

KINGSTON VOTES 2026:
Candidate Survey on the Arts and Culture in Kingston

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How do you see the role of arts and culture in Kingston?

Arts and culture are how Kingston tells its own story. This is a city of limestone, history, and waterfront, but it is our festivals, galleries, theatres, music, makers, and heritage spaces that turn that backdrop into a living community.

For residents, arts and culture help build belonging by bringing students, seniors, newcomers, and long-time residents together through shared experiences. As a first-generation immigrant who arrived in Kingston as a graduate student, I understand how much a city's cultural life can help someone feel at home. It creates opportunities to meet people, discover different perspectives, and develop a connection to the place we live.

Arts and culture also contribute to individual and community wellbeing. Cultural participation can help reduce isolation, encourage lifelong learning, and make our community more inclusive.

There is also an important economic contribution. Artists, cultural organizations, festivals, and creative businesses support employment, attract visitors, animate our downtown, and make Kingston a more attractive place to live, work, study, and invest. In my work connecting researchers, startups, and local partners, I see how creativity and collaboration contribute to innovation. A vibrant cultural sector is part of what helps Kingston attract and retain graduates, entrepreneurs, skilled workers, and families.

For Kingston's future, I see arts and culture as an important part of a healthy, inclusive, and economically resilient city. They deserve to be considered alongside other essential elements of community wellbeing and local economic development.



What role should the City of Kingston play in supporting a sustainable arts and culture sector?

The City should be a constructive and reliable partner in supporting Kingston's arts and culture sector. While municipal government cannot solve every challenge facing artists and cultural organizations, it can help create conditions in which they can continue their work and contribute to the community.

I see four important areas for consideration.

First, predictable and accountable funding:
The City of Kingston Arts Fund is an important mechanism for supporting local artists and cultural organizations. During budget deliberations, I would want to understand the fund's current needs, the demand for grants, the pressures created by inflation and rising operating costs, and the results of previous investments.

I would support evidence-informed discussions about the appropriate level and structure of municipal funding, including whether greater predictability could help organizations plan more effectively. Any funding decisions would need to be considered alongside the City's overall financial position and other important community priorities, including housing, food security, infrastructure, and essential services.

Second, affordable and accessible cultural spaces:
Artists and organizations need places to create, rehearse, exhibit, perform, and gather. Rising rents and operating costs can make this increasingly difficult.

I would welcome discussions about whether suitable City-owned facilities, underused spaces, or appropriate heritage buildings could offer opportunities for cultural use. Any proposals would need to be assessed against practical considerations such as accessibility, operating costs, building conditions, and competing community needs.

My broader interest in housing affordability is also relevant here. Artists and cultural workers experience many of the same cost-of-living pressures as other residents, and affordability can affect a city's ability to retain its creative talent.



Third, practical and proportionate municipal processes:
Permits, bookings, and approvals can be challenging, particularly for smaller organizations and volunteer-led initiatives. I would be interested in hearing from cultural workers about where municipal processes create unnecessary obstacles and asking staff whether there are reasonable opportunities to improve clarity, coordination, or efficiency while maintaining appropriate safety and accessibility requirements.

Fourth, collaboration and consultation:
The City can help bring together artists, the Kingston Arts Council, educational institutions, Indigenous communities, local businesses, tourism partners, and other levels of government. Stronger relationships may create opportunities to share resources, reach new audiences, and attract additional support.

I would value the Kingston Arts Council's expertise and encourage ongoing dialogue with the sector. Ultimately, I believe municipal support should be guided by a clear understanding of local needs, realistic financial planning, and a recognition that arts and culture contribute to Kingston's social and economic vitality.

If elected, are there any actions you would take to help strengthen Kingston's arts and culture sector?

If elected, I would approach this work by listening to the cultural community, learning more about the City's existing programs, and identifying practical opportunities to make progress within Council's responsibilities and available resources.

1. Understand the needs and effectiveness of the City of Kingston Arts Fund:
I would seek to understand the fund's current structure, demand for grants, funding pressures, and the impact of recent changes. I would welcome input from the Kingston Arts Council and funded organizations, and consider that information during budget discussions. Where evidence supports it, I would be open to exploring ways to improve funding predictability and sustainability, subject to Council's collective decisions and the City's financial capacity.

2. Explore opportunities for affordable cultural spaces:



I would ask questions about how existing municipal facilities and public spaces are used and whether there are practical opportunities to accommodate cultural activities. I would also be interested in partnerships that could make suitable underused spaces available, provided the arrangements are financially and operationally feasible.

3. Listen to feedback about municipal processes:
I would encourage artists and organizations to share their experiences with permits, event bookings, approvals, and other interactions with the City. Where concerns are identified, I would raise them with the appropriate staff and explore whether improvements could be made without compromising safety, accessibility, or other municipal responsibilities.

4. Consider arts and culture in broader municipal decisions:
When relevant issues arise in planning, downtown revitalization, public spaces, tourism, heritage, and economic development, I would consider their implications for Kingston's cultural community. I would also look for opportunities to connect cultural organizations with local institutions, businesses, and other partners where collaboration could be mutually beneficial.

5. Encourage accessible and geographically diverse cultural opportunities:
I would support consideration of ways to make cultural participation more accessible to residents of different ages, incomes, abilities, and backgrounds, including people living outside the downtown core. I would welcome partnerships with neighbourhood groups, libraries, schools, and community organizations that can help identify local needs and practical opportunities.

6. Maintain an open dialogue with the cultural community:
I would make a point of hearing from a range of voices, including independent artists, emerging practitioners, established organizations, volunteers, and cultural workers. I would also want to understand how different groups experience existing municipal supports and where they see the greatest gaps.

My role as a councillor would be to ask informed questions, represent community concerns, work constructively with colleagues and staff, and advocate for solutions that are supported by evidence. I cannot guarantee particular funding outcomes or policy



changes, but I can commit to giving these issues serious consideration and approaching them in a transparent and collaborative manner.

Additional Comments

To Kingston's artists, arts workers, volunteers, and audiences: thank you. You contribute so much to what makes this city a place people want to live in, visit, and call home, often while navigating limited resources and considerable uncertainty.

I am not an artist or an arts administrator. I am a neighbour, a father of two, and someone who works in economic development. I recognize that I have much to learn from the people who create, organize, fund, and participate in Kingston's cultural life, and I would approach that responsibility with humility and an open mind.

I believe culture is not a luxury. It helps people maintain identity, share knowledge, strengthen relationships, and connect across generations. Those lessons resonate in Kingston, where our cultural life reflects both our history and the many communities that shape our future.

I believe the City should continue to recognize the contributions of arts and culture while making thoughtful decisions about how best to support the sector alongside other municipal priorities. That means listening to people with direct experience, understanding the challenges they face, and being honest about what municipal government can realistically accomplish.

If elected, I would welcome ongoing conversations with Kingston's cultural community. I want to understand what the City is doing well, where its processes could be improved, and what practical changes would make the greatest difference. While not every request will necessarily be possible, I believe respectful engagement and transparent decision-making are essential.

A vibrant cultural sector benefits the whole community. I look forward to learning from Kingston's artists and cultural organizations and working with fellow councillors, City staff, and community partners to ensure that arts and culture remain part of the conversation about Kingston's future.