

JANUARY 21, 2025



# City of Toronto Budget Committee Deputation







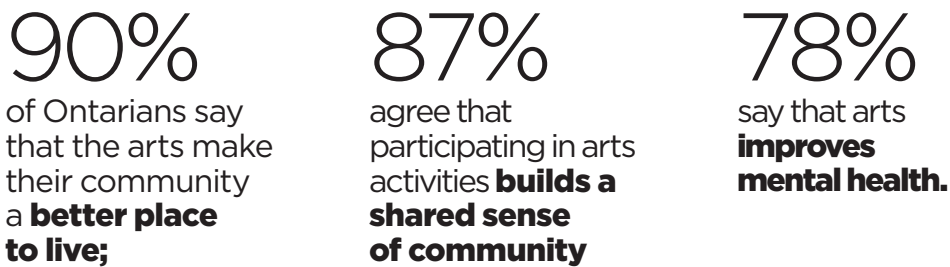
Newcomer and Refugee Programs:  
In 2024, TAC helped 24 newcomer artists gain a foothold in Toronto's art sector. The Newcomer and Refugee Arts Engagement program supported 10 arts-based projects to help newcomers tackle settlement challenges.



Animating Toronto Parks: In 2024, the Animating Toronto Parks program brought 877 artists to 295 events in 26 parks across the city's 25 wards, bringing together approximately 92,800 audience members. In 2024, 53 artists participated in Artists in the Schools through TDSBcreates, collaborating with 202 teachers in 122 schools across the Toronto District School Board, reaching 4,455 students.



# Arts are vital to a healthy city, its economy and residents



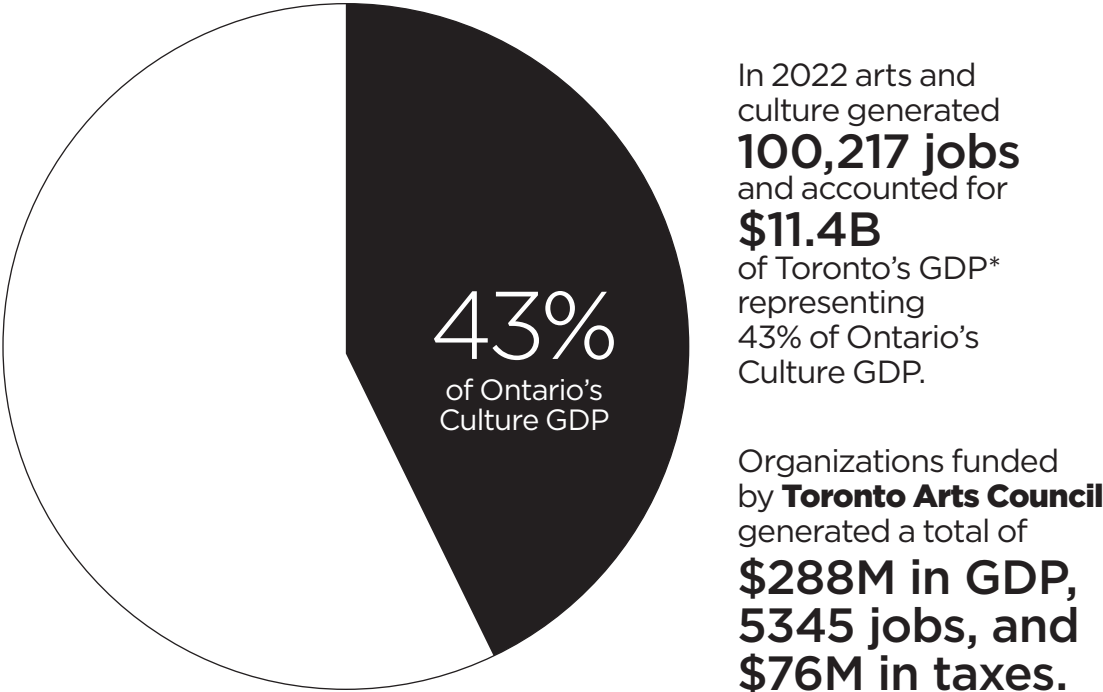
SOURCE: NATIONAL SURVEY, CONDUCTED BY NANOS FOR BUSINESS/ARTS AND THE NAC, NOVEMBER 2024

