



## ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ART GALLERIES

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Charitable Business Number 10779 6690 RR0001

### IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **The COVID-19 Crisis has severe impact on Art Service Organizations: Over 50% Art Service Organizations will struggle to survive**

To assess the impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Art Service Organizations (ASOs), a national survey across disciplines and provinces show that almost half of the ASOs surveyed will struggle to keep their doors open.

The survey was conducted in the first week of April and was initiated by the Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) and Provincial Art Service Organizations (PASO) to understand the challenge to business continuity of ASOs in this ongoing COVID-19 Crisis.

“As ASOs we offer a macro outlook. Our continuous work year-round offers us enough granularity of the details of the sector's needs and gaps. This granularity, apart from direct funding, has been addressed at different government levels including policy, legislation and funding asks in different avenues and fora. This work is complex as neither the Arts nor the whole Arts & Culture, or for that matter even the sub-sector domains such as Public Art Galleries are not homogenous, and one needs to avail the deep and nuanced knowledge of the ASOs and their work, says Zainub Verjee, the Executive Director of OAAG and Co-Chair of PASO.

The prevailing precarity of the larger sector signalled a crisis and was amplified in multiple sub-sectors. The ASOs are the backbone of the Art & Culture sector in doing advocacy for its members and have been working for the long haul towards sectoral recovery during the COVID-19 crisis. It is anticipated we will see a loss of at least 25% of active ASOs.

One respondent commented, “We are the umbrella organization that other art organizations turn to for support. With our finances on hold, uncertain or cut back, it is difficult to continue to support others. This is hard on morale and reputation.” While another highlighted, “ASOs with 50-year histories stand to lose most and with that, institutional memory and knowledge management practices of the sector.”



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The national survey clearly indicates that ASOs with smaller membership of less than 200 and lesser income than \$300,000 are very vulnerable. Further, almost a quarter of the ASOs surveyed will see a heavy impact on their operations and future feasibility under the new business model of the Canada Council for the Arts, which only funds 60% of core operations needs.

However, ASOs with over \$500,000 in turnover have a low level of optimism towards full recovery in the present crisis.

Despite the increasing survey fatigue in the sector, the 30% response rate was encouraging. These ASOs represent about 2000 Institutions, 50,000 Staff/Contractors and impacted audiences of over 10 million across Canada.

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### Quotes

#### **Zainub Verjee, Executive Director of OAAG:**

“We want to ensure that the needs of Art Service Organizations are explicitly addressed in crisis mitigation, business continuity and recovery planning and the emergency funds are allocated to ASOs across disciplines within the current and prospect relief measures for COVID-19 Crisis.”

#### **Respondent to the Survey of ASOs:**

“Although our organization itself is under no immediate threat, we are apprehensive that the blow to our members could be very severe, and this would have a major impact on our organizational model and potentially our entire raison d’être.”