



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Community Arts Action Plan for Toronto

Date:	October 31, 2008
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	Rita Davies, Executive Director, Cultural Services Economic Development, Culture and Tourism
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:/2008/Cluster A/EDCT/ECON DEV/November/ed0811-001

SUMMARY

This report seeks Council endorsement of the Toronto Community Arts Action Plan. The plan comprises recommendations based on broad community input gathered through community arts focus group meetings and citywide community arts stakeholders' consultations conducted by Cultural Services in 2005 and 2007 respectively. It also addresses Council's request "to undertake a program to expand community arts programming to the point where funding is closer to that provided to the City's major cultural organizations" at its meeting on June 19, 20 and 22, 2007.

The Community Arts Action Plan is to be implemented over the next five years. It will help strengthen the infrastructure of Toronto's community arts sector including enhanced support for Toronto's lead community arts organizations, the Local Arts Service Organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Division recommends that:

1. City Council endorse the attached Community Arts Action Plan (Appendix 1).

Financial Impact

There are no 2008 financial impacts associated with the adoption of this report.

A target for increased investment in the Local Arts Service Organizations is included in the Deputy City Manager's report to the Economic Development Committee on the *Creative City Framework Implementation*. The Community Arts Action Plan identifies service gaps through a focus group that mapped community needs. Any increase in funding for the LASOs would be subject to the normal operating budget process each year.

Cultural Services staff will facilitate and coordinate the implementation of the plan with the community arts sector. There are no other additional resources required to implement the Action Plan as work with the community arts sector is part of the regular, ongoing work of the Arts Services Unit in Cultural Services.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council on June 24, 25 and 26, 2003, approved the *Culture Plan for the Creative City* that outlines 63 recommendations to provide clear direction for the City's cultural agenda until 2013. On July 26, 2005, Toronto Culture presented a *Culture Plan Progress Report* to the Economic Development and Parks Committee.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/committees/edp/edp051109/it004.pdf>

The Committee received the report and requested that staff consult with stakeholders outside the downtown core about their opinion on Culture budgets and the potential for increasing the budgets for their programs and that staff report back to the January meeting of the Committee.

On December 5, 2005, Toronto Culture held a focus group for community arts stakeholders outside the downtown core which included representatives from the four LASOs (Arts Etobicoke, Lakeshore Arts, Scarborough Arts Council, and UrbanArts Community Arts Council); Downsview Park Arts Alliance (DPAA) and other community arts and cultural groups. A Staff Report was presented to the Economic Development and Parks Committee outlining community-identified opportunities and challenges regarding community arts development across the city.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/edp/edp060116/it003.pdf>

At the January 31, February 1 & 2 meeting, 2006, City Council directed Economic Development Culture and Tourism staff to report back to the Economic Development and Parks Committee on opportunities to formalize a structure and that the stakeholders group be requested to further advocate the goals and objectives identified in the report. At the September 12, 2006 Economic Development and Parks Committee, Meeting 6, Clause 19 (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/edp/edp060116/it003.pdf>), Culture staff recommended Toronto Culture undertake a thorough survey of community arts stakeholders including community members from the 13 priority neighbourhoods, underserved neighbourhoods and groups, Toronto Arts Council, and youth and youth-led

organizations to determine implementation of the goals and objectives previously identified and to develop recommendations for strengthening community arts across all areas of the city.

In May 2007 Toronto Culture held a series of citywide community arts stakeholders consultations as a framework to gather ideas from community arts groups, artists and the broader community. Grounded on 2005 findings, the 2007 public consultations sought community input on four identified areas wherein services gaps were evident: funding, space for Community artists and organizations, resource-sharing and increasing the profile of the community arts sector. In October 2007, Culture staff brought forward to Council, the recommendation to develop a Toronto Community Arts Action Plan which would encompass ways to strengthen community arts across the city based on broad community input.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ed/bgrd/backgroundfile-8014.pdf>.

In this report Cultural Services staff in partnership with an Advisory body present the Community Arts Action Plan (Appendix 1).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Following up on the Community Arts Stakeholders Report, at its meeting held on June 19, 20 and 21, 2007, Council requested the Executive Director of Culture to undertake a program to expand community arts programming through the Local Arts Service Organizations to the point where funding is closer to that provided to the City's major cultural organizations. The review determined that the Local Arts Service Organizations receive 23 per cent of their total operating revenue from the City of Toronto. This compares to the average of 3.5 per cent of total operating revenue that the major cultural organizations receive from the City. Given the local nature of community arts activity, it is appropriate that the LASOs receive a higher percentage of their revenue from the City. The recommended Community Arts Action Plan presents recommendations to build Toronto's community arts sector and increase support for the Local Arts Service Organizations.

COMMENTS

Through the Advisory Body (see Appendix 2), a Community Arts Action Plan has been developed in partnership with Cultural Services. The Plan is based on community input gathered through focus group meetings and citywide public community arts stakeholders consultations. The Community Arts Action Plan outlines tangible steps to authentically address community needs. Implementation of the Plan will take place over the next five years. Implementation will be facilitated and coordinated by Cultural Services in partnership with the community arts sector.

