July 9, 2026

Hon. Stan Cho, MPP
Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Gaming
5th Floor - 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Hon. Victor Fedeli, MPP
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade
18th Floor - 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Re: Seizing the Moment – Building Ontario's Cultural, Creative, and Tourism Economy for Global Competitiveness

Dear Ministers Cho and Fedeli,

On behalf of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and its Arts, Culture, and Tourism (ACT) Working Group, representing leading stakeholders from across the arts, culture, tourism, and creative industries, I am writing to urge the government to seize a generational opportunity to strengthen one of the province's most strategic economic assets.

As Canada enters a new era of nation-building, economic renewal and global competition for talent, investment and trade, Ontario's cultural, creative, and tourism sectors can play an increasingly important role in driving growth, jobs, and investment, while strengthening our competitiveness and our communities.

Ontario's creative economy contributes almost $30 billion (2024) and nearly 280,000 jobs, making up 45 per cent of Canada's cultural GDP. Ontario's tourism sector is equally significant, generating over $30 billion of total GDP, supporting a workforce of approximately 312,000 jobs, and attracting over 42 per cent of all international visits in Canada.

These sectors can contribute even more to our resilience, sovereignty and prosperity by aligning cultural policy and investments with Ontario's economic development, trade, workforce, tourism, and infrastructure priorities.

Ontario's Competitive Cultural Advantage – Trade and Global Positioning

There is strong international demand for Canadian cultural content, experiences, and creative services, with Ontario positioned to lead. Despite industry labour disruptions, all sub-industries in the province contributed higher GDP growth in 2024 compared with the previous year. For example, Ontario's film and television industry rebounded from the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike, adding almost $2.6 billion to Ontario's economy and creating almost 35,000 high-value full-time equivalent direct and spin-off jobs.

Tourism data also demonstrate the strong link between culture and local economic development. One in three international visitors participates in experiences such as cultural festivals and live music events. These visitors account for 30 per cent of total tourist spending, and are significantly more likely to stay longer: 40 per cent stay three days or more, compared to just 13 per cent of non-cultural visitors.

Despite this success and potential, Ontario lags peer jurisdictions such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, in attracting new arts, culture and tourism investment and expanding its global market presence. Fragmented strategies, persistent underinvestment and limited presence in international markets, have constrained growth.

To make Ontario a leading international destination for arts, culture, tourism, and the creative industries, we recommend the following priorities:

Recommendations

- Develop a coordinated provincial culture and tourism sector strategy that strengthens Ontario's global position as a leader in cultural content, services, and talent. The strategy should focus on:
    - Attracting and increasing new investment in the sector;
    - Building a highly skilled and diverse creative and tourism workforce; and,
    - Advancing the commercialization of Ontario-made cultural and creative innovations and stories.
- Embed culture, tourism, and the creative industries within Ontario's broader trade, investment attraction, and interprovincial trade strategies. This includes:
    - Establishing sustained and dedicated funding pathways for international marketing, national and international touring, circulation, partnerships, trade missions, and market development for cultural and tourism institutions, businesses, and artists.
    - Expanding funding for existing programs (e.g., Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund for marketing and promotion, Experience Ontario for programming).
    - Leveraging Ontario's cultural and tourism assets to support trade diversification and attract global investment.

- Enhance funding and capacity for provincial cultural and creative government agencies and programs (e.g., Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Creates) through sustained, multi-year investments.
- Increase the base rate in the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit (OFTTC) to 40 per cent and the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit (OPSTC) to 25 per cent to improve Ontario's domestic and international competitiveness for film and television production.

Place-Based Economies – Ontario's Diverse Value Proposition

Ontario's diversity, including francophone, Indigenous, immigrant, and regional creative communities, is a strategic advantage in the global market. These voices strengthen Canada's distinctiveness while enabling local communities to participate meaningfully in economic growth.

Government investment in Ontario's diversity generates significant returns. For example, in 2021–22, Indigenous Screen Office (ISO)-supported production leveraged $8.9 million in government investment and generated $102.9 million in total output, supporting 1,440 full-time equivalent jobs, $98.2 million in labour income, and $119.8 million in GDP. Overall, every $1 million invested created roughly 14 jobs and $1.16 million in GDP – an impressive multiplier effect.

The same multiplier effect can be seen in Toronto. The Toronto Caribbean Carnival has grown into one of North America's largest cultural festivals, celebrating Caribbean heritage while serving as a major economic driver for Ontario. The festival attracts 1.2 million attendees, including 180,000 tourists, contributes over $500 million to Canada's GDP, generates $182.7 million in tax revenue, supports more than 3,000 small businesses, and creates over 3,300 jobs. It also fosters community, social cohesion, cultural identity, and a strong sense of belonging.

However, place-based economies and diverse cultural offerings are frequently treated as niche rather than core elements of Ontario's economic strategy. Smaller communities also face ongoing talent attraction and retention challenges, exacerbated by limited transit and cultural infrastructure.

To build out regional economic growth while spotlighting Ontario's unique, diverse, and rich cultural and creative landscape, we recommend the following priorities:

Recommendations

- Work with Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) and local economic development offices to develop regional strategies supporting rural, remote, Indigenous, northern, and underrepresented communities, addressing infrastructure and workforce gaps. This includes:
    - Leveraging surplus public lands, and other assets to develop affordable and multi-use cultural spaces;
    - Increasing regional transportation options and connectivity as part of cultural infrastructure, improving access to Ontario destinations; and,

   - Expanding regional programs (e.g., Regional Economic Development through Immigration Initiative, Rural Ontario Development Program) to support workforce attraction and retention in northern, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

As global competition for cultural content, talent, and investment intensifies, and trade uncertainty grows, Ontario has a critical opportunity to strengthen its cultural sovereignty and global voice. Storytelling is not only a cultural asset, but also a powerful economic driver that fuels opportunity.

We welcome the opportunity to advance these recommendations and look forward to working with you to strengthen Ontario's global competitiveness in arts, culture, tourism, and the creative industries.

Sincerely,

Daniel Tisch, APR, FCPRS, ICD.D
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce