

From: Natalie Kearns

Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 9:49 PM

To: Budget Committee <BudgetCommittee@london.ca>; City of London, Mayor <mayor@london.ca>; Franke, Skylar <sfranke@london.ca>

Cc: Evan Klassen

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Attn: Budget Committee, In Support of the Grand Theatre's Business Case (P-39, Page 571)

Natalie Kearns
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January 23, 2024

**City of London Budget Committee - Attention Elizabeth Pelosa, Chair.
Regarding: In Support of the Grand Theatre's Business Case (P-39, Page 571)**

Dear City of London Councillors and Mayor Morgan:

I am writing in support of the Grand Theatre's Business Case (P-39, Page 571) as part of the 2024-2027 Multi-Year Budget for the City of London.

I have been employed at the Grand Theatre since the fall of 2013, which makes this season 2023/2024 my tenth season at the theatre. I moved to London, Ontario from Providence, Rhode Island specifically to work at the Grand Theatre when I accepted the job as the Head of Props. Since 2013, I have lived in Old South and have come to love and appreciate my city.

There are a number of factors that attracted me to the job at the Grand and these factors align with many of the reasons I believe that the City of London should increase their support of the theatre. My job at the Grand Theatre is a union position under IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) and I am a proud union member. The Grand has a strong track record of supporting and paying workers fairly for skilled labour both onstage and behind the scenes. My work and the work of my colleagues backstage requires a very specific skill set and it is important that the Grand continues to be able to attract and retain employees with these specialized skills. The work of the Grand attracts artists to our city and we have made vibrant lives in our communities here in London.

The work that the Grand Theatre does with young people in London through the High School Project is vitally important. The program is an incredible opportunity that gives students a chance to learn the inner workings of a theatre production and teaches life skills like collaboration, communication, and confidence. Those who go on to pursue careers in fields beyond theatre have a deep appreciation and understanding of the importance of the arts in London. And those who do pursue a career in theatre represent our city on the national stage. The number of actors and artists I continue to meet who are alumni of the High School Project astounds me.

As the Head of Props, I participate directly in the local economy with London businesses. My work involves purchasing materials and products to create the sets seen on our stages. It is important to me to buy locally whenever possible and I enjoy the fact that my work creates business for places like Lens Mills Outlet, Cobbletog Antique Market, Memory Lane Antiques, AFA Forest Products, Parker Plastics, Long & McQuade London North, and Mercury Blueprinting, among many other local stores. Not to mention the many downtown London businesses that benefit when audiences come to the core to see a play.

For these reasons, I ask that you please strongly consider the proposed increase in funding for the Grand Theatre for the 2024-2027 Budget. I recognize that there are many priorities for funding and I ask that you consider the impact of the Grand Theatre on the overall health, culture, and vibrancy of the City of London Ontario when making your decisions.

Respectfully,

Natalie Kearns

Ward 11 Resident
Head of Props, Grand Theatre