

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### **Lower-income taxpayers merely subsidize the rich**

In response to Peter Desbarats' column, Ignoring culture a costly risk (Feb. 19), which encouraged the city's contribution to Orchestra London.

What many people seem to miss is the money being given to Orchestra London has been taken from the pockets of all Londoners, not just from those who choose to support the orchestra.

All Londoners who own a home, rent an apartment, pay board or run a business in London pay property taxes. This includes people earning minimum wage, living on below-minimum-wage EI benefits, subsisting on welfare, working part-time hours and those receiving disability pensions -- the "low-income" folks. A portion of what these people expect to live on is being taken away and given to Orchestra London, subsidizing the price of tickets for people attending performances -- people earning \$50,000, \$100,000 and more per year.

This is not what the taxation system was intended to do, nor is it what city governments should be taking part in.

Should London have an orchestra? Yes, but not funded by people who cannot afford to contribute, who do not attend performances, who do not want to attend performances and who should not be subsidizing the price of tickets for others. This situation occurs over and over again in London -- the Grand Theatre, the 2001 Canada Summer Games, a new arena, the convention centre and downtown improvement. People who have better uses for their money are being made to pay for projects they will not benefit from. "Spin-off," "trickle-down" and "overall good" are just meaningless words to people living on low incomes and these projects will not put a penny in their pockets.

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