



# ENGAGEMENT WITH TENANT COMPANIES OF THE ST. LAWRENCE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

Key Findings & Recommendations  
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# CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Two in-person sessions (Dec 2025)
- Not-for-profit organizations with history at STLC
- City staff presentation on capital planning
- Focus: infrastructure, operations, mandate



# STLC: CORE STRENGTHS

- Prime downtown location
- High audience awareness
- Experienced TO Live staff
- Bluma Appel: 800 seats, acoustics, sprung floor, orchestra pit
- Jane Mallet: 450–500 seats, strong music constituents





# THE OPPORTUNITY

STLC can be:

- An exceptional performing arts centre
- A community building civic space
- A strengthened partner to non-profit tenant companies
- A driver of cultural participation and tourism

# SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Consultation participants identified several opportunities to maximize STLC's impact:

- Re-grounding of the centre in its original community service mandate
- Meaningful consultation with non-profit tenant companies
- Infrastructure improvements
- Revised operating and administration arrangements

# SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

## *Community Service Mandate*

- The STLC tenant companies strongly support a re-grounding of the Centre to its original community service mandate. In practice this mandate would ensure accessibility and community engagement and would emphasize support for local artists, fostering cultural participation, offering affordable programming, and acting as a shared civic space that reflects and serves the surrounding community.
- A review of TO Live's mandate is timely as the previous mandate was established 11 years ago when City Council voted to consolidate Toronto's civic theatres. The mandate of the board in the Toronto Municipal Code continues to reference the amalgamation of the theatres. A mandate review will ensure that the City's direction to TO Live as an agency more fully reflects TO Live's broad reach and impact.
- It was noted that the STLC was originally built to serve Toronto's not for profit performing arts community, and that public investment in the facility and the tenant companies themselves brings great value to Toronto audiences and artists as well as supporting artistic creation and innovation.

# SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

## *Consultation & Partnerships*

- Tenant companies are very interested in offering their expertise and support to the management of the facility. As the primary users, they see significant potential for growth in numbers and duration of STLC rental contracts if they are given the opportunity to participate in decisions including those focused on booking practices, equipment upgrades, box office management, marketing, and infrastructure upgrades.
- The original mandate of the TO Live Board of Directors set out in the Toronto Municipal Code included the directive to establish an advisory committee to consult with tenant companies, and it was clear from all those consulted that they would welcome this opportunity.
  - *Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 23, Civic Theatres: Section 23-2.4. "The Board shall establish an advisory committee with representation from the major companies and tenants at the Civic Theatres, to be convened at least once a year to provide advice to the Board, based on terms of reference approved by the Board."*

# SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

## *Participant Feedback for Space and Equipment Needs*

### *Space Needs*

- Elevators to second level for both theatres
- Additional rehearsal space, with sprung floor
- Increased dressing rooms
- Additional lobby and box office space
- Increased donor/reception space
- Improved audience seating and access
- Improved soundproofing between theatres
- Accessible backstage
- Accessible loading dock

### *Theatre Equipment*

- Significant repairs and upgrades to equipment are required
- New/repaired equipment must be sufficiently soundproof for music performances
- Digital video and audio streaming capabilities are required
- Repair of flies, rigging & outdoor sign all highlighted

- Strong support for repurposing existing ground floor administrative space.
- Any closures should occur off-season or with a minimum of 18 months' notice, allowing alternate arrangements to be made.
- Ongoing consultation with tenant groups to ensure continued support for identified infrastructure repairs and for new improvements as opportunities arise.

# SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

## *Operations and Administration*

- Late confirmation of booking dates is a significant problem cited by all those consulted
- 18 months confirmation of dates is essential to allow planning
- Organizations noted they needed to identify alternate venues when bookings delayed
- Participants called for new, flexible ticketing solutions for third party programming at STLC. Current system particularly challenging for subscription series
- Opportunities to further amplify tenant organizations' programming through enhanced marketing



