

TAPA Municipal Deputation to the Budget Committee at the city of Toronto

January 17, 2023

Presented by: Jacoba Knaapen: Executive Director, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)

Good morning Mayor Tory, Budget Chief Councillor Crawford and Budget Committee,

Happy New Year and Thank you for the opportunity for this deputation. The Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA) is a leading arts service organization that serves professional theatre, dance and opera companies in the city of Toronto. Our membership ranges from commercial organizations such as Mirvish Productions, to national institutions like the National Ballet of Canada and the Canadian Opera Company, Souleppper and Canadian Stage and many, many more. The scope of work on Toronto stages is unparalleled in Canada, and is recognized every year as many of you know at the annual *Dora Mavor Moore Awards*, Canada's largest and oldest professional theatre, dance and opera award show which is produced by TAPA.

Our sector has been amongst the 'hardest hit' by the pandemic and as has been frequently said, reopening is not recovery. Before the pandemic TAPA had 164 members, and we currently have 89 members, a reduction of 46%. The numbers tell the story on what is happening here in Toronto.

Just last week the Toronto Star featured a front-page article that focussed on the plight of dance artists in the city and the declining number of affordable rehearsal and performance spaces (**refer FOOTNOTE ONE**). This is supported by a recent report from DUO – the Dance Umbrella of Ontario that shows that less than 5% of rehearsal space is purpose-built with sprung floors for the safety of dancers. Last year at this very time, our sector sustained a huge blow with the announcement of the closure of the Case Goods Building in the Distillery District. After nearly two decades, the artists were told their office and studio space leases were not being renewed. This was a huge loss for arts & culture sector in Toronto and it was appalling that there was absolutely no protection for those arts workers or the organizations who contributed so much to the very success of the Distillery Historic District.

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In addition to the SPACE CHALLENGES, artists in Toronto are also facing personal financial precarity. I sit on the Steering Committee for BALANCING ACT, which is an organization that is working to create increased equality, accessibility, and inclusion for parents and caregivers working in the performing arts. Balancing Act maintains that "There are signals everywhere that the performing arts sector is looking towards creating an *economy of care*. A care-led recovery is critical to ensuring a healthy emergence post-pandemic for our sector". But I know many individuals who tell me that they cannot be an artist, have a child or start a family, *and* live in the city of Toronto. Simply put, artists are being driven out of Toronto. And ALARMINGLY nearly one in five artists have been renovicted; 75% of artists or arts workers having thought about leaving Toronto (**refer FOOTNOTE TWO**).

So I am here to say **thank you** for not making any cuts to arts and culture in the budget. And I am here on behalf of TAPA to ask the city to commit to a **new Culture Plan**.

Last year at **ARTS DAY AT THE CITY** we requested that the plan include meaningful consultation with the community, with TAC clients, with TAPA and our many members.

Well here I am again this morning, one year later, asking for a new Culture Plan that includes clearly established targets for core initiatives, that includes:

- a. Programs that remove barriers and align with the City's commitment to access, equity and diversity.
- b. Investment in the form of annual funding increases to the Toronto Arts Council, (which is an outstanding arts council!)
- c. Enhanced outreach and grassroots engagement across the entire city through both community and professional arts activities.
- d. And to create and to preserve arts spaces so that the city can take a leadership role in convening funders of cultural spaces to consider new policies that will protect investments in cultural space and pursue policy changes to protect individual artists, as well as arts organizations so something like the Distillery District never happens again.

We are also asking for funds to be allocated in the Culture Plan to support the creation of a new Live Arts Development Officer position (similar to what you have in the Film & TV Commissioner and Music Officer) to champion theatre, dance and opera.

Thank you for your commitment to the ongoing investment in arts and culture. With the recent city of Toronto election, we are entering a critical period with 9 new city councillors and we will continue our education and advocacy work at TAPA to build strong relationships at city hall that support arts and culture. The creation and preservation of arts spaces is a critical piece in our whole eco-system for our future health.

We look forward to working together with you ... we are going to need your partnership more than ever.

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Footnotes:

¹ <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2023/01/10/torontos-running-out-of-affordable-rehearsal-space-its-putting-the-citys-rich-arts-scene-at-risk.html>

² Arts Stats 2019 Going Without: Artists and Arts Workers in our Creative City, Toronto Arts Foundation

Additionally:

TAPA conducted COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEYS that provide more info.

Impact Survey #4: <https://tapa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-IMPACT-SURVEY-4-INFOGRAPHIC.pdf>

Impact Survey #5: <https://tapa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/TAPA-COVID-19-Impact-Survey-5-Infographic.pdf>