



A Coalition of Ontario Locals of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

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April 8, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health

Honourable Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

Honourable Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Dear Ministers,

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, better known as IATSE, represents 7,500 workers in the entertainment sector in Ontario, providing skilled labour to employers such as TIFF, Mirvish Productions, The Stratford Festival, The Shaw Festival, The National Arts Centre and Soulpepper. The work we do behind the scenes as carpenters, electricians, wardrobe attendants, box-office personnel and more helps create the magic that has made Ontario one of the top three live performance destinations in North America.

We are writing today to seek an equitable approach to the public health regulations that affect all of our members — an approach that gives live entertainment the same rules as the film and television sector.

The entire live performance sector has been decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic as, understandably, large gatherings have been put on hold since March of 2020. Many companies have found ways to pivot and stay relevant during these times, turning to livestreaming concerts, performances and other events in an attempt to stay in people’s minds until audiences can return to viewing such events in person. These livestreams are not very profitable, if at all, but they do create a means of keeping the arts alive until COVID is behind us. Other companies have been in rehearsals for shows to be performed this summer while adhering to health and safety guidelines, trying again to find ways to foster engagement while audience capacities are limited.

With the province-wide shut down April 1, followed a week later by the provincial stay at home order, these efforts to keep the live performance sector barely afloat have been forced to be postponed — or worse, abandoned — while similar projects in the Film and Television sector have been able to continue.

We fully understand the challenges facing the entire province in battling COVID-19 and completely support the efforts to contain the virus. The entire live entertainment sector is committed to the safety of performers, technicians and support staff of the companies that have been struggling to survive during the pandemic. All of the aforementioned livestreams and rehearsals followed, and often exceeded, the strict guidelines set out by the Ontario government to ensure the wellbeing of all involved.

On behalf of our employers in the live entertainment sector, we ask that you support these hard working Ontarians in developing and amending equitable regulations in the Reopening Ontario Act and



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reinstate O. Reg. 82/20 and allow for live performance venues to livestream and rehearse in a similar fashion to the film and television sector.

With the help of your Ministries, we can ensure that the live performance sector, a jewel in the crown of Ontario that contributes billions of dollars to the economy, will be able to survive this long shutdown and rebound quickly once we are through the worst of the pandemic.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you wish to discuss this further. We all want to see live events happen again and look forward to working with all of your Ministries to ensure a safe and robust return soon.

Sincerely,

Justin Antheunis  
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IATSE Local 58

Jeff McMahan  
Business Agent  
IATSE Local B-173

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