# Toronto Arts Council is a leader in equitable funding practices

- In 2024: TAC delivered \$23,853,422 to 379 artists and groups (\$3,699,713) and 507 (\$20,153,709) arts organizations; 26% of which were **first-time grant recipients.**
- TAC funding supports programming in **every ward** of the City.
- Grant programs for youth, newcomers, Black arts, Indigenous arts, and arts in schools, libraries, and public spaces support equity and access to the arts across Toronto.

SOURCE: TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL INTERNAL DATA

# Arts are a good investment



SOURCE: 2024 ARTS ACROSS ONTARIO, COMMISSIONED BY ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL AND CONDUCTED BY NORDICITY CONSULTING BASED ON STATISTICS CANADA, CANADIAN FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURE 2011. \*NOTE: THE CULTURE GDP CALCULATION MAY DIFFER FROM THE CITY OF TORONTO'S FIGURE DUE TO A DIFFERENT SELECTION OF CULTURE ACCOUNTS FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (NAICS).

# Artists need more

In 2024 Toronto Arts Council peer reviewers identified an additional 740 applications worthy of funding, representing \$9,210,911 in projects that could not be funded.

In 2023, over half (56%) of TAC funded organizations faced revenue losses totaling more than \$15 million. This marks a 50% rise in financial precarity, with a combined deficit over five times higher than in 2019.

In Toronto, 74% of individual artists and arts groups and 53% of arts organizations reported unstable financial situations.

SOURCE: TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL INTERNAL DATA

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SOURCE: \*2024 ARTS COMMUNITY PULSE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS AND CONTEXT RESEARCH GROUP (CRG)

# What we are asking

That the 2025 City of Toronto budget

**Approve 2025 budget investments that support urgent priorities of Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto (2025-2035).**

**Increase Toronto Arts Council's budget allocation by \$2M in 2025 (as part of a total increase of \$10M over five years).**

**Approve an inflationary increase to cultural grants of 2.5% in 2025 (with annual inflationary increases of 2% in subsequent years).**



# Kelly Langgard

DIRECTOR & CEO, TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL  
AND TORONTO ARTS FOUNDATION



OPENING NIGHT OF MELEKO MOKGOSI: IMAGING IMAGINATIONS (JANUARY 2023).  
COURTESY ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY. PHOTO BY DANICA PINTERIC (2024).

I want to thank Mayor Chow, Councillor Carroll, and City Council for your recent approval of Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto. This ambitious plan will be a game changer for our City in the coming years. We were honoured to be involved in developing it, and we are even more excited to help implement it.

**Viable careers for artists and creatives, healthy, stable arts organizations, and access to the arts in all Toronto neighbourhoods are in this plan's vision, and we are ready to deliver in all these areas, starting with increased support for the artists and arts organizations who are vital to our city's success, yet are deeply impacted by rising costs, income precarity, and lack of affordable space to live, create, and present their work.**

We recently partnered with the Canada Council for the Arts on a survey of our sector and the results were sobering, if not surprising. In Toronto, 74% of individual artists and groups and 53% of organizations surveyed reported unstable financial situations, with 89% of organizations reporting significant increases in expenses and 61% reporting revenue losses.

**Now is the time to invest and ensure their sustainability, and so we are deeply grateful for Culture Plan commitments to index cultural grants to inflation and increase TAC's base budget by \$10M over five years, starting with \$2M in 2025.**

The majority of these funds will go directly to Toronto artists and arts organizations in every corner of our city, augmenting the almost \$24M that TAC distributed in 2024.

