

Executive Management Report to the Board

Q3 Activity (Jul-Aug-Sept 2024)

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T0 Live

PRESIDENT & CEO'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditionally the third quarter is our chance to take a breath and plan for the end of year holiday madness. Pleasantly, but with a little surprise, we were quite busy throughout July and August leading into September. In this normally quiet time, you will see in our ticketing update that almost 60K people attended events managed, hosted or produced by TO Live. This resulted in a positive effect on our budget deficit, which we are continuing to manage to close by the end of the year. It also is a good indicator of the love that audiences have in Toronto for live performance - they have returned and with enthusiasm!

Please also draw your attention to the wonderful work our Indigenous Curator and Director of Indigenous Affairs have been doing. In September, we hosted our first Indigenous Arts, Music & Culture Festival called UpFRONT and it received a very warm welcome from audiences, artists and stakeholders. The Festival will be an annual event and we are already using key learnings from the inaugural year to plan 2025. An important piece to the Festival was in the MAC Art Gallery, which for several weeks was enlivened with an emerging artist exhibition curated by Sierra da Silva-Canadien. It was important to tie together uptown and downtown in our celebration of Indigenous arts.

We are beginning to plan the 2026 budget cycle, looking at how to meaningfully support the City's new Cultural Plan, and planning our Capital Projects with a focus on the priorities of AODA and Sustainability projects across all our venues.

As we look ahead to the final quarter of the year, and the juggernaut of holiday circus approaching, we are excited about the many amazing events celebrating the cultures of Toronto within our halls. It's an exciting race into the final lap of the year.

We look forward to seeing you out at an event soon!

Clyde Wagner
President & CEO



PROGRAMMING

The third quarter of 2024 featured a wide array of activities across the Programming department.

TO Live Presents

- [Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy: Kal Ho Na Ho](#). Legendary trio of Shankar Mahadevan, Ehsaan Noorani, and Loy Mendonsa performed Bollywood hits to a thrilled audience at Meridian Hall. This concert built on TO Live's South Asian audience development efforts.
- [UpFront Festival of Indigenous Arts, Music and Culture](#). The three-day festival, curated by Tkaronto Music Festival and produced by TO Live featured music, puppetry, comedy, free workshops and an Indigenous marketplace on Scott St. The Festival began with a traditional water walk ceremony from the shore of Lake Ontario to Meridian Hall, led by an Indigenous elder.
- [tewaká:wes: An Indigenous Art Exhibition](#). Curated by TO Live's Indigenous Cultural Curator, the month-long exhibition at the Meridian Arts Centre featured multidisciplinary works by seven artists.

Making Space

Continuing TO Live's narrative as a meaningful and active contributor to Toronto's cultural life through provision of space, residencies, and other support:

- TO Live provided space and some financial support for:
 - Roshanek Jabari technical residency
 - Kelly Clipperton creative residency
 - Naishi Wang creative residency
 - SummerWorks Provision of Space
 - National Arts Centre Indigenous Theatre General Auditions
 - North York Arts Awards
 - Celebration of Life for Louis March
 - Common Ground Dance Festival Provision of Space
 - Esie Mensah Provision of Space
 - Cote Danse Provision of Space
 - Disability Collective: Propellor Dance Workshop

Stage Rentals

Q3 Highlights include:

- Meridian Hall: Comedians Ellen DeGeneres, Basement Yard, and Wanda Sykes. Concert performances of Twilight in Concert, Aref Live, and Sirvan and Ehaam
- St Lawrence Centre for the Arts: The Latvian Festival of Song and Dance and K-Pop band ONF.



- Meridian Arts Centre: Performances by Sinfonia Toronto and The Chosen by Teatron Theatre and Words and Music Presented by Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company

Communities and Outreach

- At the Meridian Arts Centre, free [community dance classes](#) facilitated by Ishaa Vinod Chopra were offered to the community in partnership with North York Arts. Downtown, the [Resin Art with Arefa](#) workshop series was extended by one session date due to popular demand.
- Hosted a Xenia Concert (which offers performing arts experiences for children, their families, and others within those communities who face systemic and social barriers to inclusion) with [Jennarie](#) and Grammy nominee [Drew Jurecka](#) at Meridian Hall in July and [Schmaltz & Pepper](#) at the Meridian Arts Centre in September.
- Launched TO Live's inaugural arts-based [Summer Camp](#) over 2 weeks in August for 72 children at the Meridian Arts Centre to strong positive feedback from North York families.
- Now in its fourth year, the *explorations* program has been awarded to support six Toronto-based artists (Natasha Bacchus, Radhika Baskar, Chloe Begg, April Leung 梁筱, Johnathan Morin and Bryce Taylor) directly addressing the urgent needs of local emerging artists with vital resources to develop their artistic practice.

