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Hon. Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
6th Flr, 438 University Ave,
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Minister MacLeod,

I have written to you previously to highlight Davenport's arts and culture sector and its importance to Ontario's economic and social development. Our community is home to one of the country's largest populations of artists, writers, musicians, actors, stagehands, technicians and other creators. I have worked to bring their voices to the legislature and have called on the government to support these workers, galleries and publishers with meaningful support. Given the impact of the pandemic, that support is needed more than ever.

But today, I write to you to highlight a growing threat to the viability of our local arts and culture community: the rapid loss of space to make, practice, perform and display new work.

In July, I wrote to ask for your help to prevent the loss of a historically significant public building at 1117 Queen St. West. This former post office, owned by the federal government, has now been quietly transferred to a private owner. In an area already experiencing a massive transformation in recent years, and where a strong and thriving arts community has already been displaced, this loss is being keenly felt.

Community organizations, artists and non-profits have been working hard to prevent this sale and to use this public land for the public good. The City of Toronto is working to establish heritage designation under the Ontario Heritage Act before it's too late. I want to appeal to you once more, in your role as Minister, to work with me and my local community to keep this public land in public hands.

The threat of losing this building is being compounded by other creative spaces which are being lost to development pressure. St. Anne's Church in the Dufferin Grove area, has been forced to sell off its parish hall, a community fixture that has been home to multiple-award-winning theatre companies, Theatre Gargantua and Roseneath Theatre, among other community and arts organizations. This is in addition to its social and community supports, including hosting the Dufferin Grove Organic Market, organizing community dinners, and much more. The loss of this space will be felt by our entire Davenport community.

Toronto's music community has already been hit hard by the closure of venues during the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, but it suffered a huge blow recently with the threatened closure of yet another Rehearsal Factory space (two other locations are also closing because their sites have been sold to developers) on Geary Ave. Countless musicians honed their craft here, and there is simply no replacement. This has left bands and artists without a place to practice or prepare for recording.

Meanwhile, just east of the border of my riding, artist studios at the corner of Dupont St. And Ossington Ave have closed, evicting up to 50 artists and working creatives. On Sterling Road, where the revitalized MOCA Toronto is an anchor for development in the area, culture sector workers and residents across the street at 221, 225, and 227 Sterling Road are at risk of losing their work and living spaces.

Minister, you have spoken time and again of the importance of Ontario's cultural sector to our economy. **But in order to protect the next generation of filmmakers, composers or photographers, we need government action to protect affordable and accessible work spaces and to build the deeply affordable housing that makes it possible to live here.** The creative output of these workers is what makes our city the vibrant and dynamic place that we love. People want to live where there is music, theatre and art. That in turn has driven development, but under current provincial planning oversight, that same development is continuing to drive out our cultural workers, our galleries, performance spaces and studios.

I am asking you once more, to meet with me to discuss these issues and to plot a way forward. Instead of government policies that favour developer profit at the expense of everyone else, your government can help balance the scales and foster a thriving cultural sector in Toronto that will be the envy of the world. My constituents are ready to create – all they need is the space and support to do what they do best.

Thank you, and I look forward to your response.



Marit Stiles, MPP
Davenport