



P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

## Item No.11.5.6

Request for Council's Consideration															
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Included on Agenda</b> (Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon Thursday)	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Added Item</b> (Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office by Noon Monday)	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Request from the Floor</b>													
<b>Date of Council Meeting: Tuesday, September 8, 2015</b>															
<b>Subject: Atlantic Fringe Festival 2015 Event Grant</b>															
<p><b>Motion for Council to Consider:</b> That Regional Council approve an increase of \$11,250 to the 2015 Events Grant to the Atlantic Fringe Festival, to bring the total combined grant to \$20,000 due to additional information provided in regard to the 25th anniversary celebration of the Festival, to be funded from the 2015/2016 Marketing Levy Special Events Grants Reserve account Q315.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Atlantic Fringe Festival information has come forward that was not known by the Special Events Advisory Committee nor Regional Council when recommending and deciding the previously approved \$8,750.</p> <p>Attached is the August 29, 2015 memo that provide extensive detail about the event as well as clarifying information about its 25th anniversary.</p> <p>Previously the Atlantic Fringe Festival: requested \$25,000 for 2013/14 (\$14,500 approved); requested \$20,000 for 2014/15 (\$14,500 approved); requested \$20,000 for 2015/16 (\$8,750 approved).</p> <p><b>Outcome Sought:</b> That the Atlantic Fringe Festival be provided a 2015/16 events grant total of up to \$20,000 in keeping with the new information and in particular reflective of the event's significant sustainability since 1990 thus achieving the 25th anniversary milestone.</p> <p><b>Financial Implications:</b> Budget Summary, Q315, Marketing Levy Special Events Reserve</p> <table><tr><td>Projected Balance March 31, 2016 (at July 31)</td><td>\$54,845</td></tr></table> <p>Budgeted Withdrawals:</p> <table><tr><td>Events:</td><td>\$ 977,800</td><td rowspan="2">(\$400,000 Hallmark allocation has been previously approved and \$466,250 MLSER Events. With pending to council approval We Day Atlantic Canada \$65,000 balance would be \$46,550)</td></tr><tr><td>Web.com</td><td>\$ 300,000</td></tr><tr><td>Misc.</td><td>\$ 8,000</td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td><u>\$1,285,800</u></td><td></td></tr></table>			Projected Balance March 31, 2016 (at July 31)	\$54,845	Events:	\$ 977,800	(\$400,000 Hallmark allocation has been previously approved and \$466,250 MLSER Events. With pending to council approval We Day Atlantic Canada \$65,000 balance would be \$46,550)	Web.com	\$ 300,000	Misc.	\$ 8,000			<u>\$1,285,800</u>	
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Councillor Steve Craig		District 15													

From: Thom Fitzgerald  
Atlantic Fringe Festival Director

To: Steve Craig, [Steve.Craig@halifax.ca](mailto:Steve.Craig@halifax.ca)  
Jennifer Watts, [Jennifer.Watts@halifax.ca](mailto:Jennifer.Watts@halifax.ca)  
Waye Mason, [Waye.Mason@halifax.ca](mailto:Waye.Mason@halifax.ca)  
Cc Paul Forrest, [forrestp@halifax.ca](mailto:forrestp@halifax.ca)  
Cc Elizabeth Taylor, [taylore@halifax.ca](mailto:taylore@halifax.ca)

Dear Halifax Councillors,

I'm writing to ask that the council review the 2015 MSLER grant to the 25<sup>th</sup> Atlantic Fringe Festival. The festival will be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary next week, and instead of seeing funding that reflects such a milestone, the festival grant was cut by 40% from last year's level. I understand from Councillor Craig directly and from comments he made on CBC today that the Special Events Advisory Committee made the decision to cut the festival's grant from \$14,500 to \$8,750 without reviewing the application and without receiving full information from city staff. In particular, the committee was not made aware that this is the festival's quarter-century anniversary.

When I received word from city staff that the grant had been cut, I tried to contact Paul Forrest but he was on holiday. I heard back from Elizabeth Taylor who offered me two distinct responses. Firstly, she said she had reviewed our application and that information that it is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was never included; this I knew to be not true but without a thorough understanding of the adjudication process couldn't fathom how that information could become omitted. Secondly, Ms. Taylor informed me that I could appeal to have the funding restored to the previous year's amount if I provided more information, but that this process could not take place until after the festival was over.

