



## Davenport Provincial Arts Roundtable – Call Notes

### Friday, April 24

Hosted by Davenport MPP Marit Stiles and Dr. Jill Andrew, MPP for Toronto-St.Paul's and Official Opposition Critic for Arts and Culture

### Participating Organisations:

Toronto Media Arts Centre
Art Metropole & Association of Artist-run Centres and Collectives of Ontario (ARCCO)
workman arts (art + mental health org, in Davenport)
MOCA Toronto
Toronto Animated Image Society
Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT)
Clay and Paper Theatre
Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre
Toronto Outdoor Picture Show
Charles Street Video
Inuit Art Foundation
Regent Park Film Festival
Akin
Wavelength Music
Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto Canada

### Background:

As local organizations of all kinds deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions, this meeting was convened to hear directly from arts organisations in Davenport about how their operations have been affected and what supports they need in order to get through this difficult period.

### Discussion:

In general, there was a sense that the funding programs announced so far by the federal government would either not be enough to sustain arts organisations, or they were simply ineligible. At the time of the call, details were not yet available on the new \$500 million COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage, and Sport Organizations.

Provincially, there have been no direct supports announced for the arts and culture sector. MPP Stiles and the Opposition NDP Caucus have called for a comprehensive plan that is meant to protect small and medium businesses, including non-profits, with eviction protections, rent subsidies and transition funding.

Since the time of the meeting, the provincial and federal government announced a new Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program, but we have since heard that the program relies too heavily on landlords making the application -- and applying for the subsidy -- something many landlords in Davenport are simply not willing to do.

During the conversation, MPP Stiles talked about the additional pressures facing the arts community - including the original exclusion from CERB of artists and contract-workers who earn some income while their main employment has ceased (eligibility has since changed), the lack of a rent subsidy for tenants and implications for artists with disabilities.

MPP Andrew talked about her ongoing consultations with arts organisations province-wide in her role as critic, and emphasized the need for a post-COVID plan for the sector. That plan needs to include transition funding for hard-hit groups and more resources for granting councils. She also talked about the need for a provincial campaign to encourage a re-engagement with Ontario's arts community, measures to help people support the cultural sector in a context where gatherings are limited.

The MPPs explained that they have called for reversal of OAC cuts, and an increase in the funding. MPP Andrew has raised Celebrate Ontario and Ontario Summer Experience program with Minister McLeod as many groups have not heard.

The Opposition continues to decry cuts to and have called for restoration of the Indigenous Culture Fund, Ontario Music Fund, Engaging seniors through the arts, Ontario Arts Endowment program.

MPP Andrew noted that philanthropy is expected to be down by 50% - and that private donations should be matched by the government to make up this revenue source for the sector. She also noted that the Community Museum Operating grant - funding has been at a standstill.

### **What organisations told us:**

#### **Operating funding**

- Some orgs have operating funds, but with future unclear, will result in lost revenue from postponed performances, screenings and events

#### **Commercial rent**

- Commercial property owners getting a subsidy but not the organisations themselves

#### **Adaptation and transition**

- Live performance is not going to move online but some orgs are looking to shift to service work/community outreach.

- Is there a fund for digital adaptation?

### **Impacts**

- Orgs that do not receive much arts agency funding, mostly corporate funding and that support is drying up. What support can replace that funding?
- Orgs that serve marginalised communities have fewer resources to cope with pandemic, concerns about the loss of these voices. This aspect is missing from the government's response.
- Some orgs may be able to get through the closure but long-term impacts are unclear. What will 2021 look like? This needs to be a focus of gov't and granting agencies.
- Orgs that self-generate income through ticket sales or program fees will see a massive loss that will impact the coming year. Described as "catastrophic."

### **Funding**

- Celebrate Ontario grant still outstanding - very concerned about McLeod's comments
- Increased funding to OAC needed, groups still waiting to hear about their application.
- Groups looking for notice of any new grants
- 'Ontario Live' - unclear how that might apply to museums and arts orgs
- Funding bodies should focus on affected org beyond the immediate moment, advocate for more funding from arts council (particularly for groups representing marginalised people)
- Worry that more cuts will be coming for OAC
- Fast tracking grants helps with cash flow, but the second wave of financial issues after reopening and clients are reduced - what happens?
- Rent relief, wage subsidy are helpful for some orgs but only for this three month program

### **Communication with Ministry**

- Concerns that the 'Big 8' institutions have the most attention and influence at the expense of small orgs and institutions
- Inconsistent messaging from government on program announcements (like Ontario Live), lack of clarity.

### **Other:**

- Orgs seeking advice from Public Health on reopening procedures and precautions
- Fear that the digital space is going to get the lions share but how do we reclaim that public space in light of pandemic precautions in the long term.

### **Follow up actions:**

MPP Stiles stressed the need for the government to look ahead, beyond the immediate relief measures and ensure that the arts and cultural sector, and arts workers in general, are included in any recovery plan. We need to be bold in our response to protecting our communities, our culture and our economy. The government has shown the capacity to act quickly and we need them to do that now.

**The MPPs agreed to work on a joint letter summarizing their consultation and to invite other Toronto MPPs to co-sign.**