

From: Liz Rowley <erowley@live.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, June 3, 2014 3:24 AM
To: kc@carfaontario.ca
Cc: Drew Garvie
Subject: RE: The Arts & The Ontario Election

Dear Friends:

Attached and below please find our responses to your 5 important questions concerning the arts in Ontario.

1. **How will your party support youth employment in the Province through a robust community-driven training/internship strategy?**

Youth unemployment is more than double the cross-Canada average. Even more worrisome is the employment rate with only half of young Ontarians having paid employment. For many more, low-pay, non-union and precarious employment in the service sector is the only option, either that or being forced to relocate to the West of Canada to work in the Tar Sands.

The Communist Party believes that youth have the right to decent employment. Part of providing this should be through an expansion of funding for the arts. The Communist Party also supports scrapping tuition fees at the universities and colleges as they are a regressive form of funding and increasingly a barrier to education, especially in the arts. Currently the fine arts, arts and social sciences are being underfunded in post-secondary institutions as privatization rolls forward. The gutting of fine arts programs and the charging of exorbitant ancillary fees for these courses must be stopped.

Part of expanding education and training for cultural workers and artists would be an expansion of apprenticeships in the sector. However, with an estimated 100,000 – 300,000 unpaid interns in Canada we support increased oversight, regulation and new legislation to ensure all interns and apprentices earn a living wage.

2. **Can you confirm your party's commitment to the arts sector by increasing investment in the arts through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport -- and key agencies such as the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) and the Ontario Trillium Foundation - - to bring Ontario to the national average, a minimum of \$89 per capita?**

The Communist Party supports increasing per capita investment in the arts to well above the cross-Canada average. Our party recognizes the right to access culture and leisure and this will require expanded public funding.

3. **How will your party strengthen the *Status of Ontario's Artists Act* through a consultative process to better address the financial challenges of artistic creation?**

Although the act recognized the contribution of workers in the arts and culture sector there are serious holes that leave artists vulnerable, and too often living in poverty.

The act needs to include collective bargaining for self-employed artists and access to benefits.

The Communist Party advocates expanding health care to include dental care, vision care, mental health care, pharmacare, and long

term care, which would immediately benefit those in the arts community who are without access currently.

We are also fighting for progressive tax reform based on the ability to pay which would shift the tax load onto the big corporations and the wealthy, and provide needed tax relief for working people, including those in the arts.

These policies would also help to overcome some of the shortcomings of the act.

4. **How will your party address the value of the arts through increasing arts education in schools?**

The Communist Party agrees that arts education needs to be reinforced and expanded at the elementary and secondary education levels. Central to this is the long-promised, but never delivered needs-based funding formula for education which would provide the funding needed to restore and expand music and the arts to the curriculum. This must include teachers who are qualified and certified to teach in these fields, and funding to provide for the costs of materials, instruments, and everything else necessary to the provision of a well-rounded and excellent arts and music education. The charging of ancillary fees (for the use of musical instruments for example) needs to be stopped.

In our view, a single, secular school system open to all regardless of religion or gender, will provide the best possible social and economic conditions for fully-funded and robust arts programming to be delivered in Ontario's public schools today.

Students also benefit from access to artists and the arts, and funding for arts education should include funding such opportunities.

Arts education should also focus on countering mass US corporate culture by developing and strengthening a democratic Canadian culture, including music, dance, theatre, film, literature, painting, etc

5. **How will your party invest in adequate and affordable facilities for artists and arts organizations?**

As arts organizations have amply demonstrated, public investment in the arts is returned many times over in economic terms. Tourists visit cities with a vibrant cultural life, and businesses invest in them. For every job in the arts, there are spin-offs in many other sectors, generating jobs and incomes for workers, profits for employers and tax revenues for governments.

The Ontario government should reverse its austerity policies which are starving the arts, and instead invest in the arts, and subsidize publicly owned venues for amateur and professional artists to work in, perform in, and exhibit in, across the province. These must be accessible to all artists, including artists from Indigenous and racialized communities, working class artists, Francophones and artists whose first language is not English.

The government should also provide subsidized housing and working space for artists to use; and protect existing spaces from being taken over and flipped by builders and developers.

The government should also introduce a livable Guaranteed Annual Income so that artists will be able to work full-time without having to be independently wealthy. The Ontario government - and the public - should protect TVO, CBC, the NFB, Telefilm Canada, and public broadcasting. These reflect Canadian culture and artists in Canada.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these important issues.

In Solidarity,

Communist Party of Canada (Ontario)