Funding after the festival certainly didn't seem like any solution. I opted instead to ask the public for financial support through "crowdfunding" on the indiegogo site, to try to make up some of the difference and allow us to maintain as much festival activity as possible. I included the grant cut and crowdfunding campaign in a press release and for better or worse it has become the main story of this 25<sup>th</sup> Atlantic Fringe, leading to Councillor Craig's interview on CBC Friday. I lament that the grant reduction is overshadowing the 200 artists and fifty plays that the festival will present to HRM audiences next week. Yet I see a positive side to public education about the grant process and I have learned more about the government's internal process through this diminished grant than I ever learned when it was increased. It has also been brought to my attention that the council overrode staff recommendations in opting to elevate funding for a rugby match from \$30,000 to \$50,000 swiftly and with no delay.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about Atlantic Fringe Festival. Don't let the name fool you, the artists involved are not fringe elements of society (well, most of them). Fringe is an artistic movement in defiance of the stuffy curated arts world. Fringe is an egalitarian art practice in which artists of great professional stature and newcomers and hobbyists are treated with equal respect, and presented on a first-come or lottery basis. Last year our

provincial Merritt Award for Best New Nova Scotian Play of 2014 was bestowed upon Michael McPhee's Atlantic Fringe play "Tribe of One", for example, and my work with the Fringe was cited by Arts Nova Scotia when awarding me the Portia White Prize, Nova Scotia's highest award for a career in the arts. At the same time, Fringe is the entryway to professional theatre for most new Dalhousie Theatre School graduates, and a great platform for amateur seniors to mount community theatre. It's the region's largest theatre event and for good reason. In my five years administering Fringe we've presented plays from every Canadian province, the UK, Germany, Norway, Zimbabwe, Australia, LA, NY and elsewhere, with local shows as our creative foundation.

Atlantic Fringe fights far above its weight on the national stage, and does so with a fraction of the municipal support. Calgary Fringe is similar in ticketed attendance and enjoys a \$30,000 municipal grant; Ottawa Fringe is not much larger in terms of ticketed attendance and enjoys a \$55,000 municipal grant. I'd thought with recent increases to Atlantic Fringe's municipal funding that some hard-won recognition of the significance of the festival had emerged within government and this seemingly arbitrary reduction has indicated otherwise. My overriding concern in the last month has been that this reduction is a setback from which the festival will need to claw its way forward for years to come. You can see that the festival's municipal grant increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to \$14,500 in a few short years—see as well that our ticketed audience increased from 2000 to 6000 to 10,000 people commensurate with the HRM grant increase. This isn't a coincidence. Atlantic Fringe's growth has been explosive and we have made those dollars count. Increase the grant and you'll see the audience continue to grow; we are far from meeting our true potential.

The Fringe philosophy requires that 100% of the box office goes directly to the artists. The festival cannot keep the money. So unlike the film festival, and just about any other type of festival, our coffers do not benefit from our success. Increasing our ticket sales by 400% in 4 years did not increase our operating budget by a penny. It did however increase income to a large percentage of HRM's actors, a local economic stimulus never achieved by, say, sending Paul McCartney home with a million dollar cheque.

Restoring the funds would allow this:

- 1- a deserved rate of pay to our lighting and sound technicians
- 2- increased paid advertising and therefore increased audiences
- 3- increased marketing materials like banners, cards, placards and thus increased audiences
- 4- a proper opening reception for our 200 artists
- 5- our Show Exchange program which allows Fringe artists to see each others' shows free of charge
- 6- our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Silver Ball, which otherwise will be downgraded to be our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tin Foil Ball.

I know you all well enough to know that you are good people trying to do the best job in what is clearly a very flawed system you inherited. So am I. I don't expect miracles. This festival is not my profession. I am merely a passionate volunteer, trying to be a good

citizen. The hundreds of artists, hundreds of volunteers and thousands of patrons of this festival deserve stable and consistent support from HRM.

Our indiegogo crowdfunding campaign has raised \$2,245 from 34 donors in 3 days. I am touched by the show of support from the public and hope that we will meet our fundraising goal by the end of the festival. Don't let the public's generosity dissuade you from using public funds to support the festival; every dollar will be used to further the cultural life of our city.

Sincerely,

Thom Fitzgerald

Cell [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]