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Orchestra London begins long-term fight for financial survival after city's bailout

By PETER GEIGEN-MILLER, Free Press Reporter

Buoyed by a \$110,000 loan from the city, Orchestra London officials are working on a business plan to secure the symphony's long-term future.

The plan will be developed in co-operation with city administrators, David Haward, the orchestra's general manager, said yesterday.

"We're in the process of setting up sessions with city administration to discuss future plans for the orchestra and how our operations can be improved."

The orchestra was facing the possibility of bankruptcy until city council agreed to the \$110,000 loan Monday night.

The loan was granted on condition the orchestra agree to a financial management and business plan that satisfies the city.

The orchestra has asked for \$450,000 in annual city funding, a request city staff will examine. The symphony gets \$125,000 in annual city support but pays about the same amount in rent for using Centennial Hall.

The orchestra will continue to work on building its subscriber base and fund-raising, Haward said.

"We do a lot of work on fund-raising but obviously there are a lot of organizations looking for money from corporate sponsors and others who support organizations like ours so it is very competitive."

In its pitch to city council, the orchestra's board said surviving the 1990s has required navigating "an often perilous financial tightrope. The need to annually raise more than \$600,000 in operating funds from corporate and individual supporters by its very nature creates ongoing financial pressures."

The orchestra has more than 600 individual donors, 40 corporate sponsors and 75 corporate donors.

It has 36 full-time and 55 part-time musicians and staff and plays 70 to 75 concerts a year.