

My name is Shauna Thompson, I'm a curator at the Esker Foundation Art Gallery in Inglewood and a member of the Public Art Alliance.

I wanted to be present today as a member of both the Alliance and as a cultural worker in Calgary's art community to place my support behind the Administration's plan for the Public Art program through 2019.

What I have seen since I was last standing in this spot speaking to you 8 or 9 months ago has been really encouraging. I've seen from the program a level of openness and engagement with the local art community that I haven't seen or experienced in all the years I've lived in Calgary.

It feels like we are being actively and thoughtfully listened to; I recognize points from engagement sessions that I've participated in being reflected back to me in the review documents, and I'm encouraged by it. The chance to both offer information to, and also to learn from the people who are invested in working for our civic public art program, has been exciting and enlightening. And I think the more chances for this kind of dialogue to happen, especially with artists involved, the better.

As much as the idea of continuing the freeze pains me as a cultural worker, I also recognize that there isn't a quick fix to the issues and concerns that have been raised over the course of several years. It's important to take the time to do this right; it's not about just figuring out a way to simply mollify people who loudly complain, it's about education, and building and rebuilding relationships--this can be slow work, but this is how we're going to move forward with success.

→ Artists as advocates → Councillor Keating's point about making work acceptable
I also just wanted to take a moment to highlight something that is particularly important to me, and which is included as a subpoint in the review document: that is the importance of the involvement of international artists with our public art program.

I moved to Alberta from Ontario in 2010 because of an amazing opportunity to work in my field. I was hired at The Banff Centre, which is foremost among other things, a residency-focused incubator for artists and arts workers of all kinds--and a particularly important place for visual artists--from Alberta, Canada, and throughout the world.

One of the things that makes Banff so successful and so important to artists is the bringing together of artists from all over the world into one place to live and work alongside one another. This creates opportunities that are hugely important

to contemporary artists: opportunities for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, the growth of professional networks, new connections which can allow their work to be shown in places outside of their home communities, and thus the potential to grow their careers.

Our public art program has been a place and opportunity for those kinds of wildly beneficial things to happen, particularly through programs like Watershed+. I want to make sure we keep sight of the importance of the involvement of international artists; that our local artists will benefit from their presence and work in our community, and also that international artists will benefit from us; Calgary and its artists have a helluva lot to offer.

Finally, but certainly not least of all, I'd like to thank you--members of council, staff, and my peers and colleagues who have participated in this process so far--for supporting this direction for the program. I recognize that there has been a great deal of pressure to address the various concerns around our Public Art program, so I appreciate the resolve, tenacity, and commitment to this process of making our civic Public Art program a global benchmark.

