

November 18th, 2020

To: the City of Guelph Council,

I write to you today on behalf of Silence, the arts and performance space on Essex St. in Guelph. While this is a personal letter, I also write on behalf of artists, musicians, creators and community innovators in this great city of ours. I say that this city is great and that is an unwavering truth but it is so, in a lot of ways, because of the contributions of those arts workers for whom I am advocating. Today I am urging you to support the proposed budget request for the Community Investment Strategy as well as the Tourism Rebuild Emergency Grant. Both requests that, if implemented, will further support the programs, businesses, and people who make this city a great place to live.

The impact of the COVID19 pandemic has been devastating. Many of us have found commiserating to be helpful as we touted our “all in this together” mindset, but as the months have wore on, we have come to realize that there is a great deal of variety in how folks are experiencing the pandemic and how the many economic, social, and physical ramifications of this virus have affected individuals in different ways. One experience, however, that I believe is universal is the role that arts and culture workers have played in uplifting our spirits, fostering community, and inspiring joy, thoughtfulness, and creativity in others. Without arts workers, stay at home mandates would have been unbearable. When we’re alone, we turn to music, art, television, film, books, and online content to connect with others, to connect with ourselves, and to escape some of the crueler aspects of our collective reality.

While social distancing may have led to an increase in consumption, arts workers are often not reaping the benefits of this. Instead, independent artists, venues, community centres, and content creators are competing with an oversaturation of free digital content, and streaming services run by media conglomerates are raking in the funds while grassroots workers and creatives are struggling to make ends meet and stay connected to their audiences. Even before the pandemic, opportunities for independent musicians and visual artists to access fair wages have traditionally been few and far between. I’m proud to be a part of the vibrant and resilient community that is the arts and culture sector in Guelph. However, without support from the municipality and other funding streams, we will not be able to sustain the programming and content creation that our communities thrive on. As we all learn to continuously adapt to changing restrictions, new innovations, and the economic realities of a post-pandemic environment, there are significant challenges that we must work together to overcome.

By supporting the Community Investment Strategy and the Tourism Rebuild Emergency Grant, you are showing the incredibly hardworking people in these sectors how valuable their contributions are to creating an enriched community.

Sincerely,
Scarlett Raczycki
Executive Director
Silence Guelph

