Indigenous sharing and learning. Overcoming budget and time constraints, museum staff effectively implemented project management frameworks and devised community-driven, customized databases as well as preservation, digitalization, and display methodologies.

An outstanding project component was the development of a collections management system that approached preservation through the lens of evolving cultural and human needs. Rooted in Anishinaabe values, it recognizes the importance of tactile interaction with heritage artifacts, appropriate care and storage, and community access to the collection.

Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre's interactive displays and exhibits that teach about Ojibway life and culture are one example from the many community-led museums across the province. These museums offer high-quality visitor experiences that showcase Ontario's distinct places and stories to the world.



Appendix A:

List of communities to benefit from increased support for community museums—towards stabilizing operations and local recovery

***Bolded** communities have more than one museum*

Algonquin Highlands	Collingwood	Kingsville	Nipissing	Smiths Falls
Alliston	Comber	Kirkland Lake	North Bay	Sombra
Almonte	Commanda	Kitchener	North Buxton	Southampton
Amherstburg	Deep River	LaSalle	North York	St. Catharines
Arnprior	Delhi	Leaskdale	Norwich	St. George
Astra	Delta	Lindsay	Oakville	St. Marys
Atikokan	Dryden	Lions Head	Ohsweken	St. Thomas
Aurora	Dundas	London	Oil Springs	Stittsville
Aylmer	Dunvegan	Lucan	Orillia	Stoney Creek
Baden	Elliot Lake	Magnetawan	Oshawa	Stouffville
Bancroft	Emo	Manitouwadge	Ottawa	Straffordville
Bath	Englehart	Manitowaning	Owen Sound	Stratford
Beachville	Fergus	Manotick	Paris	Strathroy
Beamsville	Flesherton	Marathon	Parry Sound	Stratton
Beaverton	Fort Frances	Markham	Pembroke	Sturgeon Falls
Belleville	Gananoque	Maryhill	Penetanguishene	Sudbury
Blind River	Georgetown	Massey	Perth	The Blue Mountains
Bobcaygeon	Goderich	Matheson	Petawawa	Thunder Bay
Bowmanville	Grand Bend	Mattawa	Peterborough	Tillsonburg
Brampton	Gravenhurst	Meaford	Pickering	Timmins
Brantford	Grimsby	Middleville	Picton	Toronto
Brighton	Guelph	Midland	Pikwakanagan	Uxbridge
Brockville	Haliburton	Milton	Port Carling	Vernon
Bruce Mines	Hamilton	Mindemoya	Port Colborne	Wallaceburg
Burlington	Harley	Minden	Port Dover	Wallacetown
Callander	Harriston	Minesing	Port Perry	Waterford
Cambridge	Harrow	Mississauga	Prescott	Waterloo
Capreol	Hornell Heights	Mooretown	Princeton	Welland
Carleton Place	Huntsville	Morrisburg	Red Lake	Whitby
Cayuga	Ingersoll	Mount Brydges	Renfrew	White River
Chatham	Iron Bridge	Mulmur	Ridgetown	Whitney
Cheltenham	Kapuskasing	Napanee	Rockton	Windsor
Cloyne	Kenora	New Liskeard	Sault Ste. Marie	Woodstock
Cobalt	Keswick	Newmarket	Scarborough	
Coboconk	Killaloe	Niagara Falls	Selkirk	
Cobourg	King City	Niagara-on-the-Lake	Sharon	
Coldwater	Kingston	Nipigon	Simcoe	