



Ontario Museum Association Provincial Pre-Budget Submission 2024 Recommendations

1. 10 million in support for community museums to reach 300 communities across the province.
2. 10 million in support of a digital response fund to strengthen and build digital infrastructure in community museums across the province.
3. 10 million in support of an infrastructure recovery fund to support community museums to build crucial infrastructure and capacity in the context of the pandemic and rising costs.
4. Consistent property tax exemption.

About the Sector

Museums are a critical part of Ontario's community infrastructure. Working in every corner of the province, Ontario's over 700 museums serve as keystones of their communities and provide important services that promote economic development, community wellbeing and equity, and skill development for Ontario's future generations.

Museums are...

Community Infrastructure: Creating Healthy and Connected Communities

Through programming and collaboration museums promote mental health and wellbeing. **96% of Canadians believe that museums contribute to their quality of life** by serving as trusted advocates of public health, and by supporting relaxation and mental health.

The Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, a museum located in the Waterloo region, developed the intergenerational community project 'Creative Connections: Arts & Dementia' to raise awareness for dementia. The project included free clay workshops run by Indigenous artist and educator Naomi Smith for seniors living with dementia and grade 5 students, an exhibit showcasing the creations at the gallery, a collaborative event with the Alzheimer Society of Waterloo Wellington and visits with art objects from the gallery by Smith to care homes in Elmira and Kitchener.

Museums reduce feelings of fragmentation, build equity and feelings of connection. 93% of Canadians agree that museums help them to understand other cultures and communities, and 76% agree that museums provide a sense of belonging and membership within a community.

The Textile Museum of Canada, located in Toronto, partnered with the Afghan Women's Organization to produce Weaving Journeys, a collection of short films that features the stories of 6 women representing immigrants and refugees in Canada. The process of curating the project fostered new relationships with the museum's community and partners, and allowed participants to share their own stories and artworks with new audiences.

Economic Drivers: Promoting Growth and Building Local Economies

Employing 9000 workers across the province, museums support Ontario's \$26 billion cultural industry. With a **\$3.7 return on investment**, museums have a reliably higher ROI than other public infrastructure investments, including investments in public transportation.

Arts and culture tourism, including visitors to museums, galleries and heritage sites, is the fastest growing type of tourism internationally. In Ontario, **cultural tourist trips have triple the economic impact** of tourist trips that do not include arts and culture. Culture tourists spend more, stay longer, and are more likely to be international. In 2016, 12.9 million tourists spent a total of \$7.7 billion in Ontario.

Local tourism is significantly responsible for **attracting, retaining and dispersing domestic and international workers**, and provides important economic stimulus for rural communities across Ontario. 65% of skilled workers consider a thriving cultural sector to be an important consideration before moving to a new community.

Educational Facilities: Promoting Lifelong Learning and Building Up Future Generations

More than 2 million children visit museums on school trips annually and **77% of Ontario's museums offer educational programs with connections to the provincial curriculum**. These programs provide students with hands-on educational experience and build achievement and skill in math, science, and reading.

In 2023, the York Region District School Board Museum & Archives worked with historian Kathy Grant to create a special resource for educators, students, and researchers to learn and discover more about the story of No. 2 Construction Battalion. This easy and customizable digital tool highlights a part of the Black community's response to calls for service during the First World War. Available on the yrdsb.ca website for anyone to use and access, this resource demonstrates the potential for digital museum programming to enhance classroom education and promote lifelong learning.

Museums are frequently **young people's first entry point into the workforce**. Through work experience and professional development programs, these positions provide future generations with key skills that enable them to unlock their potential in their career.

The educational role of museums is not just limited to young people. 97% of Canadians agree that museums are a place to learn and be inspired.

Museums are central to their communities.

Over 4 in 5 Canadians have visited a museum in the last 5 years, and almost half have visited one in the past 12 months. With demand rising steadily, museums are ready as trusted community organizations to support Ontarians, by building economic growth in local communities, supporting community vitality, and prompting dialogue, action and lifelong learning.

However, not every museum is equipped with the tools to best serve their communities, and as a result, not every person living in Ontario has access to a museum that is representative of their heritage and community, and that provides the services they need.

Relevance and representation, cost and geographic proximity are the top 3 considerations for Canadians when they choose not to go to a museum. The Ontario Museum Association proposes the following recommendations to support Ontarians and empower their museums today to build a more resilient tomorrow.

10 million in support for community museums to reach 300 communities across the province.

Since 2020, fewer than 25% of Ontario's museums have received funding through the Community Museum Operating Grant program. With the program closed to new applicants since 2016, over $\frac{3}{4}$ of community museums lack sustainable funding, thereby threatening local employment and causing a reduction in community services. When asked how they would spend additional funds, 60% of recipients stated they would use the funding to build a stronger workforce, hiring full-time and permanent staff to support their operations. To support local economies, develop relevant and representative programs, and invigorate 300 communities across Ontario, the Ontario Museum Association supports the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs' 2020 recommendation to "bolster the Community Museum Operating Grant Program", and proposes the addition of 10 million to CMOG.

10 million in support of a digital response fund to strengthen and build digital infrastructure in community museums across the province.

In 2020, 73% of Ontario's museums enhanced their digital activities and as a result welcomed over 50 million online visits to their websites. While larger museums are well positioned to expand their digital presence, many local and community museums lack the funds and resources to sustainably develop their own. Despite geographic proximity being the third most frequently cited barrier to attending a museum, almost one third of Canadians are not aware of their local museum.

A digital response fund will help raise awareness of community museums, increase accessibility, contribute to community vitality, and expand the reach of the museum across the province and beyond. The fund will help share innovative programming that serves as key educational support for remote regions and build the digital economy by attracting virtual-tourists. The Ontario Museum Association supports the province's investment to provide high-speed internet access in every community in the province by the end of 2025. To ensure equitable digital access for all, facilitate the delivery of online experiences and support in-person visitation, the Ontario Museum Association recommends an investment of 10 million in Ontario's digital infrastructure and virtual tourism industry.

Consistent property tax exemption

Museums across the province require a consistent property tax exemption, as educational, non-profit organizations and community assets. The current inconsistent application causes museums to pay unanticipated financial penalties for the refurbishment and construction of accessible community spaces. To make up this shortfall and best serve their community, museums must seek additional revenue streams, frequently from the government to which they paid the tax. This additional red tape takes money out of the pockets of both governments and museums. The Ontario Museum Association recommends aligning museums with other tax exempt services integral to community building including scientific and literary institutions, the Royal Canadian Legion, and philanthropic organizations.