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March 24, 2020

Dear Minister MacLeod,

On behalf of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS), thank you for your outreach to and concern for the valuable heritage sector in Ontario, as we all struggle to adapt and respond to the Covid-19 emergency.

Founded in 1888 by local historical societies, the OHS is a provincial not-for-profit, non-government corporation and a registered charity with a mandate to preserve and promote Ontario's history. The OHS represents over 550-member heritage organizations and institutions across all parts of Ontario, as well as numerous individual members, who are passionate stewards of our province's built, natural, and intangible heritage.

As part of the OHS's response to this time of crisis, we strongly recommend, based on our discussions with our affiliates and members across the province, that the Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services; and all other relevant Provincial bodies implement the following proposals to support Ontario's heritage sector:

- Exemption from property taxes. In January of this year, the OHS submitted that the Government of Ontario include in its 2020 Budget that *"not-for-profit organizations incorporated through affiliation with The Ontario Historical Society under its Special Act, 1899, be exempt from property taxes, and that exemption remain as long as those members continue in Good Standing with The Ontario Historical Society."* Now more than ever it is imperative that our volunteer organizations owning or leasing heritage properties be exempt from crippling property taxes if they are to resume operations once the immediate response to Covid-19 is through. Otherwise many communities across Ontario will likely lose valuable tourism assets.
- The immediate release of funding to organizations for approved grant programs such as the Heritage Organization Development Grant (HODG), the Community Museum Operating and Pay Equity Grants (CMOG), and Provincial Heritage Organization Operating Grants (PHO). These grant programs are fundamental to the operation of historical societies and community museums in Ontario, and allowing these groups to access their annual funding as soon as possible would help to ensure sector stability while regular programming, rentals, public events, and visitor fees are not accessible. In the past, the OHS has offered to administer HODG on behalf of the Province and we would like to reiterate that offer at this time. The OHS would streamline the process so groups could access funding that much sooner, as well as free up the Ministry staff so they can focus on other crisis responses.
- The establishment of a new Ontario heritage infrastructure grant program. This program could provide immediate economic stimulus for heritage organizations that own and operate built heritage sites in communities across the province, and with vital restoration

projects that are shovel ready. The grant could also provide funding for digital infrastructure, for organizations to build or improve robust websites and online programming. The OHS has a proven track record in administering successful grant programs on behalf of the Province in previous decades, and would be very willing to run similar programs again.

- Expand the Summer Experience Program beyond summer months, and include funding for both students and new graduates. It is vital that we provide support for existing employees in the heritage sector, as well as for our youth joining the workforce, and ensure that the organizations that provide employment have the means to do so.

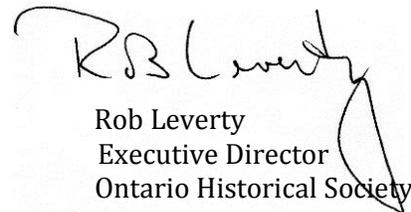
The OHS has worked in partnership with every Government of Ontario for the last 132 years on behalf of public interest. We again stand ready to help the Government of Ontario in these challenging times and believe the trust built over the last few decades with many current and former MPPs in your caucus bodes well for our continued partnership to support Ontario's heritage sector.

As a membership based provincial organization, we know that the above recommendations represent the most significant priorities of our member organizations, which are located in all regions of Ontario. Please do get in touch with our staff at any time to discuss these recommendations further.

Sincerely,



Michel S. Beaulieu, PhD, CAHP
President
Ontario History Society



Rob Leverty
Executive Director
Ontario Historical Society