



## Council Member Motion

For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** March 11, 2021  
**From:** Mayor Helps, Councillor Loveday and Councillor Andrew  
**Subject:** Support for an Arts Hub Pilot Project

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### Background

The City of Victoria recognizes the need for increased support for arts and cultural spaces including the need for the creation of an Arts Hub. Council's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan included a goal of creating a "new Arts Centre" to serve "as a cultural hub". The 2018-2022 Strategic Plan includes two priorities related to the creation of an arts hub. The first strategic priority is for the City to "continue to support ongoing efforts to launch a Creative Hub" and the second is to "support arts, culture and innovation venues and spaces."

The *Create Victoria* arts and cultural masterplan also calls for the introduction of "an arts incubator or hub as part of the cultural spaces planning." Further, *Create Victoria* states:

Cultural clusters and hubs are a geographically defined area where there is a concentration of cultural activity which can include cultural institutions, arts and cultural venues, live-work spaces for artists, cultural businesses and creative industries. These hubs provide opportunities for public participation, the incubation of ideas, networking and cultural production. Cultural clusters and hubs can help regenerate neighbourhoods or downtown cores to attract new residents and services.

The City of Victoria had been playing a key role in discussions regarding the creation of an Arts Hub at 28 Bastion Square. This exploration is now out of the City's hands and even if this space is selected by the provincial government as an ideal site for an arts hub, it would be many years until the building would be ready for occupation.

Meanwhile, an opportunity has arisen which could help the City of Victoria quickly and cost-effectively achieve strategic priorities while not increasing the burden of work for City Staff. Theatre SKAM has put an offer to lease 851 Johnson Street, a space that could serve as a pilot-project for an Arts Hub. (See attached letter.) This space could potentially offer a new accessible black box theatre, office and creation space for arts organizations, rooms to rent, a script library, visual artist studio space, and storage of shared theatre equipment. It is also close to the Metro Theatre and the Victoria Conservatory of Music making it a good fit for the beginning of a small cultural cluster as defined in *Create Victoria*.

There is less than two years between now and the end of Council's current strategic plan. With City budgets tightened by COVID-19 and staff with already full workloads, this proposal from Theatre SKAM may be the City of Victoria's only opportunity to achieve an Arts Hub within this Council term. Supporting this project on a five-year pilot project basis with opportunities

to renew will allow our community to realize the benefits of an Arts Hub, while evaluating and planning for longer term needs.

We understand that there are other cultural spaces that also need funding and look forward to seeing the staff recommendations coming forward to Council at the March 18<sup>th</sup> 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting with respect to cultural spaces funding. We are bringing forward this application from Theatre SKAM at the same meeting as an additional and time-sensitive funding request.

Theatre SKAM has a limited time (six business days as of today's meeting) to secure the space at 851 Johnson Street to the benefit of the wider arts community. It is recommended that Council endorse this proposal from Theatre SKAM and financially support the project.

### **Recommendations**

1. That Council supports Theatre SKAM's proposal to operate an "Arts Hub" pilot project primarily focused on the performing arts.
2. And that Council grant \$40,000 in one time funding from the City's contingency budget and \$20,000 in annual funding for a period of 5 years from new assessed revenue, to achieve the City's goals of setting up an Arts Hub in downtown Victoria, and to help make Theatre SKAM's proposal financially viable.
3. That this recommendation be forwarded to the daytime Council Meeting of March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor Helps



Councillor Loveday



Councillor Andrew