



Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries White Paper  
*“Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader”*

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## **Ontario Museum Association Response:** *Including museums in MHSTCI strategies*

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## Introduction

The current period of rebuilding and reconnection as the province moves into recovery from the pandemic provides an opportunity to empower museums to play a central role in the implementation of government strategies, particularly those outlined in the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries' white paper, *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader*.

The Ontario museum sector objectives align with the stated goals in the Ministry's white paper, and the OMA response considers each Action Item, identifying how museums' contributions can maximize the overall impact.

Now is the time to modernize the programs and support systems for Ontario's museums, so they can achieve more in their role as community assets for economic, educational, cultural, and social vitality. Museums demonstrate consistent economic and social return on investment, enhancing their impact and value for our communities.

These investments will strengthen museum contributions as part of a facilitated transition to 'the new normal'—enabling museums to fully participate in recovery and pivot to emerging business models.

The Ontario Museum Association stands ready to work with the Government of Ontario as a partner in the development and implementation of the Ministry's Action Plan in *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader* towards recovery and a renewed funding model for Ontario museums.

## Exhibiting Resilience: Empowering Ontario's community museums for strategic recovery

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) released its own white paper, *Exhibiting Resilience: Empowering Ontario's community museums for strategic recovery* in the fall of 2020. This white paper brings together specific findings and expertise from across Ontario's museum community. Drawing on surveys of OMA members both before and during the pandemic, as well as information from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, Canadian Heritage, and other key stakeholders, the OMA created a profile of the state of the sector and identified its way forward.

*Exhibiting Resilience: Empowering Ontario's community museums for strategic recovery* serves as a resource and a reference for the museum sector and the provincial government, working together with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries to modernize the support systems for Ontario's museums, so they continue to be essential community assets for economic (tourism), educational, cultural, and social vitality. The Ontario Museum Association stands ready to work with and on behalf of its members, and in partnership with the Ministry, to develop and implement the following recommendations towards recovery.

## Executive Summary, from *Exhibiting Resilience*

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) offers recommendations to the Ontario government to support Ontario's museums in survival, recovery, and long-term sustainability in the period of regrowth instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The OMA presents these recommendations in the context of the Ontario Government's "A Framework for Reopening our Province", as well as the *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act*, to:

- Restart jobs and tourism for Ontario's economic recovery
- Strengthen communities
- Create opportunities for people as they recover their lives and livelihoods by protecting consumers, modernizing services, improving the education system and removing the social and economic barriers that stand in the way of success.

### Value of Museums for Ontario: Before the Pandemic

Ontario's museums are essential contributors to Ontario's economic and social fabric for employment, engagement, education, economic, and tourism success – in addition to our key role in protecting and promoting Ontario's heritage. Ontario's museums are major contributors to the province's economy and educational landscape. They strengthen their communities and help create distinct and vibrant places to live, work, visit, and invest. Ontario's museums are vital contributors to the hyperlocal social and economic fabric: supporting downtown areas and their revitalization.

Museum contributions to Ontario include:

- Estimated \$1.6 billion in total economic value annually
- Estimated \$600 million in value of formal school visits per year
- Employing 11,000 people in the province
- Engaging 40,000 volunteers who contribute 2.6 million hours a year
- Fostering social cohesion and engagement; supporting equity & accessibility—telling the stories that need to be told
- Strong partnerships with industry, education, libraries, arts, culture, and tourism

### Strategic Issues

Museums in Ontario are hindered by systemic issues that curtail the growth and sustainability of the sector and reduce our ability to execute *Ontario's Museums 2025* strategic plan. The most pressing of these issues is the critical, ongoing underfunding of museums. Provincial contributions to community museums have not kept up with inflation or the growth and changing nature of the museum sector. A renewed museum funding model would consider the legislative environment, with improved, consistent support and eligibility criteria aligned among levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) and between ministries.

