



## Ontario Budget 2023: Pre-Budget Submission Ontario Museum Association

### Introduction

Ontario's museum sector stands ready to work with the provincial government as a partner in rebuilding and reconnecting Ontario. Museums demonstrate consistent economic and social return on investment, enhancing their benefit and value for communities across the province. Our recommendations for the 2023 budget ensure opportunity to empower museums to play a critical role in pandemic recovery and continue to be essential community assets for economic, educational, and social vitality.

Museums play a vital role in helping to achieve recovery and reinvigoration across Ontario, both socially and economically. Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, museums have exhibited resilience and delivered valuable engagement, serving their communities where possible. With adequate and stabilizing government support they can continue to make our communities vibrant and vital places to live, work, visit and invest.

The Ontario Museum Association recommends three priority solutions so museums can continue to build their contributions to Ontario as we recover from the pandemic:

1. A Digital Response Fund (valued at \$10 Million over three years)—to strengthen, reach and support economic and social benefits across Ontario
2. Increased support for community museums by \$10 Million per year to reach 300 communities across the province—towards stabilizing operations and local recovery and growth
3. Property Tax Exemption—all museums need a consistent property tax exemption, as educational, non-profit organizations, and community assets
4. Infrastructure Recovery Fund—\$10 Million—to build capacity post-COVID

### About the Sector

The more than 700 museums, galleries, and historic sites across the province are located in every community—urban, rural, Northern, Indigenous, east and west—and serve as vital community-building infrastructure. **Museums are assets to their local communities, key to education, employment, economic development, tourism, culture, and equity.** As trusted public institutions, museums foster social wellbeing and visitor engagement through high-quality, authentic experiences and connections.

Ontario's museums contribute to growing our economy: **for every \$1 spent on museum operations, museums deliver a \$3.70 return on-investment.** Museums also support the ability of municipalities to attract skilled workers in all sectors. They support local

employment through 11,000 museum professionals across the province and offer experiential and early-career learning opportunities that provide entry into sectors such as tourism. **As vital local tourism assets and infrastructure to welcome visitors in every community across the province, museums support the province’s \$36-billion tourism industry.** Demand for museums, both in-person and online, continues to grow, and meeting this omni-channel demand is a key priority for the sector.

Museums provide welcoming spaces for authentic experiences and opportunities for lifelong learning. **They are key assets to the province’s educational system, with usual formal school visits contributing \$600 million in value to the province each year.**

Museums have a role in fostering social wellbeing and building better communities. **As community hubs and vital infrastructure, museums provide access to the benefits of culture, heritage, and local vitality.** Dedicated museum workers interpret the diverse and multifaceted stories that make up our shared heritage, rooted in their connections to their communities and objects in their collections.

## Detailed Solutions

### A Digital Response Fund:

Strategic investment in digitalization of museums supports community engagement and connection, both in-person and online. With adequate support, museums can respond to increasing community demand by accelerating their digital transformation – developing educational, engaging and entertaining online content. Investments in Ontario museums’ digital response will also drive cultural tourism as virtual engagement results in increased in-person visitorship—online presence and support for online trip planning are key to building tourism growth.

\$10 million over three years will enable museums to make strategic investments in their digital transformations that will increase their ability to meet the needs of their local community, showcase Ontario on the world stage online, and attract tourists from around the world who are seeking the authentic experiences they provide.

### Increased support for community museums by \$10 Million per year:

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has recognized the importance of supporting museum operations— recommending to “bolster the Community Museum Operating Grant Program”. Increased support for museum operations means support for local employment in communities across Ontario and increased tourism and educational opportunities.

This recommendation will increase the benefits of local museums in 300 communities across Ontario, so that every community is a vibrant and vital place to live, work, visit and invest.

### Consistent Property Tax Exemption for Museums:

With the consistent application of a property tax exemption, museums can allocate more funds for the refurbishment and building of community spaces, and conserve heritage value and assets. The current environment of uncertainty and anticipated municipal property tax increases impedes capital projects and limits the growth potential for museums as tourism infrastructure and hubs of local vitality.

Like other key community-building infrastructure, such as legions and educational institutions, an exemption from property tax will increase the benefits of museums in their local communities.

### Infrastructure Recovery Fund:

Ontario's museums continue to struggle post-COVID to build back to pre-COVID attendance levels. This specific funding will support museums as they implement improved cleaning and sanitization infrastructure; improved physical, linguistic, and cultural accessibility; better wayfinding and pathways; the addition of outdoor covered spaces, and other infrastructure improvements.

Museums have unique needs for maintaining and improving their capital infrastructure: 60% of Ontario museums are responsible for at least one building 100 years old or older. Ontario's museums are continually looking for ways to improve visitor experience and effectively welcome tourists: 75% of Ontario museums had intended to undertake infrastructure upgrades, renovations, or building projects between 2019 and 2022.

This funding will support museums' ability to serve as vital tourism assets and community hubs with safe, welcoming and improved physical spaces and to make all of Ontario an attractive destination.

### **Conclusion**

Ontario's museum sector stands ready to work with the provincial government as a partner in rebuilding and reconnecting Ontario. The above-mentioned recommendations outline how museums—across the province—can continue to make our communities vibrant and vital places to live, work, visit and invest.

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

The Ontario Museum Association (OMA) speaks for more than 700 museums, galleries, and historic sites, 11,000 museum professionals, and 37,000 museum volunteers across Ontario. Established in 1972, the OMA has a mission to strengthen capacity among institutions and individuals to build a strong, collaborative and inclusive museum sector that is vital to community life and the wellbeing of Ontarians.

The OMA strengthens capacity among institutions and individuals active in Ontario's museum sector, facilitates excellence and best practices, and improves the communication and collaboration of its membership. The Association advocates for the important role of Ontario's museums to society, working with all stakeholders, related sectors and industries, and other professional organizations.

**For more information**

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