
City Council

Motion without Notice

MM32.39	ACTION			Ward:All
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Developing a Culture and Creative Property Tax Class - by Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Mayor John Tory

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

** This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate.*

Recommendations

Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Mayor John Tory, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with City Planning, Legal Services, Economic Development and Culture and other appropriate Divisions, to develop policy objectives and proposed eligibility criteria for the creation of a new property tax sub-class for arts and cultural facilities in Toronto, and to report back to the Executive Committee by February 1, 2018 for direction to include in a formal request to the Province for the establishment of such a class.

Summary

Arts and culture are central to the fabric and vibrancy of our City. Today 174,000 Torontonians work in the culture sector, including nearly 25,000 working artists who call Toronto home. These artists build skills for the new economy, support local businesses, and add dynamism to our City. The drivers of innovation in this field are mostly housed by small, incubator arts organizations, which provide space, support, and exposure to many independent artists, including women, people of colour, and indigenous Torontonians.

Examples of this include 401 Richmond, which is a vital part of the local neighbourhood, and an important landmark in Toronto. 401 Richmond has taken on new life as a pillar of the creative industry. The former factory is now home to producers in this age of creativity, rather than the tapestries and products of the past. The building's unique operating model, and protection as a heritage resource, have allowed a vibrant arts and culture centre to develop.

401 Richmond is just one critical example. In 2015, as part of the development of the Ontario Culture Strategy, the City of Toronto provided a submission to the Government of Ontario that requested the examination of a property assessments for designated heritage properties, as an effort to both protect these resources for the future, but also to encourage their maintenance for dynamic purposes including the arts, as opposed to just "highest and best use".

Earlier this year, City Council formally asked the Province to work together with City staff to explore ways to support arts and creative hubs and find ways to address the growing issue that has already, and continues to, threaten the sustainability and survival of these organizations critical to the fabric of our City.

Last week, after a year of work, the Province announced that they are prepared to work with the City to create a new property tax sub-class for arts and cultural hubs like 401 Richmond, subject to a formal request from City Council. Thank you to the Province of Ontario, the Minister of Finance and the Premier for the cooperation on this file that has brought us to the important point.

Ensuring that Toronto's arts sector continues to thrive is a critical step toward building a world-class city that is a destination for tourists and employers, and provides a great quality of life for all residents. With this announcement, the work of the creative hubs in our City can continue.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM32.39