## **Museums are also impacted by:**

- A closed program for operating funding that prevents leading and achieving museums from accessing support
- Reliance on short-term project funding that contributes to mission drift
- Outdated standards of assessment that do not reflect the current best practices of museum work or an evolving business model
- Inconsistent application of property tax exemptions

## **Impact of COVID-19**

*Updated to February 2021*

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant an entire year of negative impacts and affected the essential methods of revenue generation that museums rely on for their core operations and community outreach. The revenues lost in the province are estimated at \$319million.<sup>1</sup>

In the cases where museums were able to re-open, they struggled with decreased occupancy to support physical distancing, reduced confidence of visitors, and increased costs in order to keep their spaces clean and safe. Only 18% of museums said they had “High confidence” that they would have the financial resources to operate in 2021.<sup>2</sup>

## **Recommended Priority Solutions**

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

- 1. An Ontario Museum Relief Fund, valued at \$8.5million, in response to the impacts of COVID-19**
- 2. A Digital Response Fund, valued at \$10million over three years**

These measures are essential first steps towards stabilizing the sector and setting it on a path to success.

## **Recommended Long-Term Solutions**

As a first step towards the improved sustainability of Ontario’s museum sector, the Ontario Museum Association will work with the Government of Ontario on the following areas of action:

- 3. That the Government of Ontario renew the Ontario museum funding model, including an increase of sustainable, annual operating support for community museums to \$15 million per year**

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<sup>1</sup> Based on data from the Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2019. Department of Canadian Heritage, 2020

<sup>2</sup> 2nd COVID-19 Impact Survey Key Findings, Ontario Museum Association, 2020

## Conclusion

*Exhibiting Resilience: Empowering Ontario's community museums for strategic recovery* provides further context for the above recommendations, including the valuable contributions museums make to Ontario, and how the impacts of the pandemic have exacerbated existing systemic issues within the heritage and museums sector.

The recommendations and context provided in *Exhibiting Resilience* form the basis of the OMA's response to the MHSTCI's white paper, *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader*.

# Ontario Museum Association response to *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader*

## Immediate support to empower museums as key assets for the province's recovery

As the province looks to build and support hyperlocal tourism, offer tourism trails, and develop a globally competitive, year-round set of tourism products, museums' expertise and role as tourism infrastructure are key assets. Museums are experts in creating authentic, unique experiences in their local areas through connections to historic collections and stories, to community partners, and to the distinctive qualities of the places around them. Supporting and empowering these existing tourism assets is essential to achieving the Ministry's goals.

Museums need emergency relief funding from the province to stabilize the sector, prevent job loss, and avoid labor shortages in the tourism industry. Ontario's museums protect irreplaceable cultural assets and collections held in public trust and are key tourism assets in every community across the province. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that museums across the province of all types have been unable to generate earned revenue for over a year. Especially for independent not-for-profit museums, this period without provincial relief funding is causing dire pressures on already-strained budgets. Municipal museums, however, are not immune. Without the ability to achieve their usual performance metrics, municipal museums face potential budget cuts. These circumstances threaten the closure of museum sites and the irreversible loss of place-making history. Museums are existing infrastructure to support the Ministry's goals for a more successful, inclusive, and vibrant tourism sector. Achieving the Ministry's stated goals will be more challenging if communities lose these vital assets. Museum-specific supports are needed to retain the province's heritage assets within the portfolio of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

**The Ontario Museum Association recommends an Ontario Museum Relief Fund of \$8.5million**, and we are eager to work with the Ministry to ensure the Relief Fund is inclusive and reflective of museums and their needs.

## Build and capitalize on digital opportunities

The Ministry has an opportunity to support and build initiatives to address how digital transformation is changing the landscape and business models in the Ministry's sectors—especially in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Ministry, as a leader, can make smart, strategic investments to support increased digital capacity in its portfolio, in alignment with investments being made by other ministries.

Digital offers opportunities to build new, innovative tourism products and experiences.

Better digital tools can integrate existing tourism resources to assist in trip planning, for hyperlocal tourism in the immediate period of COVID-19 recovery and for visitors from further afield in the future. For example, instead of building new websites for organizations to enter their events, work to build smarter sites that leverage existing digital infrastructure and aggregate event listings, working with provincial associations to avoid duplication and maximize efficiency.

The government's investments in broadband—for example, through SWIFT—as well as other supports for digital activities, will increase the potential impact of digital tourism initiatives.

Future museums and their emerging audiences will rely on digital technology for building comprehensive and immersive experiences for the next generation of visitors and consumers.

