



**Ontario Museum Association**  
Pre-budget submission 2016

Executive summary

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) is the leading cultural organization in Ontario working to ensure a relevant and sustainable museum sector for the benefit of all Ontarians.

It welcomes the opportunity to make recommendations as part of Ontario's pre-budget consultations.

**Key recommendations:**

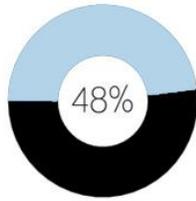
The OMA recommends to the Government of Ontario that, together, we work towards a strengthened renewed program of museum funding support. The key tenets of a renewed museum funding program must, in the OMA view, include:

- Adequate Ontario government funding that allows museums to thrive, contributing to jobs and the economy. With the government recognition of the community museums' role as public trustees of Ontario's heritage and collections, the principles and spirit of the *Ontario Heritage Act* should be honoured, providing funding up to 50% of eligible museums operating expenses. This funding would also allow access to the program for eligible museums currently prevented from accessing the program due to insufficient resources.
- Responsiveness to the changing nature of Ontario and museum operations.
- Transparency in decision-making around museum operating funding.
- Equitable and fair eligibility criteria for all museums that recognizes the diversity and breadth of Ontario.
- Enhanced accountability in decision-making and reporting on the part of both government and museums.

In addition, the OMA recommends that provincial investments in education, municipalities and tourism be better leveraged to also support museums and the benefits they provide Ontarians.

Museums provide Ontarians with better learning experiences and support for the Education curriculum, increase social vitality through the engagement of citizens of all ages, as workers, volunteers and visitors. Museums are recognized community hubs in municipalities across the province, and also draw more visitors annually to Ontario than sporting events, with cultural tourism leading to a related significant economic impact.

We submit that this is a period in time when Canada's low dollar can be positioned to provide greater opportunity for cultural tourism, encouraging both international and Canadian tourists to spend their travel and leisure dollars in Ontario and the known quality that our museums offer. It is especially timely and important to consider this investment to strengthen the museum sector offer in anticipation of the celebration of Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Almost half of Ontario's population visits a museum each year!

## Brief

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) welcomes the opportunity to make recommendations as part of Ontario's pre-budget consultations. We are the leading cultural organization in Ontario working to ensure a relevant and sustainable museum sector for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Together, almost 700 museums create a network that tells the story of our province, and its people, and provides context for increased understanding and social cohesion. They are part of the tourism industry and contribute to economic growth in their own right.

In Ontario:

- Museums contribute \$764 million to the provincial economy. They are part of Ontario's \$22 billion cultural GDP.<sup>1</sup>
- Museums employ 10,765 people.<sup>2</sup>
- Ontario's investment in the Community Museum Operating Program is \$0.37 per Ontarian.
- 48% of Ontarians visited a gallery or museum in 2010.
- There are 8.9 million overnight trips to museums, art galleries, historic sites and living collections, or two-fifths of the Ontario-bound tourism market.<sup>3</sup>
- Museums enjoy a 90% approval rate.

Museums hold the collections that tell the story of communities and history – something vital to the public interest in its own right. Equally important though, museums are part of our future. They are part of what builds Ontario up.

For almost two years, Ontario's museum sector has been engaged in the *Ontario's Museums: 2025 Looking Ahead* task force, an initiative to plan for a strong, relevant and cohesive museum sector in Ontario. At the centre of our work has been an exploration of how we can increase public access, strengthen engagement and better serve all Ontarians.

Through broad-based consultation and study across the province, *Ontario Museums 2025: Looking Ahead* has identified Action Areas for the sector to come together and address to ensure museums remain vital and relevant. Together we are finding ways to innovate and transform so that Ontarians may be better served.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada *Survey of Heritage Institutions*, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada *Survey of Heritage Institutions*, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile Executive Summary (<http://www.arts.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=8780>)

The Government of Ontario has a critical role in this. It is in the interest of all Ontarians that we have museums and the means to preserve our heritage, share our stories and explore what they mean for our future. Legislation like the *Ontario Heritage Act* recognizes this.

We acknowledge and thank the Government of Ontario for the support it currently provides to museums. It is extremely important to the viability and operation of our sector.

At present though, Ontario museum support is only \$5 million, excluding provincial agencies like the ROM and Ontario Science Centre. Provided for under a regulation of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, this funding currently supports 173 museums across Ontario. With almost 700 museums in Ontario, it's clear that many other museums that should be eligible do not receive provincial funding.

The regulatory framework through which the Ontario government invests provides for up to 50% of eligible museums operating expenses.

With flat-lined funding since 2007, the Government is not able to adequately respond to the needs of museums, nor does it provide for transparency of eligibility and financial support for new entrants.

### ***Looking ahead and our recommendations***

At the Ontario Museum Association, we recognize the need for transformative change. That is why we embarked on *Ontario's Museums 2025: Looking Ahead*. It is well-timed with the Province's Culture strategy, an initiative we fully support.

To realize the full potential of the cultural sector, including museums, increased adequate provincial funding is necessary. Together, we must also find different ways of working together to extract greater value from what we're already doing.

For museums specifically, the OMA recommends to the Government of Ontario and Ministers of Finance and Tourism, Culture and Sport that, together, we work towards a strengthened renewed program of funding support. The key tenets of a renewed museum funding program must, in the OMA view, include:

- Adequate Ontario government funding that allows museums to thrive, contributing to jobs and the economy. With the government recognition of the community museums' role as public trustees of Ontario's heritage and collections, the principles and spirit of the *Ontario Heritage Act* should be honoured, providing funding up to 50% of eligible museums operating expenses. This would also allow access to the program for eligible museums currently prevented from accessing the program due to insufficient resources.
- Responsiveness to the changing nature of Ontario and museum operations. We must recognize the increasing diversity of Ontario, the potential of digital technologies and different, more collaborative operating models.
- Transparency in decision-making around museum operating funding.
- Equitable and fair eligibility criteria for all museums, that recognizes the diversity and breadth of Ontario.
- Enhanced accountability in decision-making and reporting on the part of both government and museums.

In addition, the OMA recommends that provincial investments in education, municipalities and tourism be better leveraged to also support museums and the benefits they provide Ontarians. These sectors are all integrally related to museums in Ontario. This will become increasingly important as all levels of government consider infrastructure investments, an area of critical need for museums as well. We believe that if we all work together better, we can have a greater impact for our citizens, residents and visitors. Leadership from the Province is essential if we are to achieve this.

### ***About the Ontario Museum Association***

With 1100 members (institutional and individual) the Ontario Museum Association is the leading cultural organization ensuring a relevant and sustainable museum sector in the province for the benefit of Ontario residents and our global community. It builds capacity among individuals and institutions active in Ontario's museum sector.

The OMA represents more than 700 Ontario museums, galleries, and historic sites, 10,000 professionals, and 16,000 volunteers who hold the collections of the province in trust for the people of Ontario.

The OMA builds the capacity of the museum sector by:

- Enhancing sector position through community education and stakeholder relations;
- Enabling organizational capacity-building;
- Encouraging career and professional development;
- Promoting membership networking and communications opportunities;
- Providing information and resources to the museum community.

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