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CITY OF TORONTO

1. Update the vision and mandate of TO Live to reground it in a community service mandate, celebrating STLC's historic and unique performing arts identity in Toronto.
2. Ensure STLC tenant companies are thoroughly consulted on infrastructure upgrades
3. Work with tenant companies to provide timely communication of constructions plans and possible closures
4. Repurpose existing ground floor office areas for accessibility needs, such as elevators, lobbies and entrance improvements
5. Consider infrastructure priorities identified by tenant companies in planning for infrastructure improvements

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO LIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

6. Activate a STLC Advisory Committee as outlined in the Toronto Municipal Code (Chapter 23, Civic Theatres), with the committee to include representation from STLC tenant companies
7. Reform booking procedures to:
  - a. Ensure a minimum of 18 month confirmation timing
  - b. Provide tenant organizations with first right of refusal on STLC bookings
  - c. Consider creating multi-year booking agreements, offering tenant companies the opportunity to book blocks of time on an ongoing basis
8. Enhance marketing support including further activation of TO Live's promotional channels to support all tenant company productions.
9. Ensure flexible ticketing options support tenant company productions at STLC.



# CONCLUSION

## STLC HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE:

- An exceptional performing arts centre
- A true civic cultural home
- A strengthened partner to tenant companies
- A driver of cultural participation and tourism

# ATTACHMENTS

- Detailed Feedback: Infrastructure Improvements
- List of Participating Organizations

# Detailed Feedback: Infrastructure Improvements

## Participant Feedback

The City of Toronto is responsible for the planning and delivery of the capital plan for TO Live's three theatre facilities. The City is completing a 10-year capital plan for STLC based on a recent detailed Accessibility Study and Building Conditions Assessment (BCA). Per City Council direction, the City is planning and funding renovations at STLC to address the facility's State of Good Repair (SOGR) and Accessibility (AODA) needs. Consulted organizations were generally supportive of these infrastructure improvement plans as outlined.

There was broad consensus on the most important priorities and constructive suggestions were offered on specific needs. Suggestions included needs related to SOGR and AODA, as well as other facility improvements.

- Accessibility is a critical issue throughout the facility. Elevators are required to provide second-floor access in both theatres and their lobbies. The Jane Mallet Theatre needs a safer and more accessible audience entry point; the existing stairs are unsafe, with uneven step widths and partial railings, creating a significant liability risk.
- There is no wheelchair accessibility backstage, and accessibility within dressing rooms and backstage areas is a major barrier for performers, especially those with large instruments.
- Repurposing existing ground floor office space should be considered to address these accessibility shortcomings, including the addition of elevators, improved entrances, and more inclusive event-hosting areas.

## Detailed Feedback: Infrastructure Improvements (continued)

- More generally, participants felt that the centre is tired and in need of an upgrade. Core patron amenities are inadequate, most notably the shortage of women's washrooms and the extremely cramped audience seating. The lobby space presents a major challenge, particularly when performances are occurring in both theatres simultaneously. Sound quality in the lobby is poor and without use of the second level, there is no space to entertain donors.
- Back-of-house facilities are equally outdated. The green rooms feel firmly rooted in the last century, and there are not enough dressing rooms or backstage bathrooms to support the scale of productions presented. There is insufficient rehearsal space, creating scheduling and operational challenges for tenant and visiting companies.
- Soundproofing between theatres, especially backstage, is inadequate, causing noise bleed that interferes with performances.
- Unused ground-floor administrative space represents an opportunity for repurposing, though its location above the boiler room creates significant heat issues that would need to be addressed.
- The loading dock is unsuitable for most productions, forcing companies to load in through the stage door. This process is difficult and inefficient, with no dedicated parking for vehicles and extremely challenging access to the venue.
- There is significant concern from all consulted that they be kept informed of work plans and potential building closures. It is critically important that any closures occur off-season or with a minimum of 18 months' notice, allowing alternate arrangements to be made. In addition, ongoing consultation with tenant groups is advised to ensure continued support for identified infrastructure repairs and for new improvements as opportunities arise.

# List of Participating Organizations

- Ballet Jörgen Canada
- Canadian Stage Company
- Fall for Dance North
- Hannaford Street Silver Band
- Luminato
- Music Toronto
- Nightwood Theatre
- Opera In Concert
- Toronto Dance Theatre
- Tapestry Opera
- Toronto Operetta Theatre