

**WEA Public Consultation
Wednesday, March 4, 2009
WFCU Centre**

Event Summary

Approximately 40 people attended this meeting to learn about WEA's plans for the future and participate in shaping its direction. The Marlborough Elementary School drummers launched the event with an impressive and uplifting presentation. WEA President Carolyne Rourke outlined the plans and introduced board member Pat Lewis who led the question-and-answer portion of the meeting. James Patten (Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Windsor) was guest speaker and greetings were delivered by Pam Fenchak (Grant Review Team Member for the Ontario Trillium Foundation) and Caroline Postma (City Councillor) representing Mayor Eddie Francis.

Presentation Overview

Carolyne Rourke presented a framework for a new granting program that builds on WEA's pre-existing Arts Leadership Awards. The new program is multidisciplinary and has four main goals:

- To recognize and celebrate excellence in the arts and long-standing contribution to Windsor-Essex
- To support the arts infrastructure in the city by granting to arts organizations
- To support the career development of rising artists, along with public access to and appreciation of art
- To support the career development of rising artists and the development of the art form through mentoring

Rourke indicated that the granting program will begin modestly and will grow as WEA builds up its endowment. Guests were invited to comment on the plans, provide input and to volunteer to work with WEA in bringing the plan to fruition.

Pam Fenchak

The Ontario Trillium Foundation volunteer gave an overview of the role of the Foundation (an agency of the provincial government) to invest in healthy, vibrant communities. She identified Windsor as the "best kept secret" and referenced the role of WEA in contributing to making the community strong. Fenchak presented a plaque to Rourke and fellow board members.

Caroline Postma

Postma congratulated WEA on building up its endowment and on satisfying the scrutiny of OTF's rigorous assessment process. She recommended that WEA keep its profile high to inspire more people to get involved and lend support. She referenced the important role of culture in improving quality of life thereby creating an attractive environment for investors. She closed by indicating that the city is fortunate for WEA's presence, praising the capabilities of the organization and extending her best wishes on behalf of the city.

James Patten

Patten outlined the two "obvious" benefits of culture to a city: its role in generating cultural tourism; and its impact on identity. Cultural tourism is important particularly given our ageing population. As demographics shift in this direction there is a growing appetite for cultural activity. Having a vibrant cultural scene reflects well on Windsorites, indicating a level of sophistication on par with major international centres.

But most importantly, culture defines a place, highlighting what makes it unique. As the economy slows, this uniqueness begins to disappear but culture can sustain it. He talked about the arts as a platform for local content. At its heart it's about democracy. Culture is the real arena where everyone comes together to connect and interact. With the decreased role of the church, cultural organizations have taken on the role of bringing the community together to socialize. Here socializing happens in a non-threatening way that draws a diversity of individuals – across socio-economic lines. Cultural organizations can not be replaced, he said. They tie communities together over time.

Question & Answer Period

WEA board member Pat Lewis led the session, inviting guests to ask questions and make comments and recommendations. There was an hour of active participation from the group leading to a number of pointed comments and recommendations on the program framework which are highlighted below. Lewis informed the group that all input would be considered and incorporated into the plans going forward.

Cam Franzoi of Follow the Leader Foundation indicated his interest in partnering with WEA as his foundation also presents awards. He talked about his connection with the arts through his son who is a professional artist and operates a local gallery and his enthusiasm to become more involved.

Comment: James Patten referenced the dangers of spreading too thinly, suggesting a more refined focus to the program. He also suggested that the grants to emerging artists for the creation of public art might place a burden on the artists as the \$1,000 grant amount is insufficient to produce public art.

Recommendation: James Patten suggested the Kresge Foundation as a model for WEA as it alternates presentation of Awards every other year, allowing for a focus in a given year on a particular discipline.

Recommendation: Windsor Symphony's President Doug Fox suggested the inclusion of a Philanthropy Award given that Windsor is considered one of the most giving cities and that this would be a catalyst for increased philanthropy.

Terry Fink, LaSalle's Director of Culture and Recreation, asked about the geographic boundaries of WEA. Rourke indicated that the organization's work is inclusive of the Windsor-Essex region (based on the tourism model) and that a previous initiative, CarTunes on Parade even went beyond, to incorporate London and Sarnia, based on the AGW's model.

