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## **City Council throws Orchestra London a lifeline**

**THE ARTS REPORT** - CBC Radio

**LONDON, Ont.** - London, Ontario's city council has agreed to a financial rescue package for the city's orchestra. Last week Orchestra London announced it was out of cash and was days away from reaching the end of its line of credit at the bank.

After a meeting with orchestra board members and musicians union representatives last night, city council agreed to a \$110,000 loan to cover the orchestra's short-term needs. But London's deputy mayor says the council couldn't come up with a long-term solution, so city staff has been asked to study a request for \$450,000 in annual funding.

The orchestra says federal and provincial funding cuts are part of the reason for its current situation. An Ontario tax ruling related to the status of the orchestra musicians has also added to its woes. Ontario's ministry of finance hit the orchestra with a \$128,000 bill for back taxes and penalties.

But Orchestra London board members say the lack of financial support from the city of London itself has been at the heart of the matter. The city provides an annual grant of \$125,000 to the orchestra, but that is paid back to the city in the form of rent for the orchestra's performance venue at Centennial Hall.

The orchestra board will meet today to consider new funding solutions. Some members of the city council have said they would like to see Orchestra London and the city's Grand Theatre work more closely together.

According to the musicians, London has been near the bottom of the list when it comes to the amount of money Ontario cities commit to their local orchestras.