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UNIVERSITÉ
UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

Department
of Visual Arts235 JOAN & MARTIN
GOLDFARB CENTRE
FOR FINE ARTS4700 KEELE ST.
TORONTO ONCANADA M3J 1P3
T 416 736 5187

F 416 736 5875

www.yorku.ca/finearts/visa

Professor Brandon Vickerd

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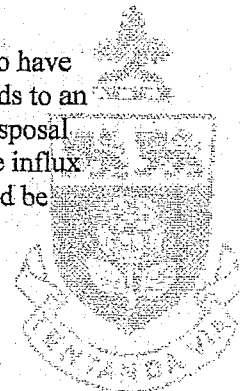
To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing this letter to provide my support and comments on the Community Consultation Report being presented by the Arts Funding Task Force. Although I would welcome the opportunity of providing my comments in person at the June 5th Hamilton City Council meeting I cannot attend as I am installing an exhibition in Denmark at that time.

I have thoroughly reviewed the report prepared by the Arts Funding Task Force and find it to be an innovative and thought provoking document that provides a detailed trajectory for further developing Hamilton's cultural vibrancy.

Before I comment directly on the report I feel it necessary to provide some personal background; I am an artist who has exhibited extensively across Canada and abroad, and participated in the development of cultural policy and public art programs in other cities such as Calgary and Toronto. In my role as a tenured professor in the Visual Arts Department at York University I lecture on the role of contemporary art in creating a sense of community and civic engagement. I moved with my wife and two year old daughter to Hamilton in October 2012, purchasing a home on Fairleigh Ave South. My first experience with Hamilton was courtesy of a solo exhibition I had at Hamilton Artist Inc in 2002, when I visited the city at that time I left with the impression that it was a post- industrial city with a downtown core that had been abandoned by the middle class. Ten years later I was invited to participate in SuperCrawl 2012. Traveling from my home in the Leslieville area of Toronto, I was stunned at the state of transition that Hamilton had experienced in the ten years since my last visit. It was apparent that a rich and vibrant art scene had emerged and was fueling a re-imagining of the downtown core. Based on this impression my family, like many other artists and professionals decided to make the move to Hamilton.

The decision of creative professionals to migrate to Hamilton is a phenomenon familiar to numerous writers and cultural theorist who have noted that a migration of the creative class into an urban centre leads to an eventual gentrification resulting in higher property values, more disposal income spent in the community and greater civic engagement. The influx of the creative class into Hamilton is part of a process of that should be supported and invested in. Hamilton is the only city in commuting


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distance of Toronto that is still affordable for young families, and over the next few years these young families will be drawn to the city, in part by the vibrant cultural life. As a direct result property values will rise, disposable income will be spent in the community and the demographic in the downtown core will continue to shift. This change will benefit the City of Hamilton financially and culturally, and as such a strategic investment needs to be made in order to support the arts community. Being an established artist with a stable income permits me the ability to live in Hamilton regardless of receiving support from the city; however if the cultural sector is going to remain vibrant a structure needs to be developed to support and encourage the arts and cultural innovation at various levels. This will be an incentive for less established artists and entrepreneurs to commit to living in Hamilton and participating in cultural industries. This investment permits artist and innovators to develop roots in the community.

The four main points that stood out to me in this report are the goals of 1) providing stable operational support to the creative community 2) encourage emerging and established projects, 3) building capacity and sustainability and 4) foster entrepreneurship. Having participating in the development of cultural policy in other municipalities and reviewed studies on similar policies, I am confident that these goals are achievable if the recommendations in the report are adopted. More important I believe these goals address serious shortcomings in Hamilton's current support of the arts. It is rather shocking that a city of this size, with a reputation as a cultural hotspot does not support its artist through an arm's length granting agency, nor a structure to provide stability in funding to the creative community. If Hamilton wants to benefit from its developing reputation and a creatively vibrant city, then it needs to invest in its creative class.

As a creative professional active in the Hamilton community, as an academic familiar with similar policies, and as a proud citizen of Hamilton I encourage you to adopt and support the report prepared by the Arts Funding Task Force.

Sincerely,


Brandon Vickard