

11 July 2025

To: Chris Kawalec, Program Manager, Community Development, City of Peterborough

CC: Joe Crooks, Acting Director, Culture Services, City of Peterborough

From: City of Peterborough Arts and Culture Advisory Committee (Bolanle Abodunrin; Katherine Carleton, chair; Deirdre Chisholm; Voula Halliday; Mauricio Interiano; Jeannine Taylor, vice chair; Gerry Vandenberg)

Re: Community Wellbeing Fund, report CS025-003

=====

We are writing, as you requested, to follow up on the various discussions and information exchanges that you have had with members of the City of Peterborough's Arts and Culture Advisory Committee over the last few months about the proposed Community Wellbeing Fund.

We sincerely appreciate the time you have taken to meet with us and to endeavour to address our concerns. Your commitment to your work and your openness to talking with us about it are really commendable.

However, as the unanimous vote at both our May and June meetings must make clear, we are unable to endorse the report as it has been shared with us.

Our major concerns can be summarized as follows:

The program design outlined in the Community Wellbeing Fund report that we were asked to consider is not appropriate for arts organizations and will not help to advance their work and impact.

A program that does have the potential to advance arts groups' work and impact, a pilot Operating Grants for Professional Arts Organizations program, has already been designed. However, the City has opted not to proceed with it at this time, and members of ACAC are concerned about further delays to its adoption. There is some history here. Following a recommendation from ACAC in June 2023 and a report to City Council in October 2023, the City asked the Art Gallery of Peterborough (AGP) and the Electric City Culture Council (EC3) to work together to design an arts-specific granting program,

with guidelines reflecting best practice. Additionally, the City supported a public consultation process and Arising Collective was contracted to design and lead the consultation and prepare a report on findings. AGP and EC3 undertook additional research and worked together to design an arts granting program for the City, intended to be launched in fall 2024.

We have now been advised that the proposed Operating Grants for Professional Arts Organizations program will be delayed at least until the new Municipal Cultural Plan has been adopted, and that its launch date is estimated for 2027.

As a result, we are faced with the prospect of arts organizations being lumped together with non-arts groups, and the same criteria and frameworks being used for both arts and non-arts groups. In the view of ACAC members, this does not feel like progress.

Because grants to arts and culture organizations have historically been awarded such a significant proportion of the City's project and investment grants each year, we feel very strongly that any new funding programs (including the proposed Operating Grants for Professional Arts Organizations and the proposed Community Wellbeing Fund) that potentially affect arts and culture organizations should only be introduced after the Municipal Cultural Plan has been approved by City Council. This will help ensure that arts granting programs are designed to reflect the City's long-term goals for arts and culture, and that they are complementary to the Community Wellbeing grants.

We believe that the elimination of multi-year funding commitments in the new program design is counter productive. While it may give the Grants committees more scope each year, it increases the workload of highly effective, stable and well-managed applicant organizations without providing them with any more capacity. Net result: grant dollars will not go as far and the beneficial impact on the community will be reduced.

We believe that the explicit elimination of operating support in the proposed Community Development grant program is problematic. Operating funding, in many parts of the not-for-profit ecosystem, is a goal that groups work hard to reach, deserve and sustain. It provides them with the ability to plan long-term, deliver excellent programs, sustain employment, and generate other revenue (including grants from other orders of government) to sustain their programming. Yet this report recommends moving away from it. While

we bring our collective concern to the specifics of the arts and culture field, this perception of the value of operating funding is not unique to the arts, and we would urge that this be re-considered.

For these overarching reasons, then, we are unable to support the recommendations included in Community Wellbeing Fund report CS025-003. However, we remain available to advise on alternatives that will help to address these concerns as well as the myriad of detailed issues that might arise in any adjustment of the framework that you have developed.

Like you, we want to support progress for the people, organizations and enterprises active in Peterborough's social purpose sector. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that the City's programs and services achieve this end.

Thank you for your consideration.