

OTTAWA CULTURAL ALLIANCE – ALLIANCE CULTURELLE D’OTTAWA

Collectively advancing Ottawa as a vibrant, cultural capital city/Progresser ensemble pour faire Ottawa une capitale culturelle dynamique

AOE Arts Council, Council of Heritage Organizations in Ottawa (CHOO|COPO), Heritage Ottawa, Ottawa Arts Council, Ottawa Festivals and Ottawa Museum Network

June 15, 2015

Mayor Jim Watson and Members of Council
City of Ottawa

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

Re: An important message about sustainable cultural funding

Our six Ottawa cultural umbrella groups are writing collectively as the newly formed *Ottawa Cultural Alliance* on behalf of our 800+ member artists, arts groups, festivals, museums and heritage organizations. We believe we can more effectively advance our sector’s success by working together to strategically address shared concerns and opportunities.

We strongly support the **2013-18 City of Ottawa Renewed Action Plan for Arts, Heritage and Culture**, the result of a valuable City-Community joint planning process undertaken by hundreds of invested cultural stakeholders and unanimously approved by City Council in 2012. Developed under the leadership of Councillor Mark Taylor and arts and heritage leader Dr. Lilly Koltun, this Action Plan was designed to close gaps, meet emerging needs and to enable a more sustainable sector by pursuing the goal of achieving per-capita average competitiveness for cultural investment with other large Canadian cities.

Now half-way through this six-year investment plan, our mission remains to work collaboratively with the City to complete it. This past Friday, Catherine Shepertycki of the Ottawa Cultural Services and Dr. Koltun provided a brief update on the plan at the Ottawa Arts Council’s Idea Exchange. While there are numerous Action Plan elements, the **key is an increase of just under \$5 million to base operating funding for the cultural community phased in over the six year period** (summarized on p.26 of the Plan, attached). Having recently analyzed the proposed 2015-18 Term of Council Priorities, we are very concerned with the level of investment indicated over the next four years, as it appears that completion of the Action Plan may be in jeopardy.

“On the canvas or on the drawing board...in the theatre or in the marketplace...our artists and entrepreneurs tell the story of Ottawa we all know and love. A city that is dynamic, progressive and capable of great things.”
Mayor Jim Watson, 2015 Ottawa State of the City Address

Ottawa is fortunate to have a Mayor and Council, as well as Invest Ottawa and Ottawa Tourism, who understand and regularly speak out about the demonstrable benefits accruing to cities that make cultural vibrancy a priority – economic, social, quality of life, innovation. There have been solid indications that the City agrees with these investments, especially now with raised expectations for 2017 in clear sight. The Ottawa Cultural Alliance is pleased to see cultural investments included among the 2015-18 Priorities but are **surprised to see levels of investment inconsistent with City messages and the Action Plan intentions**.

Reviewing the Term of Council Priorities (p. 110) as it relates to the Action Plan’s \$4.955 million in investment increases to the base over 6 years, we see that \$1 million was added in the first two years (2013, 2014) and an additional investment of \$106,000 is proposed for 2015 with no additional investments in 2016-18. If so, the increased investment in the Action Plan, as originally conceived, over the 6 years would be **\$3.849 million short of its stated goal**.

We recognize that these figures exclude the important major investment being made in the expansion and renewal of the Arts Court/Ottawa Art Gallery complex. We sincerely applaud the City for its leadership in ensuring that this much-needed work gets done. However, the overall dynamism and sustainability of the cultural community is more than bricks and mortar, the breadth of which is well outlined in the elements in the Action Plan. The City's cost of this facility was greater than originally anticipated and it is our understanding that the six-year investment strategy needed to be revised by the City to support it.

