The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Office of the Premier

Queen’s Park

Toronto, ON, M7A 1A1

By email: premier@ontario.ca

RE: Ontarians believe that an active local arts scene makes their community a better place to live.

November 8, 2023

Dear Premier Ford,

“*In post-pandemic times arts continue to play a major role in the personal and community wellbeing of Ontarians.*”

I write to bring your attention and amplify the results of recent studies done that will influence our provincial government to future-proof Ontario’s communitie, strengthen the arts sector and have a positive, lasting impact on the quality of life for Ontarians.

With 81,800 professional artists, Ontario accounts for 40% of all Canadian artists, almost double the number of any other province. There are 370,000 workers in arts, culture, and heritage occupations in Ontario, representing 4.7% of the province’s overall labour force, one of the highest proportions in the country ([Hill Strategies](https://statsinsights.hillstrategies.com/p/artists-in-ontario-in-2021)).

The first presents an important correlation between the [Quality of life of Ontarians and the arts](https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/research-publications/newsflash-%E2%80%93-the-arts-and-the-quality-of-life-the). The Ontario Arts Council via Nanos surveyed Ontarians on the importance of the arts for their quality of life and mental health, as well as their opinions towards the role of the arts in relation to community, diversity, and identity.

The research revealed four key findings about Ontarians:

1. 80% believe the arts are important for their own quality of life, and 85% believe the same for their community’s quality of life.
2. 79% of Ontarians believe that the arts are important to their mental health.
3. 90% of Ontarians agree that an active local arts scene helps make a community a better place to live, and 82% agree it also helps communities attract businesses.
4. 96% of Ontarians believe that engaging children in the arts is important to their overall development.

The second is the [2023 State of the Sector](https://theonn.ca/topics/advocacy/nonprofit-sector-surveys/) survey by the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN). This report presents a nonprofit sector, of which the arts is a significant part of, “*running on fumes, headed into unprecedented territory*”. We echo the urgentness expressed by the ONN in their [open letter to you on October 18, 2023](https://theonn.ca/publication/open-letter-to-premier-ford-on-2023-sector-wide-survey-results/).

ONN 2023 State of the Sector Survey highlighted several worrying trends:

* Demand for nonprofit services is at an all time high over the four year period of ONN surveying, and has grown 29% since 2020.
* Nonprofit financial situations are on a downward spiral.
* Two thirds of the sector is facing staffing challenges, specifically around recruitment and retention.
* More than other sectors and industries, nonprofits are at the whims of our context. For nonprofits, community crises translate into increase in demand for services usually without additional support, and broader economic uncertainty and austerity means declining donations and government funding.

85% of Ontarians agree that if their community lost its arts activities, people living there would lose something of value. The ONN analysis and forecasting indicated that these continued downward trends have the potential to bring the nonprofit sector in Ontario to the brink of collapse. This puts many local arts groups and places where our communities create and participate in art at risk.

We believe in the power of the arts to transform lives. Ontarians agree that an active local arts scene helps make a community a better place to live. With your support we can reach more than 78% of Ontarians by making art accessible. With your support Ontario’s next generations will receive an education that will set us apart. With your support mental health in your community will increase exponentially.

But only with the support and commitment of the provincial government investing in the nonprofit sector, local artists and our communities.

78% of Ontarians believe that helping make the arts available to people in Ontario is an important government investment. We hope we count you as part of that 78%.

We are asking that you share the values Ontarians hold in public support for the arts by championing:

* significant increases to the Ontario Arts Council budget;
* the policy recommendations outlined in the ONN report; and
* artists and arts groups in all communities across Ontario.

Sincerely,

***Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario***

**Sources**

i. Artists in Ontario 2021, <https://statsinsights.hillstrategies.com/p/artists-in-ontario-in-2021>

ii. The Arts and the Quality of Life The attitudes of Ontarians, <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/research-publications/newsflash-%E2%80%93-the-arts-and-the-quality-of-life-the>

iii. 2023 Realities for Ontario Non for Profit sector,

<https://theonn.ca/topics/advocacy/nonprofit-sector-surveys/>

 iv. Open Letter from the ONN to Premier Doug Ford,

<https://theonn.ca/publication/open-letter-to-premier-ford-on-2023-sector-wide-survey-results/>

**For further information, contact:**

Shruti Ganapathy, Markham Arts Council - AACO Co-Chair

info@markhamartscouncil.com

Janet Jarrell, Quinte Arts Council – AACO Co-Chair

janet@quinteartscouncil.org

**Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario:**

Algonquin Arts Council

Arts Council - Haliburton Highlands

Arts Council - Windsor & Region

Arts Council of Northumberland

Arts Etobicoke

Arts Network Ottawa / Réseau des arts d'Ottawa

Arts, Culture & Creative Industry Development Agency

Chatham-Kent Arts & Culture Network

Conseil des arts Prescott Russell Arts Council

Electric City Culture Council

Guelph Arts Council

Hamilton Arts Council

Headwaters Arts

Haliburton Highlands Museum

Le Conseil des arts de Hearst

Kingston Arts Council

London Arts Council

Markham Arts Council

Mississauga Arts Council

Arts Council of Northumberland

North Perth Arts and Culture Council

North York Arts

Ottawa Arts Council

Prince Edward County Arts Council

Quinte Arts Council

Scarborough Arts

Scugog Council for the Arts

Smiths Falls and District Arts and Culture Council

Sudbury Arts Council

Toronto Arts Council

Town of Shelburne

Tweed and Area Arts Council

UrbanArts

Wallaceburg and District Council for the Arts

Westport Arts Council

York Region Arts Council

Your Arts Council Cornwall