For Ontario museums to be able to make strategic investments in digitalization, succeed within emerging business models, and achieve the full potential that technology can offer to Ontarians, the **Ontario Museum Association recommends a Digital Response Fund of \$10million over three years to support Ontario museums' digital transformation.**

## Strengthen and connect existing organizations and initiatives

*“Bolster the Community Museum Operating Grant Program Funding” – Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs<sup>3</sup>*

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, recognizes the pressing need for increased total operating funding for more of Ontario's museums serving their communities:

*"I've noticed that museum funding has remained relatively stable, and it's been difficult for museums that may have come up over the last few years, to represent our very diverse communities, has been a challenge. And so in the Ministry, we are looking at that, and we are continuing to speak to our colleagues on the Treasury Board to get an acknowledgement that that needs to be changed. And so I wanted to offer... my commitment to all of you to succeed in a pandemic world and a post-pandemic world."<sup>4</sup>*

An investment in museums from the province is necessary for museums to fully engage in the desired initiatives for recovery proposed by the Ministry and the government. This investment will ultimately result in increased and improved tourism opportunities, build employment and meaningful volunteerism, and support education for greater overall impact in local communities across Ontario.

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<sup>3</sup> Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs Final Report: Study of the Recommendations Relating to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020 and the Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis on Certain Sectors of the Economy, October 2020, Appendix 3: Third Interim Report: Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Culture and Heritage, pp. 24-25 [pp.132-133 of full report].

<sup>4</sup> The Honourable Lisa MacLeod, *Remarks at OMA Annual Conference 2020*, November 5, 2020.



To build the capacity of the museum sector to achieve the Ministry's stated goals, **the Ontario Museum Association is recommending an increase of annual operating funding to Ontario's community museums to \$15million per year.** This increase in funding will open the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) program to more than 300 museums all across Ontario and offer a local return-on-investment for the communities they serve. An increase in funding through the CMOG program was recommended by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in October 2020.<sup>5</sup> Access to sustainable operating funding is especially important for emerging institutions that reflect the communities identified by the Ministry for their tourism potential (Francophone, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+). The Ontario Museum Association can work with the Government of Ontario to renew the funding model for museums to support a greater range of the province's museums and foster success with strong support mechanisms.

In addition, to help achieve the goals the Ministry has set, OMA recommends that the Ministry support, bring together, formalize, and expand existing initiatives. Several of the Ministry Action Items speak to the creation of new initiatives—for example, tourism trails and the redevelopment of Ontario Place. We encourage the Ministry and partners to consider museums and the inclusion of the local community as central to the success of all proposed initiatives.

For the “tourism trails” example, museums and local communities are essential to develop the storytelling element of these trails. The “Saints & Sinners: Bootleggers' Run Trail” through Grey, Bruce, and Simcoe Counties strengthens both culture and culinary tourism by connecting museums like Grey Roots Museum and South Grey Museum to breweries, wineries, and cider houses along the “Bootlegger’s Run” route to offer visitors a deeper look into the region’s Prohibition-era bootlegging history. The “Slavery to Freedom Trail” maps the dangerous route taken by 19<sup>th</sup>-century African Americans who escaped slavery by following the Underground Railroad to Canada. The museums and historic sites that make up the trail invite visitors to explore the rich histories and experiences of Black people in Canada and Ontario.

Provincial associations, such as the OMA, could help expand existing tourism offers, facilitate the creation of new complementary programming, help avoid duplication or the creation of orphan projects, and ensure long-term sustainability.

For example with tourism trails, we recommend a comprehensive province-wide inventory, developing existing tourism routes, connecting new offers to existing routes, and bringing together organizations doing the work that is desired in the creation of these routes.

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<sup>5</sup> Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs Final Report: Study of the Recommendations Relating to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020 and the Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis on Certain Sectors of the Economy, October 2020, Appendix 3: Third Interim Report: Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Culture and Heritage, pp. 24-25 [pp.132-133 of full report].

It is also essential, especially when looking at the targeted expansion of tourism products and offers (e.g. Francophone, LGBTQ2S+, Indigenous; as mentioned in the Ministry plan), that the organizations which represent and share their stories are also supported. Acknowledging and addressing the existing barriers (e.g., linguistic, financial) these organizations face would enable their full participation in the Ministry's plans, ensuring more fulsome inclusion in the tourism experience.

