

# theatre GARGANTUA

Monday January 19, 2026

Dear Members of the Budget Committee,

My name is Jacquie Thomas, and I am the founding Artistic Director of Theatre Gargantua, a Toronto-based professional theatre company established in 1992. For more than three decades, Theatre Gargantua has created original, dynamic Canadian performance works that are rooted in this city and have toured nationally and internationally, representing Toronto's artistic leadership on the world stage. We have been supported by the Toronto Arts Council since our first year of operation, and TAC investment has been foundational to our longevity, ambition, and public impact.

I am writing to urge the City of Toronto to increase—and at minimum inflation-adjust—funding for arts and culture in the 2026 City Budget, with particular attention to the Toronto Arts Council. This is not simply a matter of sector sustainability; it is a matter of cultural sovereignty, civic resilience, and Toronto's ability to tell its own stories at a time when Canadian culture is under increasing economic and political pressure.

Arts and culture in Toronto are not discretionary amenities. They are essential public infrastructure. The arts generate employment, stimulate local economies, anchor tourism, and activate neighbourhoods. Equally important, they foster social cohesion, critical dialogue, and a shared sense of belonging in a city defined by its diversity. Companies like Theatre Gargantua employ artists, designers, technicians, administrators, and producers; we develop new Canadian work over many years; and we present it to audiences in Toronto first, before it circulates nationally and internationally. The cultural chain begins here in Toronto—and it depends on stable public investment.

In real terms, flat funding is a funding cut. Without consistent inflationary increases, arts organizations experience an erosion of capacity year after year: fewer artists can be hired, projects are scaled back or abandoned, and long-term planning becomes impossible. For Theatre Gargantua, whose work is research-intensive and developed over extended creation cycles, predictability and adequacy of funding are critical. The absence of inflationary adjustments places organizations like ours in a constant state of financial precarity, regardless of artistic success or public demand.

At the same time, unmet demand for arts funding in Toronto remains extraordinarily high. Each year, the Toronto Arts Council must turn away a significant number of strong, rigorously assessed applications due solely to limited resources. This means lost opportunities for artists, lost cultural experiences for audiences, and lost economic and social benefits for the city. Toronto cannot credibly claim cultural leadership while leaving so much creative potential unsupported.

This moment also demands a broader view. As global media consolidation accelerates and foreign cultural products dominate screens and some stages, municipal investment plays a vital role in safeguarding Canadian cultural expression. Local arts funding ensures that Toronto artists can create work that reflects our lived realities, our histories, and our future aspirations—work that cannot and will not be produced elsewhere. Strengthening this ecosystem is an act of cultural self-determination.

Increased investment in arts and culture is fully aligned with the City's Arts & Culture Plan, *Culture Connects*, and with Council's stated priorities around economic resilience, equity, affordability, and quality of life. Arts funding is not a cost centre; it is a multiplier that returns value across multiple policy areas.

I respectfully urge the Budget Committee to recognize the arts as essential city-building infrastructure and to commit to sustained, inflation-adjusted, and expanded funding for arts and culture in the 2026 City Budget. Toronto's artists have demonstrated extraordinary resilience. What we now need is a clear signal that the City understands the value of what is at stake—and is prepared to invest accordingly.

Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacquie Thomas", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jacquie Thomas  
Artistic Director  
Theatre Gargantua