



August 2021

Dear MPP Andrews:

My name is Matthew Sheahan, and I am the President of the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE). I was overjoyed to receive this request for input and our list of our three top priorities in regards to the arts and culture sector. As arts educators, our priorities connect practitioners and educators, and highlight the need for firm commitments in the sector and education system.

Our first priority is for the Ontario government to protect and develop arts programming in all levels of education and commit to creating safe physical spaces for students of all ages to develop, learn and express themselves through the arts.

Secondly, the government must commit to subsidizing and preserving the art making spaces and performers hit heaviest by the pandemic. As educators, we work closely with these artists in our classrooms and in their spaces in order to provide students with authentic learning experiences. As John F. Kennedy said, "If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his (her/their) vision wherever it takes him (her/them)." This is impossible when faced with crushing debt and limited access.

Finally, the government must commit to the safe reopening of theatres, studios, and other arts and culture venues. The government needs to consult, listen and learn from industry experts as to how a safe and healthy reopening can occur, and provide financial support where applicable in order to offset the costs of renovations and/or safety precautions. This is the same with arts educational spaces. Drama and dance classroom teachers need to be consulted as to the best course of action for a safe return to learning.

Art, arts education and art making enriches, expands and challenges our society. We must seek firm commitments over vague promises to ensure a healthy return.

Thank you for taking the time to gather this information.

Sincerely
Matthew Sheahan