

ARTSVOTE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Cultural advocacy must embrace all parts of the sector, and resist divide and conquer strategies which threaten community solidarity.

The cultural sector is varied and diverse, with many competing and often conflicting interests. It must guard against efforts to weaken its cause by dividing its members—big against small, classical versus experimental, one socio-cultural group against another. The ability to understand the legitimate concerns and needs of interests other than our own is exactly what arts advocacy is all about, and can be our greatest strength.

The goal of cultural advocacy is the internalization of cultural values by municipal leaders, rather than the advancement of special interests.

Artists do not want politicians to do special favours for them, but to make decisions supportive of cultural practice because they are in the best interests of society as a whole. The long-term objective is to make such decision-making a normal and valued part of municipal life.

We are committed to non-partisan cultural advocacy.

Artists are united by their commitment to the value of art, not by partisan allegiance. Although individual artists are free to be politically active in any way they choose—including standing for office—the arts community as a whole must remain consciously non-partisan in its advocacy.

Artistic and cultural activity is integral to the life of cities.

Throughout history, cities have been the crucible for new ideas and artistic creation. The economy of cities in Canada is increasingly tied to artistic and cultural activity.

Municipal leaders at both the local and regional levels need to understand how decisions impact the arts and culture sector.

Cultural activity is intricately woven into the life of cities. How cities solve transportation issues, housing pressures, zoning problems, taxation needs and educational demands all have an impact on the arts and the relationship between artists and their publics. Politicians and others charged with municipal leadership need to be sensitive to these relationships.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that municipal leaders are informed about the arts and culture rests with the cultural community itself.

Artists and cultural workers must speak for themselves. Although they can benefit greatly from partnerships with a range of other sectors and interests, they are responsible for meeting their own advocacy needs.

Cultural advocacy is a permanent, year-round activity.

Budget considerations and the approval of grants are only the most obvious times in the year when important decisions are made municipally which affect the arts. Organized efforts must go on year-round to ensure that those charged with making decisions can recognize their impact on the cultural sector and be motivated to optimize their potential.

Cultural advocacy must be tied into the municipal electoral cycle.

Municipal elections are more frequent than provincial or federal elections. This encourages regular turn-over in community leadership, and provides a natural forum for public advocacy every couple of years. Giving cultural issues a high profile in municipal elections is central to the ARTSVOTE strategy.