

April 8, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health

Honourable Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

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

Dear Ministers,

We are writing today as leadership from the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA), the Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA) and Orchestras Canada. Collectively we represent 389 professional music, theatre, dance and opera companies, organizations and artists in Ontario. We speak on behalf of internationally recognized and award-winning theatre companies, music venues, concert promoters, festivals, talent agents, artist managers, musicians, actors, playwrights, designers, dancers, choreographers, producers, arts workers, non-venued artist collectives and suppliers, from national institutions to emerging independent companies and volunteer-driven groups. Show business is big business and the footprint of our work in Ontario is impressive, reaching more than 20 million audience members each year.

We write because we seek an equitable and science-driven approach to the framing of public health regulations that affect our members: an approach that gives live performing arts (and its pivot to digital content capture and sharing) the same standing as the film and television sector.

As you are aware, both the “emergency brake” announced on April 1st and the third state of emergency announced on April 7th have effectively shut down live performing arts in Ontario. Our efforts to simultaneously keep audiences and communities engaged with compelling online content, and keep artists and technicians working safely, have been halted, further delaying our efforts to plan and implement a safe and confident return.

This letter is an urgent plea requesting regulatory fairness. Continued restrictions preventing music, festival, theatre, dance, opera, and orchestral companies from rehearsing, taping and livestreaming will threaten the survival of these sectors and the future of cultural infrastructure in Ontario.

In livestreaming, we convene small groups of highly-trained professionals in well-managed spaces to engage in closely-controlled work. Many of the companies and artists that we speak for are governed by collective bargaining agreements, and they work in close collaboration with unions, trade associations, and onsite health and safety committees to ensure that health and safety protocols are strictly documented and observed. We are well-equipped to implement and work within world-class safety protocols. As a sector, **our number one priority** is the safety of our artists, workers, and patrons. Our member companies are committed to engaging our communities in our venues when it is safe to do so. They have found new and creative ways to keep professional artists working, using their talents to connect with existing and new audiences. This pivot is fundamental to the viability of the sector: we need to keep artists working and we need to keep audiences engaged, so we are collectively well-prepared for a confident return to live performance when the time is right. In the interim, and as a stop-gap, the creation of digital content has become the only form of artistic practice and audience development for live music, theatre, dance, opera and orchestras.

The support from your Ministries will be crucial in ensuring the survival of Ontario's live performing arts industries for the future. **We implore you to revise the new restrictions to allow for these essential business functions.** When the time comes, we know we can re-emerge as an artistic force and an economic powerhouse. We need your support and permission to be able to create and share digital content. We also ask for a **reopening framework** and metrics, something which we would be pleased to develop with you, so that our members can plan for an eventual reopening. Not a date on a calendar, but a framework that clearly identifies the conditions required for staged reopening. Markets and regions across Canada and around the world have created potentially useful tools, and we would be happy to provide them as examples you may wish to consider.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need more information or to consult with us. We look forward to continuing this important conversation.

Thank you for your consideration of this essential and urgent request.

Sincerely,



Erin Benjamin, President and CEO Canadian Live Music Association



Katherine Carleton, Executive Director Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada



Jacoba Knaepen, Executive Director Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts

c.c.: Deputy Minister Nancy Matthews; Assistant Deputy Minister Kevin Finnerty;
Mayor of Toronto John Tory; Toronto city Councillors Bailão, Bradford, Carroll, Crawford, Cressy, Filion,
Layton, McKelvie, Robinson, Thompson, Wong-Tam
Economic Development and Culture Division City of Toronto: Pat Tobin, Sally Han, Matt Ootes,
Marguerite Pigott, Mike Tanner