Existing tourism assets, like museums and sector associations, can be supported in their role of providing quality information to the tourism sector: to groups such as travel agencies, tourism operators, and Regional Tourism Organizations. One example of this would be funding for attendance at tourism conferences; another would be presentations to RTOs and DMOs on the value of museums and local community attractions.

Centralizing museum services, such as procurement and training, provides an innovative opportunity to reduce administrative burden on museums, and then leverage museum expertise and resources towards improving the quality of Ontario's tourism offer.

## **Integrate Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in all programs and services**

The OMA recommends that a greater acknowledgement and commitment to promoting Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion be integrated in each of the Ministry's Action Items. Museums preserve Ontario's diverse heritage and share the stories of communities whose voices might otherwise go unheard. Additional funding, programs, and other supports from the Ministry could help alleviate the existing systemic barriers and inequities that prevent inclusion in the first place.

## **Encourage and pursue private-sector investment and partnerships to generate innovation**

The Ministry can connect potential corporate supporters with initiatives and organizations across all facets of its portfolio for mutual benefit. Corporations could be connected with and introduced to non-profit organizations that share their goals for social responsibility. The Ministry can facilitate museums' access to, and create incentives for, corporate partnerships—strengthening all organizations involved. A sector-wide approach can build economies of scale and increase fundraising capacity.

Programs which encourage private-sector investment, such as the Ontario Arts Foundation which provides matching funding for donations to endowments, must be created and available to museums and heritage institutions.

With greater access to private-sector funding, facilitated by the Ministry through government initiatives, museums can adopt innovative models for many aspects of their operations. As an example, creating incentives for Ontario or Canadian enterprises to provide centralized museum services, coordinated by the OMA, could benefit all partners. Economies of scale would reduce entry barriers for museums to access insurance that meets their needs, specialized museum resources and services, and world-class technology and collections management software.

Digital transformation, especially, presents opportunities for collaboration between Ontario's museums, the Ministry, provincial associations (OMA), and private-sector partners.

## **Implement a coordinated approach and vision that includes museums**

### **Between MHSTCI sectors, other Ministries, and levels of government**

The OMA recommends that a more comprehensive, overall vision for the Ministry's portfolios be integrated into the Ministry Action Plan. This vision should intentionally focus investment and policy changes towards achieving a wider set of goals, so that any short-term investments are made in the interests of long-term benefit. For example, as recommended by the FELCA panel, the Ministry could reallocate funding normally spent on marketing to international tourists towards supporting tourism organizations like museums, so that when Ontario is again open to all visitors, organizations have been strengthened and are ready to welcome those tourists.

As the Ministry looks to build tourism opportunities in every community, it is essential that organizations are supported equitably—to address the “pay-to-play” issue Ontario's museums face, and so that our products are improved in alignment with their promotion. A new vision for the Ministry must encourage larger organizations, especially the province's core agencies, to support smaller organizations across the province (e.g. with expertise, collections loans, travelling exhibits).

The Ministry, in its role as a convenor, can facilitate closer working relationships between Regional Tourism Organizations, tourism assets, and tourism operators to encourage coordinated initiatives, integrated marketing, and longer-term planning for mutual benefit.

The Ministry can also leverage existing organizational networks to facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration that enhances capacities in all areas of the Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, while also working together across Ministries and levels of government. For example, the Ministry could bring the skills, knowledge, and expertise of museums and other parts of the Ministry's portfolio to support the goals of the Ministry of Education by producing engaging and accessible curriculum-linked education content.

Inter-ministerial action is also required to confirm the consistent application of the property tax exemption for all museums across the province, based in their heritage and educational value.

The OMA recommends that the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, working with Ministries such as Labour, Training and Skills Development, provide funding for job creation and skills development for the Ontario museum workforce based on the successful Young Canada Works model. Using this model, the OMA can act as the delivery agency for the museum sector.

With all partners, the Ministry can adopt data-sharing agreements to avoid duplication and ensure access to the benefits of evidence-based decision making. For example, data collected by Ministry programs and services, such as CMOG, should be widely available to inform the sector and support strategic thinking.