**In 2024, TAC funding supported programming in every ward of the city through grants to 525 organizations and collectives, and 361 individual artists— 26% of which were first time grant recipients, which means that our funding is consistently reaching new and emerging artists and initiatives across the city.**

In Toronto, equity includes where people live, and we work very hard to make sure every neighbourhood of the city benefits from our funding. In areas where there are fewer arts facilities to fund directly, TAC has special initiatives and partnerships with libraries, parks, historic sites and schools to ensure that residents everywhere have access to quality arts experiences. **In 2024, TAC supported arts education programs that reached over 283,000 children and youth through operating program grants, and we also funded 53 artists to collaborate with 202 teachers in 122 schools across Toronto through our tdsbCREATES partnership.** 4,455 students benefited from this program, including in neighbourhood improvement areas, underserved communities and schools outside of the downtown core.



These numbers show how arts funding is a valuable cultural and social investment, but the arts are also a significant economic driver and job creator.

The Ontario Arts Council will be releasing a new economic impact study soon showing that the arts and culture sector contributes \$11.4B annually to Toronto’s GDP. The study also found that **Toronto Arts Council funded organizations generate \$288M of that GDP. These organizations also contributed \$76M in taxes in 2022, sustained 5,345 jobs, presented public programming to 6.3 million people, paid 20,000 artists and engaged 11,500 volunteers who dedicated over 242,000 hours of their time to our city.**

Beyond the numbers, we know that a healthy arts and culture environment in our city has so many other benefits. Public art transforms unattractive infrastructure into usable and beautiful community spaces, and it’s been well studied that creative placemaking enhances community safety, reduces isolation, and fosters well-being.

This is why the arts are fundamental to peoples’ lives and to a caring, vibrant city, and why it is so important that the 2025 budget makes new investments in the Toronto Arts Council, in the Local Art Service Organizations, and in other urgent priorities of the City’s new Culture Plan.



TAC was created by the City 50 years ago with a mandate to improve the quality of life in Toronto through the arts. For 50 years, TAC has been helping to build the capacity of the sector so that artists and arts organizations have the support and the opportunities they need to be city builders. **We firmly believe that the arts can help to address the big challenges that you are focused on solving as our city’s political leaders, for the benefit of all Torontonians.**

I want you to know that you can depend on the Toronto Arts Council to be a hardworking partner in your objectives and priorities.

SCARBOROUGH MADE , SCARBOROUGH MADE IN THE PARKS.  
FUNDED BY TAC'S ANIMATING TORONTO PARKS PROGRAM.  
PHOTO BY ZIYAAD HANIFF (2023).

[1] HILL STRATEGIES, STATISTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE ARTS  
MORE THAN 32,000 PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS IN TORONTO  
(HILLSTRATEGIES.COM)

[2] TORONTO INVESTMENT IN CULTURE [HTTPS://WWW.TORONTO.CA/LEGDOCS/MMIS/2019/BU/BGRD/BACKGROUNDFILE-124721.PDF](https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/BU/BGRD/BACKGROUNDFILE-124721.PDF)





# Sally Lee

BOARD MEMBER, TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL  
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT SCREEN FUND FOR BPOC CREATORS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CANADIAN INDEPENDENT SCREEN FUND FOR BPOC CREATORS

My name is Sally Lee, I am a proud member of Toronto Arts Council’s Board of Directors, as well as the Executive Director of the Canadian Independent Screen Fund for BPOC Creators. I also serve on the boards of the CONTACT Photography Festival, Wavelength Music, and am on the Advisory of the Reel Asian Film Festival - organizations which are all funded by TAC.

Over the course of my career, I have been deeply involved in the arts at every level, from working at grassroots artist-run collectives like LIFT, a co-op for independent filmmakers, to mid-size organizations like Soulpepper Theatre Company, and larger cultural institutions such as TIFF. At the risk of dating myself, I’ll also add that I’ve been playing bass guitar in various indie bands since the early 90s.

All told, I have spent over three decades working in the arts in Toronto, and I am here before you today with an abiding belief in the vital role of artists as catalysts for social good and as storytellers of our collective journey. The Arts connect us across differences, to our city, our communities, and ultimately, to each other.

