



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS

An Organization of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada

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March 13, 2020

Open Letter to the Federal and Provincial Ministries of Labour, Ministry of Canadian Heritage and Ministry of
Employment and Social Development Canada

The Canadian Federation of Musicians (CFM) is the Canadian Office of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM), which is the largest organization in the world representing the interests of musicians. There are 25 Canadian locals, representing more than 17,000 musicians, working in all aspects of the entertainment industry, from symphonies to theatres, television to advertising, motion picture soundtracks to rock concerts and everything in between.

The arrival of the COVID-19 virus in Canada has created the need for emergency measures, from the closure of offices and implementation of work-from-home policies, to the restrictions on large gatherings to the outright cancellation of music events such as the Junos, concerts, theatrical performances, orchestral performances and touring. While the CFM understands these necessary and unprecedented steps, they have created a devastating loss of planned work and needed revenue for not only the musicians involved, but for the organizations who have engaged them and now suddenly find themselves without ticket sales. That is revenue that cannot be recouped, and indeed, may have a long-term effect on the viability of those organizations and musicians, and subsequently the industry as a whole.

In order for the industry and those individuals to survive this crisis, there must be appropriate support from all levels of government for musicians working in traditional employment arrangements as well as the precarious "gig economy" freelance players.

The CFM is requesting that government adopt emergency measures in this exceptional situation, to provide security to counteract this critical loss of revenue, through whatever means necessary. These steps may include a waiver of the one-week waiting period for EI benefits (in the case where the musicians are entitled), to expanding the benefit to include freelance workers who provide their services as self-employed contractors, to ensuring that compensation is made available for musicians who have had gigs or tours cancelled for both lost revenue and other expenses, such as the hundreds of dollars, or thousands paid to USCIS as petition fees for P2 visas for US entry.

Consideration must be made as well for proper funding to help musicians and symphony/theatre organizations recover, as well as assistance to stimulate and revitalize the industry once the virus has been contained and/or eradicated.

The CFM is undertaking to gather data in order to demonstrate the loss in financial terms, because of this crisis, and will be sharing that data when available. The CFM also welcomes any questions or dialogue which government feels prudent during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Alan Willaert
AFM Vice-President from Canada