## Conclusion

The OMA thanks the Ministry for its leadership during this challenging period. To achieve all of the goals presented in *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader*, the Ontario Museum Association's recommendations are as follows:

1. Immediate support to empower museums as key assets for the province's recovery, including the establishment of an **Ontario Museum Relief Fund**;
2. Build and capitalize on digital opportunities and the creation of a **Digital Response Fund**
3. Strengthen and connect existing organizations and initiatives, particularly through a **Renewed Ontario Museum Funding Model**;
4. Integrate Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in all programs and services;
5. Encourage and pursue private-sector investment and partnerships to generate innovation; and
6. Implement a coordinated approach and vision that includes museums.

The Ontario Museum Association stands ready to work with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and the Government of Ontario as a partner in the development and implementation of the above recommendations towards recovery.

## Museum Sector Considerations to Ministry-Proposed Action Items

### Action Item # 1: The Redevelopment of Ontario Place as a World-Class, Year-Round Destination

Ontario Place, as a showcase of the province, has the potential to join other leading institutions as a museum space for both Ontarians and visitors. The site redevelopment can utilize museum expertise in storytelling, visitor engagement, and exhibition to build quality experiences. The Ontario Museum Association, working with leading Ontario institutions like the Royal Ontario Museum, Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Ontario Science Centre, can provide vital guidance on the development of a museum presence at Ontario Place. Emerging models such as those used by Myseum of Toronto can also be implemented to enable a nimble and people-focused approach to engagement, possibly including the development of site-specific museum programming. Engagement with Indigenous communities, communities of colour, other equity-seeking populations, and networks of museums from across the province can enable the telling of a fulsome story of the province within the Ontario Place landscape. The model currently used to develop the Community Exhibits Program at the Ontario Legislature building could be expanded—giving all Ontario communities a chance to be showcased within the expanded Tourism Hub of Toronto. Projects can be impermanent, digitally-supported, and community-led, with some selected models:

- Myseum of Toronto’s *Wigwam Chi-Chemung* Indigenous cultural centre pop-up on the waterfront
- Toronto History Museums’ *Awakenings*—a cross-sectoral intervention at Toronto historic sites to address the lack of representation in the stories of Toronto’s history

### Action Item # 2: Building Back Stronger in our Communities

The Ontario Museum Association is encouraged by the announcement of the Community Building Fund. In order for the Fund to be inclusive of the full breadth of the museum sector, both announced streams must ensure broad eligibility. For example, eligibility can be extended to municipal museums to “sustain their operations in the short term and create new attractions, experiences and events”. Museums and culture organizations, whether municipal or not, would benefit from eligibility for infrastructure funding in stream 2, especially to increase accessibility and capacity to welcome tourists.

For stream 1, museums need clear guidance on the aspects of their operations that will be eligible under this fund.

For flexibility, successful applicants should be permitted to spend this funding across fiscal years, in order to better align with their needs and overall seasonality in the sector.

Museums may also benefit from permission to apply as a group or a Regional Museum Network, so that economies of scale and reduced duplication can ensure the funding achieves maximum reach and return-on-investment for their local communities. Expressions of need for funding across the museum and nonprofit sectors indicate that the Community Building Fund, while a welcome investment, will be insufficient to fully address the impacts of COVID-19. A strategic approach, coupled with increased funding and broader support, will enable the Community Building Fund to have long-lasting impacts.

### **Action Items # 3 & 4: Recognizing the Contributions of Ontarians & Broaden Ontario's Volunteer Base**

Volunteers are an essential part of Ontario's museum sector, with 37,280 volunteers contributing 2.6 million hours to Ontario's museums every year—including some museums that operate solely based on the contributions of their engaged volunteers. To build the contributions of Ontario's volunteer sector to the province, the Ministry, as part of the wider government plan, should include resources to promote the safe return of volunteers and support the organizations that offer volunteer opportunities. Museums and safe volunteer opportunities will help people reconnect to their communities and fight social isolation during COVID-19 and the recovery period. In this role, museums need support as volunteer hosts. As an example, centralized training resources, especially for COVID-safe protocols and accessible customer service, will reduce barriers for organizations to bring in volunteers and contribute to other goals identified in the Ministry Action Plan (see Action Item #6). The training examples mentioned above will also help protect both volunteers and vulnerable populations. To this same end, equitable access to insurance policies, especially in light of COVID, will ensure that organizations and individuals are protected. Museums have expressed concern for rising insurance costs due to the pandemic.

A Ministry-wide approach to volunteer support would also enable connecting interested volunteers with organizations that may have trouble reaching them. Provincial or regional volunteer coordinators could help match willing Ontarians with organizations that match their skill set and interests.

