



Dear Premier Pillai, Minister Streicker, MLA White, and MLA Dixon,

Thank you for your enthusiasm for the work of independent theatre companies in the Yukon and for recently supporting our production of *Jenny Hamilton - Teenage Cult Leader* with project funding, attendance at opening night (for those who were able), and for Minister Streicker's kind words on opening night. It means so much to us to know that you appreciate the work we do.

You might be interested to know that the show sold out its Whitehorse performances (590 of 590 available tickets), and we are headed to Haines Junction, Atlin, and Dawson City once we close at the Old Fire Hall this coming Saturday. This is our 6th mainstage production, and our 4th brand-new, Yukon-created theatrical work. Every Larrikin show, without fail, has attracted approximately 1000 Yukoners and has sold out, including *The Resurrectionists* in the middle of a pandemic. In short, our statistics indicate that we are consistently relevant to audiences and that we hold an important place in the Yukon arts ecosystem.

I'm writing today to ask you to consider increasing the amount of funding available in the Arts Operating Fund. I write to all of you because I don't see arts funding as partisan. The arts hold us all up to be the best we can be. The arts inspire us all to keep moving forward despite difficulties and hardships. Hopefully the arts will inspire everyone in the Legislative Assembly to divert some much-needed fiscal energy into a fund that has long been neglected.

Larrikin Entertainment recently applied to the Arts Operating Fund on February 15, for the 5th time, despite being told that there is no available money in the fund (again). I was told that it was almost 100% a waste of my time to apply, and that if I did apply, I should view it as an exercise to both experience the application process (again) and put the application in front of the arts council (again) so that they may be more familiar with our work for next time. It takes over 20 hours to prepare an application for AOF and, without operating funds to pay an artistic director to write grants, every one of those hours is volunteered. It is not a simple thing to prepare a grant of that size and importance. We will not be notified of whether our application was successful for a few more weeks yet, but I am almost certain we will not be funded. Not because we are not eligible or deserving, but because the fund is fully subscribed.

Most funds are oversubscribed, this is not an unfamiliar concept. We all understand that we are in competition for funding and, generally speaking, the most eligible projects are funded. However, this is not the case with AOF. This particular fund is fully subscribed to the point there isn't any money for new applicants at all, regardless of how eligible or worthy of funding they are. It's not a fair competition. New applicants are not given an equal opportunity for support because there is precisely enough money in the fund to support only the current recurring recipients. This puts the Arts Council in a difficult

predicament - how are they even supposed to evaluate new applications when they know it's an exercise in futility?

The organisations that currently receive annual operating funds from AOF are (almost) guaranteed to be perpetually funded, and the council does not want to fund them with less than they already receive (and need) annually. I would not wish that any of the currently funded organisations lose their funding as they are all doing phenomenal work, however there are others who are eligible for this funding who are also meeting the needs of the community by creating phenomenal art - and they are vastly underfunded in comparison.

Every year the YG arts funding administrators advertise the Arts Operating Fund deadline and encourage applicants to inquire and potentially apply. However, when applicants do inquire, they are told that the fund is full. Period. No available funds. Rinse and repeat. It has been this way for many years (over a decade). I have had the same conversation annually with various fund administrators and it never changes. With one exception - in 2020 there was a small amount of available funding - \$65,000 - but the council decided to give the currently-funded organisations a (well deserved) raise for inflation, and did not fund any new applications.

If the current AOF recipients are likely to continue to receive their annual funding, and there's no money to award annual funding to new applicants, and there's no more money being added to the fund, how is the Arts Operating Fund not an exclusive funding club for current members only? And how does one hope to acquire membership to such an exclusive club? An organisation simply had to exist and apply when the fund began and then keep re-applying each year in order to secure their funding. This is excellent news for the organisations who have that distinct advantage, but vastly stifling for newer organisations that are unable to benefit from the same privilege.

With the Yukon's population growth over the past 5 years, we should expect that there will be more demand for entertainment and arts and, as a result, more organisations requiring operating funds in order to successfully meet the growing community's demands.

I write today to implore you to consider expanding the available funding in the Arts Operating Fund so that organisations that are less than 30-40 years old might have a fighting chance to establish themselves on an equal playing field.

I have attached the rejection letter from the Yukon Arts Advisory Council from our February 2023 application to AOF. The council is quite clear that Larrikin is ready for operating funding and "well positioned" for our recent application in February. However, regardless of how ready the council thinks we are for this funding, they cannot award money that doesn't exist.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this very important matter concerning arts funding in the Yukon, and thank you all for the very important and difficult work that you do.

Sincerely,

Katherine McCallum