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September 20th, 2023

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of RISE Arts and Community Services, I am writing this letter to speak to the Economic and Community Development Committee about my life experience and the impact the investments the City has made towards the arts and community has had on myself and my community.

Growing up in Scarborough, our youth are raised on the notion and belief that we are from a poverty stricken suburban neighbourhood on the outskirts of the big city, with nothing good to be proud of, and to own our notoriously known identity of gang violence and shootings... and for the better half of my youth, I did. We experienced it, witnessed it, and paid for it until we finally woke up and chose to do something about it. I won't get into details, but death and traumatic experiences such as what happened at Danzig can either shake ones core to flee, or push someone past their tipping point to know that pursuing what you believe is right, is a do or allow many others to die or be harmed situation for you and your community. 2012 Was that year for me and many of my friends that chose to follow the path we did, and continue to do so 11 years later.

With the funding and mentorship we received from the live arts mentorship program, and cultural hotspot has truly helped to build the foundations for RISE to become the youth/arts/community serving organization it is today. The city took a chance on us, and it has provided returns that have saved lives, and birthed literal stars, and fully engaged citizens that are aware of their potential, purpose, and civic duties in ensuring we do not continue the vicious cycles that continue to cause generational harm onto us. The YCISI funding also came at a pivotal time for RISE and organizations like us, who are all working closely together to serve our youth and communities, to ensure we remain sustainable, and be in a position to share our experience of developing and maintaining our organizations with the next generation. It is funding that ensures succession in the arts/youth/community organizing sector happens without the loss of vital information and history.

We have countless stories of success to draw from, and so do many of the organizations that we work alongside us that we can all share as to why continued funding and investment into the arts and youth is necessary to keep the vibrancy of our communities alive and well. But I'll keep my case study about RISE specifically...



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If you were to go into any neighbourhood in the GTA, and asked the people: Would you believe a young black kid that was raised in Scarborough, who also moved around and grew up in Flemington, went to high school at Blessed Mother Theresa in Malvern, would grow up and create one of the most powerful movements this city has ever seen back in 2012. Who literally change the face and reputation of Scarborough during that time, and motivated others to see themselves in a positive light, have kids from as far as Brampton, Kingston, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, Jamaica, and the UK, travelling WEEKLY to see what we were doing here in Scarborough, instilling confidence in the youth to go out and try to create something good of their own, to speak up and contribute towards the cities Youth Equity Strategies, and inspiring young artists to sing and rap their hearts out, who you now are hearing on your radio's and streaming services today, earning Juno and grammy nominations, breaking world records, and doing world tours with John Mayer, or opening up for Alicia Keys, and someone who eventually becomes the First Poet Laureate of Ontario, would they believe you?

That person I speak of is Randell Adjei, my brother who is the founder of RISE... and all to say, if funding and investments into the arts/youth/and community was a small pebble from the operations budget of the city that was thrown into a pond, he and our accomplishments with RISE are just some examples of what the ripples in the water would turn out to be.

**Peace & Love,**



**Jason De Mata**  
**Operations Director, RISE Arts & Community Services**

