

Deputation January 24, 2022

Presented by: **Jacoba Knaapen: Executive Director, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)**

Good morning Mayor Tory, Budget Chief Councillor Crawford and Budget Committee, Thank you for the opportunity for this deputation. The Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA) is a leading arts service organization that serves over 100 professional theatre, dance and opera companies in the city of Toronto. The membership is all-encompassing and ranges from commercial organizations such as Mirvish Productions, to national institutions such as the National Ballet of Canada and the Canadian Opera Company, to not-for-profit theatres including Soulpepper, Canadian Stage, the “Off-Bathurst Theatres”: Tarragon, Theatre Passe Muraille, and the Factory Theatre, also Crows Theatre, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and many many more venued and non-venued companies and emerging independent companies. The scope of work on Toronto stages is unparalleled, and is recognized every year as many of you know at the annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards, Canada’s largest and oldest professional theatre, dance and opera award show.

But the COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on Toronto’s arts sector. It has shuttered our theatres, cancelled, postponed or ended hundreds of productions, and impacted thousands of artists and millions of audience members.

TAPA recognizes that arts and culture are a crucial part of the post-pandemic recovery in Toronto.

SOME FACTS:

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- Arts & Culture impacts our economic growth; and contributes \$ 6.3 billion towards Toronto’s GDP (footnote 1)
- Arts & Culture helps to create vibrant communities: and brings health and well-being to neighborhoods throughout Toronto, and 89% of Torontonians believe that the arts make Toronto a better place to live, work, visit and create (footnote 2)

Today I am asking for three things:

1. TAPA is asking the city to commit to a new Culture Plan

- 10-years after the *Creative Capital City*, it is now time for a new Culture Plan for the City of Toronto.
- We are asking that the plan development include meaningful consultation with the community, including TAPA and our many members.

- The new Culture Plan would include clearly established targets for core initiatives, including but not limited to:
 - a. Programs and initiatives that remove barriers and align with the City's commitment to access, equity and diversity.
 - b. Investment in the form of annual funding increases to the Toronto Arts Council.
 - c. Enhanced outreach and grassroots engagement across the entire city through both community and professional arts activities.
 - d. Creation and preservation of arts space:
 - After nearly two decades, the lease agreement between Artscape and the Distillery District is ending, and the artists have been told that their office and studio space leases will NOT be renewed, and in fact they are being forced to leave six months before their lease expires. At this time of pandemic, artists are more vulnerable than ever and it is appalling that there is absolutely no protection for the arts workers and organizations who have contributed so much to the success of the Distillery Historic District.
 - In this time of space scarcity for arts organizations we need the creation and preservation of arts spaces including designating arts infrastructure as a component of development charges levied by the City on building developers
- e. We are also asking as part of the new culture plan for funding to be allocated to support the creation of a new **Live Arts Development Officer** position (similar to Film & TV Commissioner and Music Officer) to champion theatre, dance and opera.

2. TAPA is asking for the City to support our federal advocacy for Basic Income Guarantee

- Artists play a critical role in contributing to the social fabric of our society, and the pandemic has proven how critical arts and culture are to the mental health of all Canadians.
- There is wide-spread support for Basic Income Guarantee and recognition in how it will help to rebuild our Canadian economy. Now is the time.

SOME FACTS:

- 80% of Toronto's artists and arts workers believe they cannot make a living wage
- Half of Toronto's artists earn under \$30,000 per year. Nearly one in five artists have been renoctived, and 75% of artists or arts workers have thought about leaving Toronto (footnote 3)

3. TAPA is asking for the City to support upgrading infrastructure and safety supplies as companies reopen

- As part of the path to recovery, our professional theatre dance and opera companies need infrastructure support when it is time to re-open.
- Rebuilding our audiences is critical to our sector recovery. This will take time as the public slowly embraces live performance again. We need to regain their confidence by demonstrating that we are consistently compliant with all of the health protocols being legislated, and in order to do so, we need to be given assistance.
- Some of the most remarkable work on Canadian stages begins in smaller venues right here in Toronto, that are often historical buildings with very old systems in place.
- At the very least we need access to rapid antigen tests, PCR tests, anti-viral drug access, masks, and hand sanitizer. This is the very basic equipment that we require and must be distributed equitably to all companies in need, so that the public experience is consistent and reliable across all venues, no matter their budget or size.

Thank you for your time this morning and for your commitment to ongoing investment in arts and culture. We look forward to working with you ... we are going to need your partnership more than ever.

Thank you
Jacoba Knaapen, Executive Director, TAPA
jacobak@tapa.ca

¹ 4% of Toronto's GDP of \$158 billion. <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-at-a-glance/>

² 2018 Arts Stats: Why the Arts Matter

³ Arts Stats 2019 Going Without: Artists and Arts Workers in our Creative City, Toronto Arts Foundation