

## PRESENTATION TO COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE

November 30, 2015

AOE Arts Council – Kathy MacLellan (Chair of the Board), Victoria Steele (Executive Director) and Denis St. Jules (Vice-Chair, Board of Directors)

### Regarding 2016 Budget

Good morning, I'm Kathy MacLellan, volunteer Chair of the Board of the AOE Arts Council and have been running Rag and Bone Puppet Theatre, an Ottawa company for young audiences for 37 years. AOE Arts Council represents 400 artists and arts organizations from all corners of the City and for 28 years has worked collaboratively to build a dynamic arts community.

We were one of over 400 participants who joined with the City to develop the *6-year Renewed Action Plan for Arts, Heritage and Culture* approved unanimously by City Council in 2012. This Action Plan was designed to close gaps, meet emerging needs and enable a more sustainable sector by having comparable investment to other major cities. Now in 2015, we are half-way through this six-year Plan. While we are pleased that the City has made critical investments in arts facilities, much unfinished business remains to be done.

With other umbrella organizations from the festival, heritage, museum and arts fields, we have recently formed the **Ottawa Cultural Alliance** to strategically address shared issues and initiatives that will further advance the success of our sector. Collectively, the Alliance represents over 800 organizations and individuals working in Ottawa. **Investments in culture make sense.** Creative people are entrepreneurs who drive innovation and cultural presence is revitalizing our neighbourhoods. In Ottawa, 1 in 20 jobs are in culture and Invest Ottawa cites cultural assets as reasons to do business here. 90% of Canadians believe that arts and culture make communities better places to live.

We're here on behalf of the artists and groups who contribute to our community with help from City cultural funding and to encourage Council to address the outstanding \$3.8 Million in Action Plan investments starting with the 2016 budget. The City's own research demonstrates the solid return on these investments through leveraging revenues from other sources. For every \$1 invested by the City, another \$6 to \$12 is generated from sales, sponsorships, donations and other funding. Lower City funding means less social and economic benefit.

As a concrete example, my small theatre company gets an annual grant of \$14,000, which helps us convince the Ontario Arts Council to give us \$10,000. This enables us to raise money from the Community Foundation, and with this we are able to create a show and sell tickets

to families and schools. Last year, we reached over 20,000 people. One of those was a child on the autism spectrum who did not speak. As part of a school workshop, she made a puppet and when presenting her story, for the first time in her life, she began to speak. The arts show us new ways of seeing, and give us all a voice.

I am **Victoria Steele, Executive Director** of the Arts Council and I have the honour of working to help our City's gifted artists succeed. While we are pleased to see that culture remains a priority of Council and acknowledge the critical work done to make facilities a reality, the City is significantly behind the goals that it set out in the Action Plan. Artistic creativity and innovation rely on more than bricks and mortar. **We strongly encourage council to recommit and put its Action Plan strategy back on track and direct staff to find the resources starting with \$1.283 million in 2016.**

While the Plan contains many initiatives, the key to it all is the \$4.95 million Investment in base operating funding for over 300 groups and artists in the cultural community. This was to be phased in over the six year period 2013 to 18 and now at the mid-point only 22% (\$1.1 million) is in place. **And aside from an inflationary increase which we do appreciate, we are surprised that no new investments are currently planned for the remaining three years leaving 78% outstanding and serious questions about the integrity of the Plan.** At a recent meeting, close to 100 from the cultural community unanimously endorsed maintaining the integrity of the Plan.

Ottawa's local arts sector faces challenges, one being that the City's per capita community investments are 31% below the average of other major cities. In 2013 Ottawa invested \$7.22 per person compared to the average of \$10.50. **The 6 year Action Plan was intended to bring Ottawa up to that average.** Filling some of that gap in 2016 is especially important now with raised expectations for us in 2017.

The *Action Plan* is a unanimously supported joint venture between the community and City Hall. **Continuing to work together to deliver on this plan is vital to maintain the vibrant arts & cultural community that our city enjoys.**

**My name is Denis St Jules** and I am a retired broadcaster, a volunteer board member of the AOE Arts Council, a francophone committed to building a thriving Ottawa arts community. Arts funding is modest but can literally make all the difference from projects going ahead and jobs remaining in the City.

**We sincerely urge Council to support the requests of the Cultural Alliance to**

- **Honour the plan and unfreeze funding with a major investment in 2016**
- **And to work in collaboration with the cultural sector to help steer the plan forward.**