### **Action Item # 5: Promote Safety and Excellence in Sport**

Museums and sports halls of fame are key to the Ministry's plan. There are more than 50 Sports Halls of Fame in Ontario, including several national-level organizations who are already recognizing Ontario's sports excellence. Increasing support for these existing organizations will build opportunities for recognition and increase the visibility of Ontario's sport excellence. As an example, events like inductions to sports halls of fame would benefit from eligibility to the Celebrate Ontario program.

## **Action Item # 6: Restore Confidence and Strengthen Inclusivity in Sport, Culture, Volunteerism and Tourism**

In order to support museums' role in restoring confidence from both a pandemic and an inclusivity perspective, access to digital technologies and centralized resources are key. To offer COVID-safe visitor experiences, museums need support to implement touchless payment and timed-ticketing systems, buy PPE, and make modifications to their physical spaces. Centralized and bulk purchasing can make economies of scale possible if the sector is empowered to work together through grants. Training in COVID safety protocols can also be centralized and offered virtually. To build the inclusion of museum spaces, centralized Anti-Racism and cultural diversity training can also be implemented, by working on a province-wide scale that aligns with seasonal employee onboarding.

Especially with the above measures in place, museums can begin to attract hyperlocal tourism in the safest regions first. This means that rural and Northern museums, who may be less able to access supports needed to build safe and inclusive experiences, should be a first focus.

In alignment with the Ministry's goal of highlighting "unique, authentic tourism experiences across the province, including Francophone and Indigenous tourism," support should be provided that acknowledges the barriers faced by organizations that develop these desired experiences. An example of targeted support would be additional funding for translation services and to hire onsite staff that speak multiple languages.

## **Action Item # 7: Compete for Global Festivals, Events and Conferences**

To fully benefit from the potential of Ontario as an events destination, the Ministry can capitalize on the potential in the cultural and heritage sector. International or hemispheric conferences in the culture and heritage sector offer opportunities to build rapport and brand awareness in desirable cultural tourism demographics. Cultural tourists spend twice as much per visit on average,<sup>6</sup> and Ontario's world-class institutions and culture can be leveraged and showcased as a part of a wider strategy of event hosting.

For example, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Triennial Conference could be hosted in Ontario in 2025, attracting more than 4,000 international culture professionals to the province.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile*, by Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. for Ontario Arts Council, November, 2012.

To support these goals, the Ministry can increase eligibility in the Celebrate Ontario program, especially for cultural events. The Ministry can support joint applications between its sectors to increase the potential reach and value of these events, such as a joint museums and libraries conference, or an event showcasing the value of heritage architecture to Ontario's growing film industry. Additional considerations should be made to support the hosting of events for Francophone, Indigenous, and other equity-seeking communities, as well as a commitment to build inclusion beyond these events and festivals as a part of social recovery. Specific funding should be provided to museums and cultural entities for development and research travel in order to pursue conference opportunities.

### **Action Item # 8 & 9: Strengthen Ontario's Commitment to the Creative Industries & Create Regional Equity in Film and Television Production**

Ontario's preserved architecture, including historic houses and museums, are key assets for the province's film industry, and have supported projects like *The Shape of Water*, *Chicago*, and *Murdoch Mysteries*. Maintaining and safely utilizing this infrastructure is key to success. Smaller museums and heritage locations should be supported to benefit alongside organizations like the Ontario Heritage Trust and the City of Toronto who have dedicated filming policies and site coordinators. The Ministry can ensure that heritage and museum locations outside of major cities have access to resources to support their potential as filming locations, including guidelines for filming that reflect new technologies and filming techniques.

### **Action Items # 10 & 11: Skills Development / Redevelopment in Creative, Tourism and Hospitality Industries & Capitalize on Emerging Creative Industries Markets**

Creative industries and museums can mutually benefit each other; these Ministry priorities offer opportunities to bring industry-leading expertise to Ontario's attractions. Support from the Ministry can fund digitalized infrastructure, and offer opportunities for monetization. A coordinated approach can build partnerships between venues and developers based on mutual content needs and desires.

