

Deputation of Janna Smith, County Arts' Executive Director, to the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance, Dave Smith, during 2026 Budget Consultation December 3rd, 2025

My name is Janna Smith. I am the Executive Director of the Prince Edward County Arts Council. On behalf of our Board of Directors and the **341 members** that we represent, I am recommending that the government increase its investment in the Ontario Arts Council, whose budget has remained stagnant since 2009. This increase in investment will have a positive impact on job creation and regional GDP growth in communities across Ontario.

With arts and culture **outpacing the growth of key industries** such as oil and gas, wholesale and retail trade, construction, and manufacturing, increased funding of the arts should be a top priority in 2026 and beyond. It is well documented that:

- The arts attract high-spending tourists, improve community well-being, and are a **critical component of a diversified economy**.
- Ontario's culture sector is the **largest in the country** providing more jobs than real estate, auto manufacturing, forestry and mining COMBINED.
- For every dollar the Ontario Arts Council invests, \$25 in total revenues are generated by funded arts organizations. In 2024, grant recipients **added \$2.6 billion to Ontario's GDP**.

In Prince Edward County, the arts employ **2.3% of the workforce** — higher than both provincial and national averages. In 2024, our organization generated \$2 million in economic impact from a \$13,000 OAC operating grant - that's an outstanding return on investment.

But this is not just about numbers. It's about communities. **OAC grants reached 204 communities last year**- funding that is especially important to rural communities who have fewer opportunities to attract private investment. Since the pandemic, artists have moved into smaller towns, enriching community life, but also increasing demand on local arts organizations like ours. We are doing more, with less public support.

Consider this: Both Quebec and British Columbia invest \$265 per resident in arts & culture. Ontario spends less than the Canadian average of \$127 per resident.

Ontario has the talent and the cultural assets to lead the nation. But without adequate investment, we cannot compete with provinces that are already demonstrating a stronger commitment to the arts. With an aspiration that Prince Edward County be a global arts destination, I need the province to be a strong partner.

Please - invest in the Ontario Arts Council, so that artists and arts organizations across the province — urban and rural alike — can thrive. Thank you.