Recommendation: The Art Gallery of Windsor's president Veronika Mogyorody suggested an Award for Architecture & Urban Design. She said that this would help create a sense of place and identify the city as unique and indicated that the Society of Architects was unlikely to take on this role because it is preoccupied with the business of building.

Comment: Leona McIntyre of the Society of Representational Artists, a 70-member organization of emerging artists, commented that the \$1,000 grants to organizations would go a long way to helping the small organizations she works with to subsidize the participation of artists.

Lorna McCormack, Chair of the School of Media, Art & Design at St. Clair College wanted to know what role art students would play and also referenced the fact that there are few support mechanisms for musical theatre. Lewis explained that WEA is presenting grants, not scholarships.

Lois Smedick, a former WEA board member and architect for the MacLeod Award, commented that WEA's new program is presenting seed grants; that while modest in dollar amount they lend a level of recognition and credibility that young artists can put on their resumes and that they provide an opportunity to leverage additional funding by giving corporate partners an avenue to jump on board. She also cautioned against spreading the funds too thinly.

James Patten highlighted the distinction between professional and amateur artists, suggesting that WEA should review the Ontario Arts Council or Canada Council definitions to better understand the distinction (they both focus on funding professional artists) and then determine where to focus. Students would not fall into the realm of professional artists. He also cautioned again against expecting too much from young artists suggesting that the emerging artist grants should go strictly to professional development, i.e. not be linked to the purchase or production of public art as this would mean a donation on the part of the artist, which would contradict the intent of the

program which is to honour artists. He did speak to the role that WEA can play in leveraging funds for major public art projects, however, indicating that encouraging public art is indeed worthwhile. This led to a discussion around the 1% rule, whereby new buildings are required to allocate this small percentage of their building to art.

Composer and University Windsor professor Brent Lee spoke on behalf of the music community underlining the limitations of a \$1,000 grant to purchase or commission work. He suggested that investing in the future of artist, i.e. professional development, makes more sense.

Recommendation: An award for architecture or for performing arts.

Recommendation: Terry Fink suggested recognizing community partnerships as no one group or artist can do it alone. He referenced the success of LaSalle's Fire Art Festival as a good example of successful collaboration. He also suggested heritage as a category, referencing Toronto's Don Jail as an unusual and amazing example of the beauty and artistry of built heritage.

Evelyn McLean, Friends of the Court, Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre, drew attention to the collection of art by Windsor/Essex artists exhibited in the Essex County Civic and Education Centre. This collection instituted by the Arts Council Windsor & Region continued to increase under the direction of Al Linnell. Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre and City Hall are other sites where art is placed in public spaces.

James Patten spoke on behalf of discipline-based awards over other categories. He said that by recognizing and celebrating artists – as opposed to the people behind-the-scenes – we give a face to the arts and to the different disciplines that both raise awareness of the range of artistic activity and that feeds into the cult of personality, thereby drawing media attention.

Pat Lewis underlined the need to be constantly in the public eye and referenced WEA's custom of "dreaming big."

Mary Ellen Scully Mosna commented favourably on Cam Franzoi's interest in partnering with WEA and raised a number of concerns: the breadth of the program and the potential challenges of the jury process in this regard. She suggested that it needs to be honed down.

Pat Lewis told the group that all comments will be taken into consideration and summarized on the website. Someone suggested that the material also be posted to WEA's facebook page. Lewis indicated WEA's challenges as a solely volunteer organization to present a professional face. She said that WEA plans to apply to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for additional funding to improve the organization's ability to get its message out through the development of new online tools, marketing, etc. She invited the group to come out for the upcoming Walk for a Creative City, one of WEA's high profile community events. She also offered a tour of the new arena. This led to a

discussion about the building of the arena and the need to bring more art into the facility to accompany the sculptures on the first level.

Karen Kahelin, OTF's representative in the area, offered to convene a meeting, bringing everyone together to learn more about OTF and to look at ways in which to collaborate for the good of the community.

The formal part of the meeting closed at approximately 9:45am and guests stayed on to network and enjoy the refreshments.