The museum sector offers current and potential opportunities to build skills in tourism and digital industries, and can help equip employees with a year-round suite of skills that offers cross-sectoral opportunities for employment. Connecting organizations across the Ministry's portfolios can generate training opportunities, such as students learning Virtual Reality content by working to create museum exhibits and online content. Museum professionals can also develop their digital and creative industries skills through these training opportunities, and build deeper community connections through digital media. One example of this is the Craighleith Heritage Depot, who have engaged a local film company to produce and release documentaries on local history.



The OMA recommends that the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, working with Ministries such as Labour, Training and Skills Development, provide funding for job creation and skills development for the Ontario museum workforce based on the successful Young Canada Works model. Longer-term internships create entry-level employment opportunities and support a sustainable practice of succession-planning. Using this model, the OMA can act as the delivery agency for the museum sector.

These proposed skills development programs should also align with sectoral expertise on decent work, basic income, and appropriate housing.

### **Action Item # 12: Protect Ontario's Core Cultural Institutions**

As Ontario's "core cultural institutions" emerge from the pandemic, the Ministry can empower them in their roles at the core to ensure that they have the ability to support the institutions on the periphery across the province. In order to ensure that Ontario's community museums are also able to survive the pandemic and plan strategically for the future, the Ontario Museum Association has recommended the development of an Ontario Museum Relief Fund of \$8.5million.

### **Action Item # 13: Reconnect Ontarians**

To ensure that Ontarians can fully access the benefits of museums during the period of recovery, it is essential that museums be considered eligible expenses for the proposed travel incentive tax credit, which has not been the case in all jurisdictions that have offered similar programs. The program must also build in reasonable supports so that all museums are able to offer receipts as needed for visitors to claim the credit. This might mean offering museums integrated technologies that work as timed-ticketing, COVID-19 screening, receipt delivery, contact tracing, and attendance tracking. A collective effort to find and develop good online tools will prevent museums from having to struggle alone, or missing out on the intended benefits of the program. Considerations should also be made for current free-to-enter or admission-by-donation museum sites.

### **Action Item # 14: Develop a Year-Round, Globally Competitive Suite of Products**

Museums are a source of expertise that can inform the development of initiatives like tourism trails. As local tourism assets, museums can assist in the planning, implementation, and sustainability of these programs. Many museums are already part of Regional Museum Networks and local attractions groups of varying formality, and supporting these existing initiatives provides ready-made steps and partnerships towards the Ministry's goals. Part of this promotional and connection opportunity necessitates enhancements to existing organizations and tourism products. Further acknowledgement and support should be provided to smallest operators and not for profits who do not currently have the resources to participate in existing pay-to-play initiatives.

With access to expertise to build their skills in tourism strategy, museum workers can better understand the needs of emerging tourism markets and leverage their local knowledge and experience in visitor engagement in the creation of authentic, unique offers.

### **Action Item # 15: Open Ontario up for Business and Visitors**

With a focus on building the visitor experience and tourism product and keeping them central to the strategy, museums can contribute to the Ministry's stated goals. Museums and culture are tourism drivers for Ontario, and with effective support, can be empowered and improved as tourism assets. Centralized training for museum workers can build them into local tourism experts. Tourism ambassador models exist within the province, and RTOs can develop materials for all tourism workers to be knowledgeable and able to supplement the visitor experience.

Support for museums and sector organizations to attend tourism conferences and present to RTOs and DMOs will ensure that these organizations can contribute to building knowledge in the sector of all the possibilities for visitors.

This integrated model of knowledge should extend to travel agents, so that they can become experts in what to see and do across the province and can assist Ontarians in booking travel that will be eligible for the proposed tourism tax credit (see Action Item # 13). Ontario's travel agents can continue to be experts in Ontario destinations and experiences when tourists from all over the world are again looking to visit the province.

This model also applies to the staff at the proposed OTICs, so that the OTIC staff are equipped with comprehensive knowledge of the tourism offers near them. As part of the modernized services at the OTIC, visitors should be able to access and book timed-ticket and special museum programs, to form an integrated customer experience along the way. With support, museums, their RTOs, and the OTICs can work together to build a more comprehensive understanding of all the experiences available for visitors.

### **Conclusion**

The Ontario Museum Association stands ready to work with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and the Government of Ontario as a partner in the development and implementation of the above recommendations towards recovery. We encourage discussion around any of the recommendations or considerations presented throughout this document.