



POLICY

INVESTING IN THE ARTS

OCTOBER 4, 2021

Memorable cities offer a broad range of experiences to their residents and visitors, often anchored in the arts and creative sectors.

Cities that have future-proofed their economies have similarly used arts and creative sector initiatives to play a role in recovery and prosperity.

Calgary is well positioned to leverage its arts and creative sectors as we move toward becoming a more resilient city.

We must secure and protect our arts sector for the economic and health benefits it provides. For this reason, **the City of Calgary must begin by assembling a recovery fund of at least \$15 million to support artists and arts organizations.** These funds would be used for programming and other initiatives to support recovery in this vital part of our local economy. Funding will be primarily secured through partnerships with other orders of government, budget savings, and other innovative means.

According to Statistics Canada data, the arts and creative sectors represent a growing industry across Canada. In 2017, cultural industries accounted for 2.7% of national GDP and 3.6% of all jobs. That year alone saw significant gains in sound-recording, audio-visual & interactive media, and visual & applied arts. Culture jobs in live performance also increased by 2.4%. Furthermore, the creative sector provided 24,000 full-year jobs and contributed over \$2.1 billion in GDP to Calgary's economy in 2016.

There is clearly momentum and opportunity available through this sector of the economy.

In addition to economic benefits, the arts also play an important role in societal health and wellbeing. There are impacts to brain health, children's developmental milestones, seniors' health, newcomers' integration and Indigenous reconciliation efforts that rely heavily on investments in the arts.

It is well past time for the City of Calgary to bolster its support of the arts and creative sectors. After decades of reliance on private sector support, many artists and non-profit arts organizations were hit hard following the 2014 oil price collapse, as private companies scaled back their sponsorship and philanthropic support. The current economic situation in our city has highlighted that progressive lack of investment in the arts by our municipal government has placed our creative sector well behind any other major metropolitan center in Canada.

As a result, Alberta's arts sector receives proportionately fewer federal grant dollars than those of comparable provinces. Between 2016/2017 to 2019/2020, our province received \$3.04 in average annual grant dollars per resident from the [Canada Council for the Arts](#). Over the same time period, Ontario, BC, and Quebec received \$5.36, \$7.04, and \$9.30 respectively from the same grant program. **Calgary will continue to miss opportunities for creative sector funding if we do not demonstrate a commitment to the arts.**

We also have a situation where our provincial government has shown little interest in the economic, education, health and inclusion benefits that would flow from an investment in the arts. Municipalities are largely left to fund this important work on their own, with philanthropic efforts from community leaders and the private sector. **Fewer provincial matching dollars for arts initiatives has not only resulted in capacity gaps within Alberta's creative sector, cities like Calgary are further unable to tap into federal grant programs.**

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the disadvantages faced by Calgary's arts sector were becoming increasingly apparent, in terms of gaps in funding and support. Layering in the impacts from the pandemic, **it is estimated that Calgary's arts sector lost well over \$20 million in revenues from ticket sales, donations, sponsorships, and other income.** Well into 2021, these losses have certainly multiplied.

For the sake of our economy and collective wellbeing, we as Calgarians must nurture our creative sectors by investing in the arts.