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Thunder Bay Symphony won't appeal tax ruling

BOB STEELE - CBC Radio Arts

WINDSOR - The Thunder Bay Symphony will not appeal a recent tax court ruling. On Friday, a judge ruled that the orchestra's musicians were employees. The Symphony had argued they were independent contractors and that the orchestra was not therefore responsible for the musicians' employment insurance premiums, Canada Pension payments, or vacation pay.

At a board meeting last night, the Thunder Bay Symphony Association decided to pay Revenue Canada the \$138,000 penalty. However, the association says they will appeal for help with payment from the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council, and Federal Heritage minister Sheila Copps.

Orchestras Canada has already promised some assistance. The association represents most of Canada's amateur and professional orchestras. Betty Webster, who speaks for the association, says the ruling could have consequences for every orchestra in Canada because few of them consider their musicians employees.

Webster says her association may lobby Revenue Canada on behalf of all orchestras who now find themselves faced with a similar tax bill. Webster says few Canadian orchestras could afford the additional expenses inherent in the ruling, especially at a time when government grants have been steadily declining.