

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?

I have a personal love for the arts. I am a painter, and before life circumstances led me into social services, my first choice was actually to pursue a career as an artist. So, when I speak about the importance of arts and culture, it comes from both personal experience and an appreciation for the role creativity plays in our lives.

Arts and culture are essential to Kingston's identity, wellbeing, and economy. They tell our stories, preserve our history, challenge our perspectives, and create opportunities for people to connect across generations and cultures.

Kingston has a rich artistic community, but I believe we have an opportunity to better reflect the full diversity of our city through the art we create, exhibit, and celebrate. That includes Indigenous artists, Black and racialized artists, emerging artists, artists with disabilities, and those whose work may not traditionally find its way into established galleries and cultural spaces.

I also see arts and culture as an important economic driver. Behind every exhibition, performance, or festival is an ecosystem of artists, framers, designers, technicians, fabricators, event organizers, and small businesses. When we invest in the arts, we are also investing in local employment, tourism, entrepreneurship, and Kingston's creative economy.

A thriving arts sector contributes to a thriving city. It makes Kingston a place where people not only want to visit, but where they want to live, work, create, and build a future.



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

I believe the City's role should go beyond providing grants or supporting individual events. We need to create the conditions for a sustainable arts and culture sector where artists and creative businesses can thrive. That means looking at arts and culture through the lenses of economic development, accessibility, community wellbeing, and long-term sustainability. I see three important roles for the City:

First, being a reliable partner. Artists and cultural organizations need transparent funding processes, accessible municipal spaces, and opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their sector. We should also recognize the challenges of rising costs, including studio space, materials, insurance, and exhibition expenses.

Second, creating opportunities. The City can be more intentional about connecting local artists to municipal projects, public art opportunities, tourism initiatives, festivals, and economic development programs. We should look for ways to create paid opportunities for artists, not simply ask them to contribute their talents for exposure.

Third, making arts and culture accessible and representative. During my time working at the City, I had the opportunity to help advance initiatives such as the Intercultural Arts Festival, which demonstrated how arts and culture can bring communities together while creating opportunities for artists to share their work and cultural identities.

I want us to build on that approach, ensuring our investments reach both established cultural institutions and emerging artists who may face barriers to participation. Ultimately, a sustainable arts sector is one where creativity is celebrated, artists can earn a living, and residents across Kingston can participate in cultural life.

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

Absolutely. I would focus on practical actions that increase visibility, create economic opportunities, and strengthen the infrastructure supporting our creative community.



1. Expand opportunities to exhibit and showcase local art. I would explore a coordinated approach to showcasing local artists in municipal buildings, community centres, libraries, public spaces, and participating local businesses. I would also like to see more opportunities for rotating exhibitions, particularly for emerging and underrepresented artists. We have talented people creating remarkable work in Kingston. We need to make their work more visible and accessible to residents and visitors.

2. Strengthen the creative economy and create paid opportunities. I would work with the Kingston Arts Council, Tourism Kingston, economic development partners, local businesses, and artists to explore new ways to generate income for our creative community. This could include expanding opportunities for local art procurement, connecting artists with businesses and developers, and exploring creative markets, exhibitions, and partnerships that allow artists to sell their work. Importantly, I want us to consider the full creative supply chain. When an artist sells a painting, there may be a local framer, printer, photographer, installer, gallery operator, or marketing professional involved. Supporting that ecosystem strengthens our local economy.

3. Improve access to affordable creative spaces. Access to affordable studio, rehearsal, production, and exhibition space is a significant consideration for artists. I would explore opportunities to make better use of existing municipal facilities, underused spaces, and partnerships with property owners and post-secondary institutions. We should also examine how arts and cultural spaces can be incorporated into broader community and downtown revitalization initiatives.

4. Build a more inclusive and representative arts sector. I would support ongoing engagement with artists from diverse backgrounds to better understand barriers to funding, exhibition opportunities, and participation. Our cultural spaces should tell the many stories of Kingston, including those that have historically been overlooked.

These actions align with my commitment to a Kingston that creates opportunity. I want to see a city where artistic talent is not only recognized but supported through meaningful economic opportunities.



Additional Comments

I want to thank Kingston's artists, cultural workers, organizations, and supporters for the contributions you make to our community. As someone who once dreamed of becoming a professional artist, I understand that creativity is more than a hobby. For many, it is a calling, an identity, and a livelihood.

One thing I would love to see is Kingston becoming known not only as a city where people come to experience art, but also as a city where artists can afford to live, create, exhibit, and earn a sustainable living from their work.

I also believe we need to broaden how we think about who belongs in the arts. Whether you are a painter, musician, dancer, sculptor, photographer, framer, curator, technician, or someone just discovering your creative voice, you are part of Kingston's cultural community.

My approach as Mayor would be to listen, bring people together, and identify practical ways to strengthen the sector. I don't believe the City needs to have all the ideas. Some of the best solutions will come from artists and cultural workers themselves.

Art brings people together, but it also creates opportunity. I want Kingston to be a city that values both.