

DATE: Nov. 20, 2019

TO: Community and Protective Services Committee, City of London

RE: Improvements for Arts & Culture

Request for Delegation Status

I request a hearing with the *Community and Protective Services Committee* regarding policies and funding which impact Arts & Culture.

As a very budget-conscious citizen, all items presented for discussion are aimed at no-cost changes. I will also note that the Arts are no minor economic concern – *please see the excerpts at the end of this document* – but understand that throwing more money at ineffective programs will not produce desired effects. Recent research data is needed to evaluate changes that could yield important improvements with funds we currently spend.

As a professionally trained Visual Artist and certified teacher, most of the information I present will be aimed at the Visual Arts scene but could favourably impact the literary and theatre communities as well, who also deserve attention.

In Dec of 2018 I started an arts group called *London Association of Visual Artists* (LAVA) because the 3 existing painting groups all had 4-year waiting lists; I found out they have “no space for larger groups to meet.” Meanwhile taxpayer-funded rooms sit idle, heated for no one’s benefit while we are left out in the cold. We have over 40 members and have to meet in coffee shops. Our group refuses to pay a fee just to meet, we are non-profit.

Having noted the sudden disappearance of the Nuit Blanche Festival in 2018 (with no prior warning despite it being advertised all the way to Toronto) and the lackluster Culture Days which has also now been cancelled, I fail to see adequate progress regarding the *London Cultural Prosperity Plan*. The Sunfest and Home County festivals may pay performers – but force Visual Artists to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars to exhibit. Treated as vendors, artists often LOSE money as we do not have cheap goods to mark up for high profits.

While the Arts Council mandate stated they provide “Assistance for artists, artist collectives, and arts organizations with professional development and training, networking and mentorship opportunities, and community connection and accessibility”, this seems incorrect. (This and other sections of the mandate have recently disappeared. The mandate has shrunk considerably- has the funding?). They appear out of touch with the people they purport to represent, and do not survey them nor even provide a basic newsletter. Standard *Calls to Artists* are not adequately advertised, and the roster of artists is chosen partly on a project basis. This can unfairly exclude trained professionals, and appears to favour “friends”.

I note many smaller organizations have no access to funding other than an extremely long grants form that ties groups to the stated political aims of the Arts Council, which does not allow groups to decide what they find important. Enforced agendas about mental health and radical social justice do not foster freedom of artistic expression. Writers and theatre people told me they are unwilling to “jump through hoops” to appease the agendas of the Arts Council. We are Artists, not Social Workers; let us do our professions as we were trained to.

The Neighborhood Decision Making model is an option but there is no guaranteed arts funding there either, so well-connected power organizations can sometimes override arts altogether, especially as the city’s employees are more aware of the program than the general public.

I would like to outline some suggestions to the Committee for improvements regarding:

1. improved budget formats and oversight of arts spending to make it more transparent & accountable.
2. shorted forms for minor grants : \$500 grants should not need the same form as a \$10,000 one

3. specified spending amounts for Arts & Culture from Neighbourhood Decision making (or other body)
4. better inclusion of the arts community through surveys & funding for long-lived groups
5. better communication with the arts community through an improved newsletter
6. spaces for arts groups to meet without charge to allow them to grow
7. groups and individual artists in London to be featured on one website along with upcoming arts events
8. better networking so arts groups know about each other – we like to support and cross-promote arts
9. inclusion of Visual Artists in more festivals, and Dundas Place events, on a commission basis
10. better advertisement of all arts groups and productions (Tourism London site only -not appropriate for us)

I have spent a great deal of time in the last 2 years going over budgets, policies, and considering improvements. While some meetings with the Manager of Culture have been beneficial and resulted in changes (such as removing the small fee for artists to exhibit art in the libraries) the meeting with the Arts Council resulted in zero progress, not even an agreement to restore the newsletter or reach out to London's long-lived arts organizations for any opinions.

It is time to stop exploiting artists, writers, and performers for profit, where buildings and bureaucracies get paid but we do not; the current formula leads to a reduction in the number and quality of artists of all genres, while the respectful treatment of us yields more vibrant communities that people want to move to.

To ignore the vital energy that well-connected, growing arts groups can bring to the various communities in London is to neglect not only this creative energy, but the improved activity and spending that help to make a healthy economy – one that gets people out of their homes more, to participate in local programs and events.

I will offer as proof the activities LAVA has organized in ONE year:

- a well-attended opening show (120 people)
- an ARTWALK display of paintings on Richmond Row with 20+ businesses participating
- a community picnic and art show + composter demonstration (funded by Neighbourhood London)
- an elegant night out with local musicians
- an art display at the Woodfield Fair
- supporting FRINGE shows as a group
- a library exhibit & kick-off brunch

This city should not ignore its own plans. There has not been a five-year review as suggested by the *London Cultural Prosperity Plan*. There is not enough input from the community on the effectiveness of the current spending for arts, and it is time to do so. A group of well-connected individuals whose jobs are at stake are not the proper group to ask how well this is being done.

Sincerely,

Kathryn O'Neill, B. Ed, Major in Fine Arts
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The following are excerpts only:

CANADIANART

NEWS / JUNE 25, 2019

Culture Industries Have \$58.9 Billion Impact in Canada

That's what the latest StatsCan data shows, and it's more than the national impact of accommodation and food services. It's also eight times more than sports

Numbers released this spring by Statistics Canada indicate that the direct economic impact of culture industries was \$58.9 billion in Canada in 2017.

That's \$1,611 per capita, or 2.8% of national GDP.

And there's more of note in a summary of the StatsCan data recently released by Hill Strategies' Arts Research Monitor.

According to the latest numbers, overall economic impact of the culture industries outpaces that of agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (\$39 billion), accommodation and food services (\$46 billion) and utilities (\$46 billion). (At least in 2017.)

According to the StatsCan data, the culture industries also have eight times more economic impact than what is provided by sports. StatsCan says the direct economic impact of sports industries was \$7.3 billion in 2017, compared to nearly \$59 billion for culture.

The number of jobs in the culture industries, according to StatsCan, is also almost six times larger than in the sports industries—715,400 compared to 125,500.

StatsCan considered culture to include

- audiovisual and interactive media,
- visual and applied arts
- written and published works
- live performance
- privately held heritage and library resources, and
- sound recording, among other components.

(And all those culture industry numbers don't even include the impact of government-run organizations in the culture sector, or of education and training in the culture sector. Those impacts are \$7.6 billion (government-run orgs) and \$3.7 billion (education and training), respectively.)