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## **Readers in tune with Orchestra London**

By MARY-JANE EGAN, Free Press Reporter

Save the music.

That was the majority opinion when nearly 200 readers answered a Free Press question on whether London should beef up its financial support for cultural institutions.

Put to readers on the weekend, amid Orchestra London's financial straits, the question brought a flood of replies, one of the newspaper's largest, with feedback running 7-1 in favour of increased support for cultural institutions.

Readers were asked: "Do you think the city should provide more funding to cultural institutions." Most who said yes singled out Orchestra London as deserving of more public help. Here's an edited sampling:

For an important city of its size, London seems to have a village mentality when it comes to cultural support. Orchestra London is one of our most important cultural attractions and an asset that tells the world we are a mature society. Our city administration seems not to recognize this fact.

Ralph Aldrich

As someone who follows city budgets with a fair degree of interest, I am somewhat embarrassed to admit I was surprised by the paucity of funding for the arts revealed in the newspaper's Saturday story. I was particularly struck by the net value of the city's contribution to the orchestra — zero — put more bluntly, it's time to ante up.

John Redmond

Yes, the city should provide more funding for cultural institutions such as Orchestra London and the Grand Theatre. All levels of government should help subsidize the arts, which cannot flourish if left to the mercies of the market. Without an orchestra, not only our concert life but also music education in London would be severely impoverished.

Sandra Mangsen

I am most definitely in favour of the city increasing its support for Orchestra London and the Grand Theatre. When good things are finally starting to happen downtown, it would be a travesty to lose our cultural gems.

Nikki Attwell

Emphatically, no. How often does one have to bail out some cultural institution that is in financial trouble? Would the city be just as generous to some individual who has trouble meeting mortgage payments because of loss of a job? I think not. We have all been hard-hit by rising taxes, health costs, gas hikes, etc. For the most part, the only people who can afford to attend these events are the well-to-do. I say let them support these events with generous donations they can write off anyway. This city really needs to get its priorities in order.

Alice Champagne

Yes, I certainly do think our city should provide funding for cultural institutions . . .  
Orchestra London is a real big asset to this city and I think it's a beautiful thing.

Connie Dodd

Yes, I do think the city should give more funding , especially to the orchestra. What's the point of giving \$125,000 in grants and then taking the money back in rent? Certainly that should be given to them without having to repay the money in rent.

Margaret Atchison

No, I don't believe the city should be financing these people at all. If they can't be self-sufficient, they should find some other revenue to keep them going or else just go out of business. There's no need for us taxpayers to pay, plus have to pay an entrance fee to get in to see them. It's not fair to the taxpayer.

Ray Refoir

Yes, I believe the city should provide funding for a cultural institution. You could probably use some of that money that they're getting from the slot machines to supplement the cultural events in this city. We've got a terrific orchestra and a great theatre.

Ross Beck

For sure they should receive more funding. We certainly fund cultural things such as arenas, swimming pools and so on. Those are physical, cultural things. Now it's time to start giving aid to artistic cultural things.

Terry Hanyk

No, I don't think they should have more funding. I think they should be able to carry the ball by themselves, buy their own gas for their tank you might say. And I think they should look at the salaries they're paying the employees. Perhaps the salaries are way too high in respect to others in the city.

Ron Spurgeon

I am a member of the volunteer committee for Orchestra London and I'm fed up with all the money being spent on arenas and things for sports while the arts are forgotten.

Barbara Robertson

I'm in support of more funding for cultural institutions in London . . . I travel a great deal in Canada and I do see the support of other cities for their orchestra . . . I'd hate to see this orchestra fold.

Robert Skelton

No, I don't think they should fund cultural institutions because I don't go to any of them and if I have to pay for it in my taxes, I resent it because I don't make that much money . . . If people want to go to cultural events, they should pay for it in their ticket.

Emilia McInnis

Yes, I feel it's of vital importance that this city fund cultural institutions.

Jean Hobkirk

Yes, I believe the city should provide funding to cultural institutions. These institutions are a measure of the vibrancy and cultural health of a community and go a long way to attract people and businesses to our city."

Jim Mackenzie

No, the city should definitely not support cultural institutions with extra funding. We have enough on our plate now with the new arena, the aquatic centre and whatever else they have in mind. Our sewers and streets need the money far worse.

Gordon Jackson