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## **Drastic cuts or bankruptcy the options if financial woes continue**

# **Orchestra faces fateful decision**

By John Miner  
Free Press Reporter

Tuesday is crunch day for Orchestra London.

That's when the orchestra's board will have to decide between bankruptcy or drastically slashing its operation if it can't find a long-term solution for its cash problems.

"It's that serious," said board chairperson David Stelpstra.

Stelpstra said the orchestra is hitting the financial wall this week because it will have to start paying its employees with borrowed money. "That would be unfair to our bankers," he said yesterday.

The orchestra, by the end of the season, will be \$660,000 in debt.

Stelpstra said the board hopes to convince city council to increase its support for the orchestra.

The orchestra is grateful for the city's support in the past, but more is needed if it's going to continue in its current form, he said.

London gives the orchestra an annual grant of \$125,000, which works out to 38 cents per Londoner.

Windsor and Kitchener-Waterloo support their orchestras with a grant of \$1 per resident, while Thunder Bay gives \$1.16 per resident.

If London matched the donations of Windsor and Kitchener-Waterloo, the orchestra would not have a financial problem and would be able to continue, Stelpstra said.

He said he wants to clear up two impressions people might have about Orchestra London.

One is that the orchestra has not kept the city informed about its financial difficulties.

The orchestra submitted a report to the city on Dec. 6 that detailed the financial commitment it needed from the city and the contribution the orchestra makes to London, he said.

Stelpstra said some people may also believe the orchestra is a fat organization.

The orchestra has been running without a conductor and an executive director.

"We have literally been running as lean as we possibly can," Stelpstra said.

If the orchestra decides to fold, 36 full-time and 55 part-time musicians and staff will lose their jobs.

The city's economy will also lose \$500,000 a year that the orchestra currently adds to the London economy, he said.

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