Corporate and Private Events

- Q3 came in significantly higher than forecast due to recurring events, typically in Q2, moving to Q3 because there were no dates available. These were:
 - Niagara College - 5 days at Meridian Hall, and Fleming College - 3 days at Meridian Arts Centre
 - new client Wealth Builder University did a rare August conference that looks like it will become an annual
- More new clients included Paramount, Idaho Productions and TFO (Television française de l'Ontario).
- Recurring clients Milestone Churches and Mulvey & Banani returned.

Production Services

- New Front of House sound and stage monitor consoles were purchased and installed at Meridian Hall.
- Supported Capital Projects with theatre systems upgrades at the Meridian Arts Centre, including Production Intercom, video relay systems and winch and hoist upgrades in the Lyric theatre.
- Initiated negotiations with IATSE 822 to renew the Wigs and Wardrobe agreement at Meridian Hall.
- In addition, Q3 is when many Production maintenance projects are completed, and issues are addressed that have arisen over the previous two quarters.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing and Communications

- Recognized holidays of national and social/cultural importance on social media and digital signage, including Canada Day, Emancipation Month, Jewish New Year, and the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation.
- Created and shared content to highlight TO Live Presents shows, including:
 - [23 videos featuring artists in the UpFront Festival](#):
 - 5 videos with curator Cynthia Lickers-Sage
 - 5 videos with Drezus
 - 3 videos with Isabel Zaw-Tun
 - 4 videos with Amanda Rheume
 - 3 videos with Semiah
 - 6 videos with Shawnee Kish
 - 1 TikTok/reel of fun facts promoting [Frozen in Concert](#)
- Created 1 reel celebrating [10,000 Instagram followers](#)

Media Highlights included:

- Shankar Ehsaan Loy
 - Weekly Voice: [“Toronto SEL Musical Show, Truly Electrifying!”](#)
 - Weekly Voice: [“Where’s the Party Tonight?”](#)
 - Hello Namaste: [“#KalHoNaHoTour in Toronto! Dance with the Dynamic Trio!”](#)
 - [Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy to perform live this Saturday!](#)
- UpFRONT Festival of Indigenous Arts, Music & Culture 2024
 - CBC Radio One: Curator [Cynthia Lickers-Sage live interview on CBC Radio One](#) Here and Now
 - CIUT-FM: Curator [Cynthia Lickers-Sage live interview on CIUT-FM](#) Indigenous Waves

Ticket Services

- Provided box office support and customer service for ticketed activity. The quarter saw nearly 60K ticketed attendees and over 100K new tickets booked, in addition to putting over 150 distinct performances and nearly 80 productions on sale.
- Phased in use of Pay-by-Link and Invoices in Account Manager, providing patrons self-service online payment options for orders taken by phone, email and in-person.
- With increased fraudulent credit card chargebacks having been observed both within TO Live’s business and across the industry, new protective measures were taken, including the above-noted self-service online payments (Pay-by-Link, Invoicing), new pre-settlement reports to better anticipate threats, an improved action plan for suspicious transactions, more stringent limits on telephone credit transactions, and increased training for front-line staff.



- Improved use of the Account Manager platform, including expanded options for subscription and package setups, as well as better processes for large consignment and comp orders via bulk processing into individual customer accounts, allowing patrons and client more self-service access and ticket management for these transaction types.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Finance

- Worked with City on 2025 budget notes
- Regular business

Payroll

- Regular business
- Finalized negotiations for new payroll/HR system and started data collection for new system

Information Technology

- Completed Microsoft Windows 11 workstation upgrade project
- Completed onboarding all workstations and servers to Microsoft Defender Portal
- Completed implementing tenable Nessus Professional templates for all servers
- Completed all information and technical sessions related to the Memorandum of Understanding from the Office of the Chief Information Security Officer
- Begun preparation for phone migration project from Mitel to Microsoft Teams

Other

- Started review of all TO Live Programming contracts

HUMAN RESOURCES & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- 438 employees at the end of Q3 (+36 (9%) compared to Q2 (2023)
- 24 positions filled in Q3
- Employee turnover was 2.1% in Q3 compared to 3.5%% at the same time last year
 - 11 employees left the organization last quarter
 - unspecified (45%) , another job (13%)
 - those with tenure 1-3 years (29%), less than 6 months (24%), and 6 months – 1 year (18%) made up 71% of those who left the organization.

Training

- **Compliance training**

Online

- 289 employees - *Addressing Racism in the Workplace Training for Employees*



- 297 employees - *AODA Customer Service Standards Training (Comprehensive Content, Immersive)*
- 279 employees - *Demonstrating Respect at Work Training*
- 206 employees - *Unconscious Bias Training for All Audiences*
- 284 employees - *Workplace Violence and Harassment Refresher Training for Employees (Ontario, Immersive)*

In Person

- UpFRONT Festival Training: Intro to Indigenous Protocols – 2 in-person, 1 virtual
- Truth and Reconciliation Blanket Exercise

Employee Relations

- The Inclusion Diversity Equity and Access (IDEA) team continued the quarter with the following celebrations/remembrance:
 - in honor of Truth and Reconciliation, TO Live conducted a Blanket Exercise with employees to raise awareness about the continuing injustices and impacts of colonization within the Indigenous community

Indigenous Report Update

Key findings from the Indigenous Community Consultations report suggest that while supports and programs have improved, accessibility is still lacking. The lack of continued community engagement and authentic partnerships make it less likely for Indigenous artists to connect to the broader Toronto arts landscape.

