



September 17, 2011

Chair and Members
Emergency & Community Services Committee
City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

On behalf of the Hamilton Arts Council (formerly Arts Hamilton) and its membership, I am writing to express our support for the continuation of the City of Hamilton Arts Awards into 2012 and beyond. Following the successes of last year's event, which was exceptionally well-attended and garnered much positive community feedback, the continuity ensured by renewed funding will reinforce the confidence this program has generated among participating artists, attendees and the sponsors who provided funding and in-kind services for the 2011 Arts Awards.

Since their founding in 1976, the City of Hamilton Arts Awards have entrenched the importance of civic recognition for artists who have contributed to the city's improvement and growth. Our artists are engaged citizens and community builders whose creative contributions have garnered national interest in Hamilton's cultural revival. The review and revisions approved by Council in 2010 were a timely response to this widespread public interest in Hamilton's arts and culture, one that sent a clear message to artists and the community at large about the City's appreciation and respect for the arts in our social and economic development. By contracting the Imperial Cotton Centre for the Arts to provide the necessary marketing, outreach and adjudication work required to update the Arts Awards for today's context, the City of Hamilton further acknowledged the professional value of their arts community by providing fair compensation for the delivery of specialized services at which our cultural workers excel.

A further strength of the Arts Awards in their current format is the recognition granted to emerging artists that bring their vital and innovative energies to the arts community. The sustainability of Hamilton's thriving arts community can only be ensured so long as we are able to attract and retain young talent to our field who will serve as future leaders in Hamilton's cultural sector, and the inclusion of emerging categories in the updated version of the Arts Awards is a significant acknowledgement of their indispensable contributions.

The City of Hamilton Arts Awards have built a valuable bridge between the City and its arts community, and successfully reinforced the core principle expressed in the Arts Awards' Values Statement, 'that the arts are central to our community's identity, economy, civic pride and sustainability.' The Hamilton Arts Council therefore wholeheartedly supports the recommendation made by the Arts Awards Steering Committee, the Arts Advisory Commission and the Culture Division of the Community Services Department to provide the funding enhancement required to deliver yet another successful Arts Awards program in 2012.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Vegh
Executive Director
Hamilton Arts Council