

**TO:** MAYOR & COUNCILLORS  
**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
**SUBJECT:** **BURNABY ARTS COUNCIL ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL**  
**PURPOSE:** To seek Council support for Burnaby Arts Council organizational renewal.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** staff be directed to contract consulting support to undertake limited and essential interim activities to support the Burnaby Arts Council in the absence of paid staff; as well as undertaking a review of organizational capacity, service delivery and funding opportunities, and structure an operating model, to sustain the organization into the future.

## **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

The City support for the Burnaby Arts Council (BAC) is aligned with the following Council-adopted policies, plans, and strategies: The Burnaby Economic Development Strategy (2007), the Social Sustainability Strategy (2011), the Benefits Based Approach (2023) and the Corporate Strategic Plan (2017).

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Since 2000, the City has supported BAC with annual operating funding of \$25,000 and access to a facility that is owned and maintained by the City. The City's contribution provides stability and service continuity while leveraging additional partnerships and funding to support BAC services and programs. With increasing operating and program expenses, BAC is facing significant financial and organizational difficulty in 2024. The impacts from COVID-19, rising costs, funding and sponsorship changes and volunteer challenges are some of the contributing factors. Across the province and country, there are a number of reports on non-profits having to cease operations or exhausted and finding it hard to continue operating in the current environment.

In June 2023, a period of financial distress prompted the BAC to make an emergency appeal to the Executive Committee of Council for additional funding to retain staff and keep programs operating. They were directed to work with City staff through the annual budget deliberation process. Since that time, the Executive Director has resigned, and the BAC has reduced its activities to contractual obligations and foundational programs. In September, the BAC made the decision to temporarily close the gallery, further limiting public programming.

The BAC is an important anchor for the cultural sector in Burnaby, focused on arts-based community development and young, emerging, and diverse artists. It is one of Burnaby’s only non-profit multi-disciplinary arts organizations whose membership is broad and open to all artists and cultural advocates in the city. The diminishment or loss of this organization will have a significant impact on the strength of the cultural sector in Burnaby, limiting opportunities for local artists to present their work and the variety of cultural experiences available to residents.

The BAC Board of Directors is committed to rebuilding; however, without paid staff and emerging from a crisis, there is limited capacity to undertake the full suite of activities required for long term sustainable operations.

Staff have included a proposal in the 2025 budget process to engage consulting support to work with Culture Division staff and the BAC alongside other stakeholders. Consulting support will be focused on providing limited and essential interim activities to support the board in the absence of paid staff; as well as undertaking a review of organizational capacity, service delivery and funding opportunities, and structure an operating model to sustain the organization into the future. A review is timely to address changes in the community, cultural non-profit sector and funding agencies and approaches and explore service delivery models and funding options. If approved in the 2025 budget, the results of the review will be brought back to Council.

**3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

The BAC is a non-profit and charitable organization, which has operated in Burnaby since 1967, with a mandate to promote, support and expand the arts. The BAC currently has a volunteer working board, no paid staff, and a membership of over 140 individuals and 20 member groups. It operates the Deer Lake Gallery in Deer Lake Park and provides a variety of programs and services, including monthly community arts exhibitions and special events. It is a unique non-profit arts organization in Burnaby. Since its inception, the Arts Council has experienced change, both in its organizational composition as well as in the programs and events that it leads. A constant has been its mission to expand cultural activity in Burnaby for emerging and early career artists and to ensure that artist development and support is occurring at a grassroots level in addition to the complementary professional programming at the Burnaby Art Gallery and Shadbolt Centre for the Arts. The BAC estimates that 80% of its audience and program participants are Burnaby residents.

The City has historically provided operating funding and in-kind support to the BAC due to the strong alignment between both organizations in cultural priorities. The City’s provision of operating funding ensures that the BAC remains eligible for funding through the BC Arts Council and other levels of government. Other revenue sources include BC Gaming, memberships, individual contributions, donations, raffles, sponsorships, and program fees.

Arts Councils play an integral role in arts development in communities across BC and typical municipal funding ranges from \$8,500 to \$231,000 and differs pending size of population, scope of services and activities and support approach through contracts, fee-for-service/operating agreements or grant programs. These organizations are often community facing and address community issues and priorities through the arts, fostering artistic vibrancy and nurturing pride of place.

**4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The City of Burnaby and Burnaby Arts Council will keep the community informed throughout this process. Updates will be provided through official channels, including the City and BAC websites, social media platforms, and eNews. Input from stakeholders, members and the public will be an important part of the review.

**5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Funding for this initiative will be included in the Draft 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan for Council approval. Any costs to be incurred in 2024 are anticipated to be minimal and will be accommodated within the approved 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan.

In addition, recommendations from the consultant’s report may have further financial implications that will need to be incorporated into future planning cycles.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Morrison-Clark, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

**ATTACHMENT** - None

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Yvonne Chui, Arts Services Manager, and reviewed by Emmaline Hill, Director Culture.