**I would like to express our deep appreciation for the Mayor, Budget Committee and City Council’s ongoing investment in the Toronto Arts Council and by proxy, their investment in the artists and arts organizations that define and shape our vibrant and creative city.** I was called to serve on the TAC’s Board of Directors because I believe in what they do as an arms-length funder.

**As Toronto’s primary arts granting organization, TAC receives over \$25 million in public funding annually, of which 90% is invested directly in artists and arts organizations. TAC does this efficiently, transparently, and with an expansive and inclusive vision to make the arts accessible to everyone in Toronto.**

Prior to being invited to join the Board a few years ago, I had the privilege of serving on the Visual and Media Arts Committee together with other artists and arts workers. Participation on this committee for three years, reading proposals for operational and project funding from all sorts of organizations and artists from across the entire city was inspiring and also reaffirmed my belief in the peer jury process used by the TAC. **The kinds of questions and discussions that came up as we made decisions about the best use of public funds convinced me that all of us working in the arts are, in fact, city-builders. We WANT thriving communities and that is embedded in the practice of so many.**

Fifty years of public investment

has resulted in an incredibly diverse arts sector active in every neighbourhood of the city. And allow me to respectfully say that this has been done despite a level of investment that is modest compared to other comparable cities. Can you imagine what we could do with more?

**The Toronto Arts Council is a leader in equitable and inclusive funding practices that involve artists and communities in the decisions that directly impact them. We have our ear to the ground, know where the gaps and opportunities are, and are NIMBLE and RESPONSIVE.**

We are the only arts council in Canada to have a dedicated Black arts funding program, a program which was developed through community consultation and which provides wraparound supports that, beyond



REMARKS

the grant money, create pathways to success through mentorship, networking, and professional development workshops, for both adults and youth.

TAC's Newcomer and Refugee Artist Mentorship program played a crucial role in providing financial support and guidance to 24 newcomer and refugee artists last year. In actuality, we could have helped an additional 60 newcomer and refugee artists who sent in worthy applications had the funds been available to us. There is so much talent in every corner of this city.



NEILSON PARK CREATIVE CENTRE , *LINGERING GROUP EXHIBITION*. BY LAMIS HAGGAG, DILYS CHING, LAURENT GOOD, MARZIEH MIRI, MEER MAHMOUD, MOHA TAVAKOLIZADEH, NIMA ARABI, NIYA ABDULLAHI, SAGHAR BEHESHTI, AND SAHAR ALAMGIR . FUNDED BY TAC'S NEWCOMER AND REFUGEE ARTS ENGAGEMENT. PHOTO BY MIA BUONE (2024).

*BRITTNEE HABBIB*. FUNDED BY TAC'S BLACK ARTS PROGRAM. PHOTO BY NIKKI WESLEY (2024).





**The TAC supports creative community entrepreneurs whose goal is not profit, but intangibles like goodwill, sense of belonging, civic pride, and connectedness to others. These people know how to maximize the impact of every public dollar they get.**



As an example, I would like to tell you the story of Warda Youssouf. Warda is a community builder. Originally from Djibouti, she was a refugee for 14 years before finding a home in Toronto, where she has built a space for Toronto-based creatives through her grassroots collective House of Arts. House of Arts received funding from TAC's Animating Toronto Parks program in 2023 for a celebration of East African culture that took place at Guild Park and Gardens in Scarborough as part of the Toronto Arts Foundation's Arts In the Parks program.

This festival was a celebration of cultural exchange that embraced the beauty of diversity through art and highlighted one of my shared beliefs with the Toronto Arts Council and Foundation: that the creation and presentation of the arts should be accessible to all Torontonians.





Black Arts Program:  
In 2024, the TAC Black  
Arts Program had a  
budget of \$1,007,970  
and funded 53 artists  
and 19 organizations.  
Funded activities  
reached an estimated  
95,000 Torontonians  
in 2024.





