



October 24, 2024

Mary Medeiros
City Clerk, City Clerk Services
City of Oshawa
5th Floor, Rundle Tower, City Hall
50 Centre Street South
Oshawa, ON L1H 3Z7

Dear Ms. Medeiros,

On behalf of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery's, I am submitting a letter in regard to Report ED-24-112, the Mural Art Evaluation Plan.

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery supports the recommendations of City staff and in the report made by STEPS Public Art that was presented to the Economic and Development Committee on October 7, 2024. With staff representatives on both the Public Art Task Force and Cultural Leadership Council, we have been involved in the discussions and process in commissioning the report and leading to this recommendation.

Murals as a form of public art are not strictly intended to be permanent. They require high annual budgets for conversation and repair, and as such they are typically considered temporary. Every collection requires care and maintenance, including the process of deaccessioning. The City has an ambitious, admirable plan to increase the amount of public art which takes into consideration the challenges faced with these aging murals and their replacement. It does not erode or erase the history of Oshawa or its residents' experiences. They can and should be well documented so they can be referred to and studied by generations to come.

With thanks,



Lauren Gould
CEO

lgould@rmg.on.ca

Thursday, October 24, 2024

To Oshawa Council,

I am composing this letter as a resident of Oshawa and a fan and patron of the arts. I love public art and feel it is an important part of community identity building and creates wonderful conversations, though sometimes difficult, emotional ones.

I have been watching closely as angry and upset posts have been shared on social media platforms about the mural program and changes. I noticed recently that Councillor Nicholson was asking residents to write to council with their opinions on the matter. I have sent this letter to council. A councillor responded to that email to request I send this letter on to Clerks so that it might be included in other formats, so I am forwarding this letter on for this purpose.

I am sure you have received many letters and emails from residents who want to somehow save the murals. While I understand that reaction, it struck me that you may not receive letters from people who agree with the decision, while in fact there may be more in the public who do agree with deaccessioning. So, I am writing to support their removal.

There are many personal and subjective reasons I would prefer the murals be replaced. But I am not going to list those reasons, however.

Art is highly personal, and I feel personal preferences for art and opinions are not the priority in this case. Not mine, not anyone's. I don't believe the content of the murals should be the primary consideration.

Some of the public's emotions about these murals demonstrate that the murals have served a very good purpose and done their job in the community. But their role has been completed. Much like when a favourite athlete retires, it is sad, but you would not look back and change the accomplishments. We must look at these outdoor works subject to the weather in the same way. They have had a good run, and are ready to retire.

What matters now is the state and quality of the murals. They are not in good condition. The practicalities of maintaining decrepit, faded murals has been considered and a recommendation has been made by experts.

Extending this decision based on emotional ties to the art itself rather than the actual practical issues and solutions is a mistake that will cost taxpayers even more money in the long run.

By deaccessioning these murals and replacing them we have an opportunity to tell our history in new ways; inclusive ways, interesting and creative ways, that speak to today's residents of Oshawa, forming new, exciting and meaningful emotional ties between residents and this city.

If done well, hopefully Oshawa's residents can be sad again in 30 years when the new murals are at the end of their life. That is a measure of success in some ways, isn't it? To miss things that have gone away?

I support the decision of council to follow expert advice, research, and feedback gathered already from residents. Deaccession the murals that need it, and replace them.

Thank you,

Jacquie Severs, a resident of Ward 4