Some steps to address these concerns have taken place in Q3, which include the following:

- Continuing to share information around TO Live's offerings at a grassroots-level in Toronto Indigenous communities.
- Increasing our efforts in building and strengthening relationships with Indigenous artists such as Rosary Spence and Outside Looking In.
- Considering issues, obstacles and possible simplification of TO Live processes as they arise to encourage greater participation with Indigenous artists in the future. Discussions include simplifying contracts, communications, applications and calls for employment or RFPs are ongoing.
- Educating staff on ways to be more mindful of diverse Indigenous representation and voices in our offerings are ongoing during meetings and the course of work.
- Providing Indigenous Cultural Awareness training to staff who will be front-facing and interacting with Indigenous artists at TO Live's inaugural Upfront Festival of Indigenous Arts, Music and Culture.
- In-person training September 24th at the lobby of MH in the form of a Blanket Exercise as one step to prepare staff for thinking more deeply and critically about the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.
- In-person presentation with the Canada Council for Indigenous Business to educate Senior Executives about the Partnership Accreditation in Indigenous Relations (PAIR) program. Decisions on how to proceed will take place in Q4.



OPERATIONS

Facility Services

- Conducted large-staff annual fire drills at all locations
- Initiated annual fire safety system testing and inspections across all sites
- Trained staff to perform in-house thermographic scanning of electrical systems, reducing reliance on external services
- Performed annual asbestos re-assessment surveys for MH & STLC
- Remediated interior concrete of the MAC hydro vault

Patron Services and Event Services

- Celebrated the retirements of two long-service employees (20 and 40 years)
- Introduced additional concession products including cider and Pringles
- Collaborated with capital projects to complete new F&B storage and East Lounge Servery at MH

Capital Projects

- **Meridian Arts Centre highlights include:**
 - Accessibility Work Package 7 (Back of House support Phase 1): Phase 1 completed Construction of phase 2 is ongoing. Phase 3 commenced, and elevators are under construction
 - Accessibility Work Package 8 (Venue Renovations): Project tender closed. Commencement of work in fall.
 - Rigging Replacement for GWRH and Lyric: Work is progressing in the Lyric
- **Meridian Hall highlights include:**
 - Accessibility Projects - Work Package 4 (Front and Back of House Services): 98% completed working on deficiencies and closeout documents
 - Accessibility Projects – Work Package 5 (Lobby Washrooms Phase 2): Phase 1 completed. Phase 2 will start Q4 2024
 - Accessibility Projects - Work Package 6 (Venue Renovations): Tender package delayed. Tender package will be issued in late fall
 - Exterior Envelope & Site Work: Project is 75% completed. Construction ongoing and progressing as per construction schedule.

DEVELOPMENT – Philanthropy & Corporate Sponsorship

- Government
 - Secured funding from Ontario Cultural Attracts Fund (\$50k)
 - Secured funding from Canada Council (\$30k)
 - Submitted grant to Ontario Arts Council (\$15k)



- Major Gifts & Foundations
 - Secured 30k individual gift from a new donor (UpFRONT Festival)
 - Submitted proposals to foundations and individuals totaling \$685k for programming support
- Annual Giving
 - Launched Staff Giving campaign
 - Developed and created end of year campaign to be launched in Q4
 - Rolled out tap to donate machines at MAC
- Sponsorship
 - Secured first corporate sponsorship from TD for UpFRONT Festival (\$5k)
 - Secured in-kind sponsorship with Indigenous-owned beauty brand, Cheekbone Beauty
 - Completed a comprehensive evaluation of TO Live venue and programming assets
 - Continued cultivation of hotel and car sponsor opportunities
- Stewardship
 - Launched a 3-month trial partnership with local beverage company Barbet
 - Confirmed Partake Brewing as exclusive venue partner for non-alcoholic beer
 - Hosted opening night party for UpFRONT Festival, sponsored by Meridian
 - Engaged local residents and visitors in the STLC neighborhood and collected demographic data
- Continued to cultivate potential venue and programming sponsors, donors, and foundation partners

TO Live Foundation and TO Live fundraising are separate entities.

STLC REDEVELOPMENT

- Collaborated with Monumental consultants for TO Live's inaugural *UpFRONT Festival of Indigenous Arts, Music and Culture*
 - created "Welcome" area on Scott Street to engage with Festival goers and passerbys about Public Space/ TO Live
 - Monumental authored a report based on participant data and observations
- Collaborated with Arts & Communications to solicit naming of STLC and district
- Building Case for Support in anticipation of launching fall capital campaign
- Completed Schematic Design/budget and co-authored Staff Report for September TO Live Board meeting (in preparation for Executive/Council meetings in October)

