

**Deputation to City Hall, Sept 19, 2011**  
***Delivered by Karl Sprogis, Co-Chair, Arts Etobicoke***

My name is Karl Sprogis. I'm the Chair of Arts Etobicoke and a retired high school principal. I'm here on behalf of Arts Etobicoke, Toronto's arts community and as a co-sponsor of the Friends of the Arts petition, which has gathered over 15,000 signatures in 1 week.

The City NEEDS its investments in the arts. And INVESTMENT is the key word.

As a lifelong educator, father and grandfather, I know there are ALL kinds of kids – some are good at science & math, some excel in the arts and some are wonderful athletes. We need to motivate them all. I feel the same is true of Toronto and its residents – many interests compete for our support. But we need ALL of them to maintain a healthy city. I do NOT advocate for the arts INSTEAD of parks, libraries, police, public transit or housing. All are deeply inter-related aspects of a vibrant city.

Our role at Arts Etobicoke for the past 38 years has been to use art as a catalyst. We are often the 1<sup>st</sup> point of contact for newcomers trying to integrate into the life of the City. We provide FREE art classes, post secondary Scholarships, skills development, member services, unique programs and festivals for everyone from ages 3 to 93.

Here's one recent example: Last weekend At the Albion Library, Expect Theatre, launched Year 6 of urbanNOISE - a hip-hop Festival and youth Training program with a anti-violence theme. I can assure you – 6 years of sustained programming is almost a miracle!

And it was very gratifying to me to see the whole audience enjoying the creations of our youth who shared the stage with their heroes from the Canadian music industry. Over the years we have presented Jully Black, Drake and Jelleestone. This year we featured rising star – 16 yr old Reema Major. These are powerful role models.

urbanNOISE has helped change the perception of Rexdale –from the home of guns and gangs – to the home of the beauty, talent, and inventiveness of its youth.

I know, as a principal, when you give kids a paintbrush, they are not holding a gun. When you give kids a dance beat, they are not getting busy with a gang. When you give kids a voice – they tell it like it is, from their hearts. And this is the most valuable civic contribution that I can possibly imagine.

Toronto's artists contribute to every aspect of the city, inspiring our youth, creating jobs, beautifying our landscapes and fueling Toronto's economy through tourism, cultural industries and real estate values. The investment you make in us, we leverage many times over through corporate and private sources.

I am not a financial expert, but I do know what our organizations do when faced with similar budget challenges. Cutting expenses is the solution of last resort, because we know that if we cut too much of our programming, then our donors and funders will no longer have a reason to support us. So as a board, we re-double our efforts to increase revenue and try to be as creative at revenue generation as we are with program creation. Cutting our programming would kill us, so instead, we seek the lifeblood of our organization, which is our funding. In those difficult moments, we have to stick to our mission. I urge you to do the same on behalf of Toronto.