

Committee of the Whole Meeting - November 14, 2024

Comment from Janna Smith, County Arts (Prince Edward County Arts Council)

Good afternoon Mayor Ferguson and Members of Council. On behalf of more than three hundred County Arts members, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the proposed enhancements to the Community Grants Program being presented today.

Now more than ever - local government funding is essential to the survival of our arts communities, as provincial support for the arts has remained stagnant since 2009. Without reliable and meaningful support for the arts from the Municipality, our community stands to lose essential arts initiatives that heal, enhance lives, instill a sense of place and belonging, inspire joy and awe, and drive the economy.

This is why over the past year, we have been working hard to ensure the needs of local arts organizations are on the agenda during critical conversations, including the redesign of the municipal community grants program. This summer, we surveyed fellow Arts Councils to learn more about municipal support for their work, and surveyed local Arts Organizations on their needs.

Equipped with these learnings, we worked with Dominique Jones to propose and refine the idea of a Prince Edward County Arts Fund, something that both of our organizations have been envisioning for some time. We have been heartened by the commitment of both The County Foundation team and municipal staff to exploring and incorporating this unique and innovative arts funding approach into the proposed Community Grants enhancements you will be voting on today.

We did want to highlight that - based on past municipal community grant requests from arts organizations, figures provided by arts organization respondents to our 2024 member survey, and our knowledge of the local arts sector - County Arts initially proposed an annual funding amount of \$200,000 for the PEC Arts Fund - a figure that would adequately respond to the needs of local arts organizations, help the municipality meaningfully fulfill its commitments to supporting the arts, and bring enormous and wide-ranging benefits to our community. However, through the leveraging of this initial \$50,000 investment from the municipality through the MAT, we look forward to seeing the Fund grow and ultimately achieve this visionary target that reflects the assets and needs of our unique artist community.

I hope you will support this first step in an exciting journey towards an arts funding landscape that reflects the uniqueness and impact of Prince Edward County's artists and arts organizations. Thank you for your consideration.