Factoring in the \$2.136 million increased operating investment in Arts Court/Ottawa Art Gallery shown in the Term of Council Priorities on p. 30, there remains a \$1.714 million shortfall to achieve the \$4.955 million Cultural Action Plan goal. **We sincerely urge Council to, at a minimum, ensure that this \$1.714 million be invested in the Action Plan's remaining three years with top priority placed on the Renewed Cultural Operating Investment Item #1 on p.26 of the Plan, originally intended to be \$2 million, and secondly on the two Cultural Facility items listed as #2 and #3 in the Plan. These two priorities would have the *broadest* impact across the cultural community.**

Cultural funding increases are top priority as City Cultural Services' own research states, "*direct funding to cultural organizations is the most cost effective way to ensure the delivery of quality cultural activities. Annual studies of the local, non-profit cultural sector from 2006 to 2010 show the direct leveraging effect of one municipal dollar of investment to be in the range of \$6.28 to \$11.70.*" Through its peer-assessment process, Cultural Services funding annually supports a diverse range of over 300 artistic, festival and heritage activities undertaken by individuals, not-for-profit professional organizations and community and amateur groups.

A key goal of the Action Plan is to ensure Ottawa achieves average per capita community cultural funding compared to other major Canadian cities. As an example, per capita arts and festival funding figures for 2013 provided by City staff, show Ottawa is below Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. The average is \$10.50/capita and Ottawa remains well below average at \$7.22/capita.

Clearly we have unfinished business to attend to and do not wish to lose momentum fulfilling the promises offered through the return on investment in Ottawa's own arts and culture community. The *2013-18 Cultural Action Plan* is a joint venture between the community and City Hall. A great deal of research and stakeholder input went into the Plan and following through is a demonstration of our shared ownership and commitment to get things done as a community at large. As the new Ottawa Cultural Alliance, we are compelled to champion its fulfillment as recognized by Council's prior unanimous support. **Having no further financial investment from the City in this unfinished plan over the next three years could call into question the credibility and value of our joint commitment to the plan, as well as the value of developing action plans of this kind.**

We look forward to working with members of Council and Cultural Services over the next few years to do our parts of the Action Plan, to reaffirm it as a strategic priority, ensure its continued implementation with annual assessments and then create the development of the next multi-year arts, heritage and cultural plan.

We concur with Dr. Koltun's comment in the introduction to the Action Plan, *Ottawa deserves to be a creative city.*

Yours sincerely,

Members of the Ottawa Cultural Alliance

Diana Carter, Executive Director, Ottawa Museum Network

Peter Honeywell, Executive Director, Ottawa Arts Council

David Jeanes, President, Heritage Ottawa

Catherine Lindquist, Executive Director, Council of Heritage Organizations in Ottawa

Carole Anne Piccinin, Executive Director, Ottawa Festivals

Victoria Steele, Executive Director, AOE Arts Council

cc. Dan Chenier, General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Arts, Culture, Heritage and Recreation Advisory Committee

Steering Committee Recommendations (Annual Increases to Base Operating)

(Subject to annual Council budget approval)

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
1	Renewed arts, heritage, festival and fair operating investment	\$ 330,000	\$ 334,000	\$ 334,000	\$ 334,000	\$ 334,000	\$ 334,000	\$ 2,000,000
2	Community cultural facility capital fund	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 1,500,000
3	Cultural facility operating funding	\$ 250,000 ¹	\$ 300,000 ²	\$ 150,000 ³	\$ 100,000 ⁴	\$ 100,000 ⁴	\$ 100,000 ⁴	\$ 900,000
4	Cultural development initiatives	\$ 150,000	\$ 100,000					\$ 250,000
5	Get the word out about local culture	\$ 100,000	\$ 50,000					\$ 150,000
6	Poet laureate program		\$ 25,000					\$ 25,000
7	Neighbourhood cultural initiatives		\$ 100,000					\$ 100,000
8	Cultural summit (federal/local)	\$ 30,000						\$ 30,000
	TOTAL	\$ 1,110,000	\$ 1,159,000	\$ 734,000	\$ 684,000	\$ 684,000	\$ 584,000	\$ 4,955,000

¹ Ottawa Art Gallery — as part of Arts Court Redevelopment (\$100,000) — pursuant to business plan; La Nouvelle Scène — Upgrade and Expansion (\$150,000) — estimate pending business plan² Ottawa Art Gallery — as part of Arts Court Redevelopment — pursuant to business plan³ Media presentation space — as part of Arts Court Redevelopment — estimate pending business plan⁴ Concert hall cultural partner — estimate