

June 22, 2020

An Open Letter from Choirs Ontario

Choirs Ontario is the provincial arts service organization representing thousands of choirs and tens of thousands of choristers across this province. As has been the case in almost every other sector, choirs have been forced to cease operations and have been silent during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are writing this letter in response to several recent government regulations ([City of Toronto regulation for re-opening places of worship](#), and [Province of Ontario laws governing phase 2 of the reopening](#)) and news media articles made over the course of the last several weeks. Most recently CBC News has published articles on Tuesday June 16, [No singing or dancing allowed, even as Ontario patios, places of worship open](#) and on Friday June 19, [Who would have thought that singing could be dangerous, or deadly?](#)

Scientific study on the transmission of COVID-19 as it relates to singing is in its infancy. To date, there is no body of scientific research that definitively links choral singing with a higher risk of infection in comparison to other group activities. As such, it is of great concern to choral communities that the development of Ontario public health policy around the safety of singing could be based on anecdotal evidence of a few choirs whose membership has become sick, rather than being firmly based on scientific evidence.

To be clear, our advocacy is not for choirs to re-open and go back to “business as usual” at this time. We would never put any of our singers or members of the public in increased danger of contracting the COVID 19 virus by returning to choral activities before it is safe to do so. We are simply drawing attention to the need for evidence-based research to drive decision-making as it relates to choral singing.

In the absence of this evidence, we are compelled to highlight the unfair and unfounded focus the media has placed on choral singing as an area of - at best - heightened risk and at worst, grave danger. ***We are asking for Public Health departments to help the tens of thousands of choristers in this Province by providing clear and actionable guidelines for choral singing that are guided by science.***

Over the last three months, choirs have proven their resiliency through many physically distanced and ‘virtual’ projects. We are innovating, we are staying connected and we are learning together. As a singing community, we will continue to advocate for the benefits of choral singing for social, mental, and emotional well-being. Guided by evidence-based best practices, the activities of choirs should not fall under the mantle of a blanket condemnation. Rather they should be resumed safely and responsibly, commensurate with other group activities in Ontario.

On behalf of choirs across our province,

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