

TAPA Municipal Deputation to the Budget Committee at the city of Toronto

January 21, 2025

Presented by: annemieke wade: Executive Director, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)

Good morning, Budget Chief Councilor Carroll, Councilors Perks, Moise, and Saxe and members of the Budget Committee,

Thank you for hearing my remarks today. I am annemieke wade, the new Executive Director at the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA) and started two weeks ago. As many of you may well know, I follow in the footsteps of the remarkable Jacoba Knaapen, who spent 21 years giving deputations just like this one, asking the Budget Committee to recognize the performing arts as an integral and vital part of our city's cultural life.

TAPA has a diverse membership that represents 152 professional and not-for-profit theatre, dance, and opera organizations of Toronto, and while yes, we are predominately recognized as the producer of Canada's largest and oldest award show that acknowledges excellence on Toronto stages, the annual *Dora Mavor Moore Awards*, the role TAPA plays in the ecology of the performing arts industry goes far deeper.

I would like to thank this committee for your dedicated work on the new city culture plan: Culture Connects. On behalf of the TAPA membership, we appreciate your commitment to:

- An increase to the Toronto Arts Council funding of \$2 million annually for the next five years.
- An increase in Local Arts Service Organizations funding of \$1.8 million.
- Work across the sector to champion accessible, affordable, and sustainable spaces for artists to live and work.

Executing these pillars is paramount to ensuring that Toronto is included as one of the great cities of the world. Toronto is a creative city whose citizens work with ideas; we have an entertainment sector that attracts business investment and a sophisticated workforce. In preparation for today, I pored through decades of deputations, the TAPA Stats Report, Toronto led task forces dedicated to Arts & Culture, the TAPA Audience reports phase 1-4, and in my exhaustive research, one thing became apparent. Almost nothing has changed. Yet.

From a survey of facility needs published in September 2001, **Spaced ... Out?** By Sandra Tulloch and Catherine Smalley, I found a paragraph that could have been written last Fall.

"Rising rents or eviction notices are increasing in larger centres because of the booming real estate market. This creates workspace related challenges, loss of productivity, operational disruptions, and the loss of income for many artists and organizations. They are faced with shutting down their operations, loss of income as they relocated, sometimes staff layoffs."

We are all aware that Toronto is becoming less affordable and accessible, with housing topping the priority list for everyone, but those who create art face severe shortages of all kinds of living, creation, storage, and presenting spaces. Artists are struggling to find available, appropriate, affordable, and accessible space that satisfactorily fulfills these requirements for basic working conditions.

According to a 2024 State of the Sector – Policy report posted on October 8, 2024 by the *Ontario Nonprofit Network*, for the first time in 4 years, more than 60% of the arts and culture nonprofit subsector reported their revenues failed to grow or decreased:

- 76% less earned revenue
- 79% less individual donations
- 80% less foundation support
- 82% less sponsorships

<https://theonnn.ca/publication/2024-survey-policy-report/>

NEW DATA THIS YEAR: The top three expense lines that organizations reported increased by

- 70% in general administration costs
- 76% in salaries and benefits
- 70% in program, services, and activity costs

<https://theonnn.ca/publication/2024-survey-policy-report/>

With the austerity of government funding at all levels, the Toronto performing arts community is facing very real challenges. It is increasingly precarious to be an arts & culture organization in 2025. 42% of arts & culture organizations reported having used their reserve funds in 2024, and 22% do not have any reserve fund at all. Over half of arts, culture, heritage, and tourism respondents said they were at risk of not existing in the next three years.

Yet, a recent study released by the *Ontario Arts Council* reveals that 82% of Ontarians believe that an active local arts scene helps communities attract business. What's more, in the recent public budget consultations conducted by the city of Toronto, arts, culture, entertainment, and attractions were rated in the top five Toronto services selected for increased investments by respondents to the city survey.

Something that has changed is that the performing arts sector is heading toward an "economy of care". A care-led future is critical to ensuring a healthy sector, yet there are still countless individuals who cannot be an artist, have a child, or start a family because they live in the city of Toronto. Simply put, artists continue to be driven out of Toronto, while alarmingly nearly one in five artists have been renovicted. It doesn't need to be like this, our sector is a proven driver of economic growth, but more importantly it is the heart of community wellbeing, and this committee can cultivate the heart and soul of this city by adhering to Toronto's new culture plan in the coming years.

Culture Connects is an ambitious plan, and the initial new investments are a welcome start. This is the beginning of this process, not the end, and TAPA is thrilled to partner with the city on a plan that will fund our sector now so that artists and cultural organizations will have the resources they need to thrive today and into the future.

TAPA and its members believe in Culture Connects and we are eager to collaborate with you in 2025.