

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Downsizing of orchestra might be realistic option

In her column, Orchestra more than money issue (Feb. 22), Julie Carl reiterates the amount of contributions by the residents of London to their orchestra, compared with residents of Kitchener and Thunder Bay. Each London resident contributes "just 38 cents," compared with Kitchener, "whistling a pretty \$1," and Thunder Bay, which "hits the top note of \$1.16."

These statistics are not only meaningless and absurd, but meant to create a bleeding heart syndrome.

As London's population is about three times the size of these communities, this adds up to at least as much or more of actual funding the city provides the orchestra. Even if the contribution equals the rent the city charges to the orchestra, the orchestra does get free use of Centennial Hall -- not a small point.

If the 38-cents-per-citizen calculation were applied to cities like Toronto and Montreal, their symphony orchestras would be receiving sums of close to \$1 million and this is hardly the case.

The point is, if Orchestra London is not able to support itself in spite of the present contribution from the citizens of London, in addition to the other funds it receives, perhaps there is no good reason for it to keep existing in its present form.

A solution might be a reduced orchestra, something along the lines of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, that would be able to manage within financial constraints without degrading the high level of artistry, which London's classic music audience would enjoy and support, especially in an excellent acoustic environment as that of Centennial Hall, which is as good and better than any of the halls of the other cities.

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