

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod  
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
6th Floor, 438 University Ave  
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

June 7, 2021

Dear Premier Ford and Minister MacLeod,

### **Open Letter - A Call to Invest Fully in Ontario Museums**

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA), as a representative of the more than 700 museums, galleries, and heritage sites in the province, is calling on the government to invest in Ontario's museums so they can survive the pandemic and fully contribute to the province's recovery and vitality.

Further to the recent media release about the allocation of annual operating funding to Ontario's 166 'Community Museums' through the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) program ("Ontario Investing in Community Museums", June 1, 2021), we call on the government to act on the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to "bolster the Community Museum Operating Grant Program" (October 2020); a longstanding request of the OMA and Ontario museums.

This recommendation is supported by Ontarians; 88% of Ontarians agree that arts and cultural activities, like museums, are important to local economic well-being.

Currently, only 25% of Ontario's museums (166) receive operating funding from the CMOG program. The amount of funding in the program has been stagnant for over ten years and prevents museums from fulfilling their potential and their expanded roles in their communities. The underfunded program is not meeting the needs of our communities and the museums that serve them. This underfunding exacerbated the pandemic's impacts on museums, placing them and Ontario's heritage at risk. Furthermore, to date, the provincial pandemic relief programs are not reaching the majority of museums due to a competitive and protracted grants process. Municipal museums and the smallest volunteer-run museums are specifically excluded.

We call on you to take urgent action to invest in Ontario museums and increase operating funding to \$15million (an increase of \$10.1million) to reach more than 300 community museums across the province at a level of support averaging 15% of museums' operating budgets.

Ontario invests up to 50% of the operating budgets of our outstanding provincial museums and agencies to a total of more than \$90million, recognising the vital role that operating funding plays in their contributions to Ontario's economy and vitality.

Operating funding supports the key museum functions and is essential to the stability and success of the sector.

With this recommended investment, 150 more community museums—excluded for years from the closed CMOG program—can better serve Ontarians in every city, town, rural, and Northern community and better reflect the diversity of the province. These new, innovative, and achieving community museums, like all museums in Ontario, are significant economic and social contributors.

For every dollar spent on their operations Ontario's museums have a return-on-investment of \$3.70, contributing an estimated \$1.6 billion in economic benefits each year to this province. These benefits come in the form of education, community and social connections, and tourism. Museum visits have measurable impacts on student achievement in reading, math, science, and critical thinking, and strong museums support a strong educational system.

Over the past year, museums have continued to adapt to serve their communities, and engage volunteers, seniors, and youth where possible. Our province's museums will continue as important parts of economic, tourism and social recovery if they are empowered to fill that role.

Now is the time to ensure that Ontario's museums across the province can once again welcome back visitors with authentic and unique experiences as we safely and gradually reopen to the world.

Sincerely,



Paul Robertson  
President

cc: Ontario Museum Association Council

Marie Lalonde, Executive Director

Page 2 of 2

