



## **A Thriving Arts Sector Benefits All Ontarians Backgrounder - 2022 Provincial Election**

### **About County Arts**

County Arts' mission is to enrich the community by actively supporting and promoting the arts and artists as an essential part of life in Prince Edward County. As an arts service organization, we provide programs that benefit a membership of over 400 artists, galleries, arts organizations, and arts patrons.

Each year, County Arts' signature programs:

- generate over \$1 million in direct and indirect economic benefits including upwards of \$250,000 in art sales;
- are attended by 15,000 people/year;
- engage 50+ volunteers; and
- provide income-generating opportunities for 200 artists and arts businesses.

### **→ Ontarians benefit from a thriving arts sector**

#### **1) Economic development**

- Arts and culture activities in Ontario directly contribute \$25 billion annually to the provincial economy, representing 3.3% of Ontario's GDP.
- According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, "Arts, culture and heritage improve the ability of municipal governments to influence local economic development by attracting and retaining a skilled and talented workforce".
- 9.5 million overnight tourists participate in arts and culture activities while visiting Ontario, generating \$3.7 billion in GDP province-wide.

#### **2) Community well-being**

- 93% of Ontarians believe that arts activities help enrich the quality of our lives, and 88% agree that participating in arts activities builds a shared sense of community identity.
- Citing the proven health and social benefits of participatory arts activities, the World Health Organization has called on arts organizations to make health and well-being an integral and strategic part of their work. The power of the arts to comfort, heal, and connect us has become even more apparent during the pandemic.

#### **Local context:**

- In addition to being a major tourist destination, Prince Edward County is also home to a strong and highly engaged artistic community. The County was ranked 9th out of 100

cities in Moneysense.ca's "Canada's Best Places for Arts and Community 2017" report, due in part to our high proportion of workers in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector (3.1% in 2017 - on par with Stratford, ON). The County's 2016 Corporate Strategic Plan recognizes that "cultural amenities are an effective tool in the attraction of new residents, visitors and business investment when leveraged effectively."

- Local arts organizations create unique opportunities for residents to benefit from the arts as both audience members and participants. Examples include the Department of Illumination's festivals and County Arts' new Art for Well-Being programming, which prioritizes access to participatory arts activities for residents at higher risk of social isolation and mental health challenges.

### → **Arts and culture workers need increased support to recover and thrive during and beyond the pandemic**

The arts has been among the hardest-hit industries by the pandemic, with arts and culture workers facing myriad ongoing disruptions and revenue losses due to venue and arts space closures, canceled/interrupted artistic productions and events, and more. Economists predict it will take up to 5 years for the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector to recover.

#### **Local context:**

- These challenges are echoed by local arts and culture workers, with 64% of respondents reporting revenue decreases due to reduced tourist numbers in our 2020 Covid-19 impact survey. County Arts had to cancel signature events in both 2020 and 2021, resulting in a 63% decrease in audience engagement and a 50% decrease in earned revenues.
- In our 2021 Artist Survey, the top challenge to developing artists' practice was financial precarity. Suggested support included grants and other funding, and the adoption of a Basic Income Guarantee.

### **County Arts' #1 Recommendation → Increase OAC Funding**

The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) is the primary funder of the arts in the province, providing grants to facilitate the artistic and community-engaged arts activities of individual artists, arts professionals, and organizations.

**However, OAC funding has not been increased since 2009.** OAC's role as primary arts funder will be critical in the recovery of the arts sector, spreading even thinner inadequate funding levels.

OAC has a commitment to ensuring equitable access for everyone, with particular emphasis on priority groups including Indigenous artists. This aligns with the goals and values recently

adopted through County Arts' 2022-27 strategic planning process and our commitment to reducing barriers to opportunities for underrepresented artists in the Bay of Quinte region.

**Therefore, County Arts believes that the most effective and equitable way to increase financial stability for arts and culture workers is to increase base funding to the OAC.**

We echo the following February 2022 recommendation from the Alliance of Arts Councils of Ontario (of which we are a member):

*As both inflation and Ontario's population continue to grow, it is critical that the base funding for the OAC grows accordingly. By bringing base funding up to at least \$95M annually, the OAC can continue to ensure the short- and long-term recovery and success of the arts sector in Ontario. The organization's established and credible processes for disseminating funds, including through the use of peer assessment, should be relied on so that the arts community can ensure the best possible use and maximization of every dollar. Special funding must be available based on need and quality of performance as restricting support based on budget size disadvantages arts organizations in smaller cities and rural areas who desperately need assistance.*

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**Sources:**

- [What is the Return on Ontario's investment in the arts?](#)
- [Prince Edward County 2016 Corporate Strategic Plan](#)
- [WHO - What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?](#)
- The Culture, Arts, Heritage, and Sport [Economic Impact Model](#) (Government of Canada)
- [Financial impact of the pandemic on the culture, arts, entertainment and recreation industries in 2020 \(Stats Can\)](#)
- [US small-business recovery after the Covid-19 crisis](#)
- [Themes emerging from OAC's Strategic Planning Process \(February 2022\)](#)
- [Business Retention and Expansion Initiative- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation 2018-19 Report \(County of Prince Edward\)](#)
- [Covid-19 Recovery in Hardest Hit Sectors, Mckinsey & Company \(July 2020\)](#)
- [Ontario Arts Council 2016-17 Final Business Plan](#)