

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A TAXING CHRISTMAS FOR ORCHESTRA LONDON

Orchestra London is spending the holiday season weathering another challenge in its attempts to balance the budget.

A recently completed Ontario Ministry of Finance audit has proposed the assessment of Employer Health Tax on the contracts of the Orchestra with its individual musicians retroactive to January 1, 1995. The assessment would present the Orchestra with an immediate \$128,000 bill, plus approximately \$28,000 of increased annual operating costs. The application of such payroll taxes would have serious implications for Arts organizations throughout the Province.

The Orchestra has rallied considerable political support at the Municipal and Provincial level.

London's Board of Control today recommended a \$128,000 loan to finance a formal appeal of the proposed assessment, while local MPPs have opened lines of communication to the Minister of Finance's office to allow the Orchestra's objections to both the basis and fairness of this Ministry position to be heard.

Despite this unpleasant surprise in the midst of its Christmas season, the Orchestra is continuing to focus its energies on broadening its base of support through increased audiences and sponsorship. Londoners are encouraged to repeat last weekend's full houses by bringing friends and family to the **Jeans 'n Classics Christmas** concerts on Friday or Saturday evening, or to the Orchestra's annual **Family Christmas Special** this Sunday afternoon. Excellent seats are still available through the Orchestra London Box Office (679-8778) or at the door.

A new "***Sponsors with Spirit!***" campaign has also been launched as the Orchestra begins the drive for sponsorship of its 2000/2001 season. More than 700 sponsorship packages are in the hands of potential sponsors throughout the city, and major series sponsors including London Life, Canada Trust and Merrill Lynch, are already planning renewal of their support. These and other "***Sponsors with Spirit!***" are in turn being asked to challenge London businesses and groups of citizens to help generate \$250,000 of new financial support for the Orchestra. Innovative sponsorship packages and recognition programs are available for one's favourite aspects of the Orchestra from the annual line-up of **Jeans 'n Classics** guest artists to individual sections of musicians or the **Masterworks** podium.

“It has been an exhausting two weeks for Board Members and staff as we responded to this latest challenge,” noted Bill Murphy, volunteer president, “We are gratified by the tremendous support provided to us by our **City Administrators** and **Councillors**, local **MPPs**, bankers, musicians, audiences and sponsors.”

“However, we are far more enjoyable to listen to than read about, I therefore urge all Londoners to join us this weekend to celebrate the holidays and help secure Orchestra London’s future as a defining element in our city’s unparalleled quality of family life.”

For more information please contact,

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