

## **INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT – still nothing...**

To no surprise cultural infrastructure was absent from the 2017 Ontario budget presented on Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup>. It is disappointing that the provincial government is not putting forward the investment needed to support projects province wide. Without significant matching funding from the provincial government, organizations might not be able to access the new investment on the federal level through Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. The current capital investment available from Ontario Trillium Foundation, once per year, is not sufficient to support the infrastructure needs province-wide.

There are other elements of the budget that might have implications on our cultural spaces, we will understand more as the fiscal year rolls on.

There was mention of Community Hubs initiative that the Province has been executing since 2015 which will see surplus schools being made accessible to the public benefit sector. This initiative could result in seeing arts and culture organizations finding spaces in these new “hubs.” ABO is following this project so that we can remain informed about the implications it might have for our organizations seeking space.

The budget referenced their proposed Fair Hydro Plan<sup>1</sup> that would see a reduction in charges of about 25%. This savings could apply to up to 500,000 small businesses province wide. We are interested to learn when this plan is executed if these savings are in fact passed on to our small to mid-sized organizations. They go further to describe measures that might support businesses<sup>2</sup>, but it will likely support large industries – much larger energy consumers than our mid-size to large organizations.

Accessibility Directorate got a budget increase from 17 to 20 million<sup>3</sup>, but there is no mention of any programs that might support accessibility infrastructure beyond Ontario Trillium Foundation. Federal funds have been increased for the Enabling Accessibility Fund and we hope that this small increase to the Accessibility Directorate budget might include funds to be accessed for capital infrastructure to match the federal funds that might soon be available.

## **CORE FUNDING SUPPORT**

We are excited to hear the new investment made to the Ontario Arts Council of 20 million over four years. We hope that this will go a long way in supporting our organizations. This was not included in the formal budget, but instead announced separately by the Honourable Eleanor McMahon.

The budget for the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport (MTCS) has been reduced from \$1.45 billion to \$1.39 billion<sup>4</sup>. This is disappointing news given MTCS just released their Culture Strategy in July 2016. Although we do not have the specific details around where these cuts will be realized, a reduction in budget does not demonstrate a significant commitment in executing this strategy. We hope to understand how this will implicate the culture portfolio within Tourism, Culture and Sport.

We did not see a written mention of Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) budget, but we are hopeful that the 25 million reallocated to the Capital 150 fund will be reinvested back to OTF. Because this was not

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<sup>1</sup> 2017 Ontario Budget, A Stronger, Healthier Ontario. The Honourable Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance. Budget Papers. Page 20

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page 23

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Page 240

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 241

confirmed or mentioned in the 2017 Budget, we reached out to MTCS for confirmation. According to MTCS this decision has not yet been finalized, so we cannot report for certain that the budget allocation has been recommitted but we are hopeful as other reports through ONN and Arts Advocate have reported that this is confirmed through their Ministry of Finance connections.

As provincial funding remains absent, ArtsBuild will continue to advocate for our organizations by demonstrating the need for a significant matching fund at the provincial level.

To end on a positive note based on the open data available through the Ontario Trillium Foundation for capital projects through Ontario 150, under the program area: Inspired People, it looks like 50 projects were supported ranging from \$5,600 to \$500,000, for a total investment of \$3,842,500. The projects looked to be evenly distributed throughout the catchment areas.

Finally, we would like to congratulate Place Des Arts on receiving 3.5 million from the provincial government towards the building of a new arts centre in Sudbury. This was a special request, not from a specific granting program. We have been in touch with the ROCS since 2011 on this project and we are so pleased that they have confirmed the investment of municipal and provincial funds towards the construction of their new space – congratulations!

You can view and download the 2017 Budget [here](#).