Strategies presented in this report to enhance and support the Local Arts Service Organizations will further increase the sustainability of these anchor community arts organizations, (Arts Etobicoke; Lakeshore Arts, Scarborough Arts Council, UrbanArts

Community Arts Council). The funding strategy for the Local Arts Service Organizations is included in the Cultural Services Staff Report to City Council on the *Creative City Planning Framework*.

Community Arts Action Plan (See Appendix 1)

Background

Cultural Services' mandate for community arts is to develop and promote opportunities for artistic expression, arts education and audience development, and to encourage access to the arts for all. As stated in the *Culture Plan*, "Community arts is for the people, of the people, by the people," with a true spirit to include all Torontonians in participating in artistic opportunities to make Toronto a Creative City that is built on and "driven by people with ideas" and talents (*Culture Plan 2003, p. 30*). Community arts programs pull together people from all walks of life, diverse backgrounds and experiences, old timers and newcomers. They are key to promoting inclusion, social equity and healthy social change. Community arts foster future job growth in the cultural sector and creative industries. They develop audiences and strengthen individual and community resilience.

Community arts is characteristically multidisciplinary in nature and participatory in approach. The benefits of a community arts experience include enhanced community pride, bonding among participants, skills gained in addition to the artistic process itself including those specifically-targeted at employment.

Introduction:

Cultural Services strongly supports community arts. In 2005, following a City Council directive, Toronto Culture (now Cultural Services) conducted focus group meetings to map community needs. Based on community input, four major services gaps were identified:

1. Space – the community identified the lack of useable, affordable space of community arts activities as one of the major challenges for Toronto's community arts sector. One of the clearly identified needs is to develop the use of unconventional spaces.
2. Funding – overall concerns included the level of funding, funding models and criteria, equitable access and funding for sustainability.
3. Profile – there was a consensual perception of the need for raising the profile of the sector. Participants saw the need for the important role of community arts to be formally recognized, the success of community arts groups, artists and community members to be aptly acknowledged, and volunteer contribution to be formally appreciated.
4. Resource-sharing among community arts organizations, artists with the sector and with the broader arts community and the public.

Based on the above findings, Cultural Services conducted a series of public consultations in 2007 to:

1. Reach out broadly to beyond the participants who attended the focus group meetings in 2005; and
2. Further consult with the community on creative strategies to resolve issues identified through the focus groups meetings held in 2005.

Four questions, one for each identified issue, were asked during the public consultations. They were:

A. Enhanced & ongoing funding

What are some ways to increase funding for sustainable community arts development? In other words, what are some ways to enhance and/or maximize the use of existing funding for community arts?

B. Space

What are some ways that could open up affordable space for use by community arts and youth groups?

C. Recognition of community arts

What are some ways that could build recognition of the important role community arts play in building, developing and nurturing neighbourhoods? For example, how do we showcase success; how do we build the profile of the entire community arts sector?

D. Resource-sharing

What are some ways you that could improve resource-sharing among community arts groups in Toronto? That is, how to build on resources (programs, services, knowledge, etc) we already have?

Rich information was obtained through the public consultation sessions. Overall, there was the ardent wish from the community that the City take up a lead role in facilitating positive changes as identified through the consultation processes.

In order to come up with tangible strategies to address needs identified by the community through the 2005 focus group meetings and 2007 public consultations, Cultural Services staff worked with an Advisory Body that comprised individuals outlined in Appendix 2. A series of working meetings were held through 2008. The Advisory Body was charged with the responsibility of:

1. Reviewing in depth ideas gathered from the community and advise on what is further needed to build Toronto's community arts sector.

2. Help draft recommendations in order of importance to put ideas into doable strategies and actions.
3. Help identify what Cultural Services may facilitate in collaboration with external and internal partners to build the sector.

At the end of this process, the Advisory Body, in collaboration with Cultural Services staff, proposed a series of strategies that were incorporated into the *Toronto Community Arts Action Plan*. (See Appendix 1).

CONCLUSION

Implementing the Community Arts Action Plan will strengthen Toronto's community arts sector, which in turn, will further the *Culture Plan's* vision for building a socially and economically healthy urban community through the arts. Enhancing the community arts sector and support for the Local Arts Service Organizations will lead to a more vibrant community arts infrastructure, increased cultural wealth and resilience in Toronto's diverse communities and neighbourhoods.

CONTACT

Nadira Pattison
Manager, Arts Services, Cultural Services
Tel: 416-338-1263
Fax: 416-392-6834
Email: npattis1@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Rita Davies, Executive Director, Cultural Services
Economic Development, Culture and Tourism

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Toronto Community Arts Action Plan

Appendix 2: List of Community Arts Advisory Committee

Appendix 3: List of participants at the 2007 Community Arts Stakeholders Consultations held across Toronto