

**Letters to the editor**

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Little mention of the arts by leaders

Re: Leaders' dance chills Kain

I appreciated Martin Knelman's important article yesterday.

Echoing Karen Kain, I find it very disturbing that there has been so little mention of the arts in this federal campaign — especially by party leaders.

The unique, diverse array of incredible talent in Toronto makes this a city that people the world over want to live in. Culture really is the heartbeat of Toronto. This silence highlights the fact that Toronto's issues have had little prominence in the election.

As with many arts groups in Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council vigorously supported the Canadian Arts Coalition in lobbying for extra funding to the Canada Council. We were heartened by the announcement of more than \$300 million in new funding — a move long overdue. As the largest cultural centre in Canada, Ottawa's funding has a huge impact on Toronto — on artists, arts organizations and on the public who enjoy access to an enormous breadth of talent and activity because of this investment in one of Canada's most significant industries.

In fact, more than 100,000 people — or 8.3 per cent of Toronto's workforce — are employed in the cultural industries. What's more, attendance at cultural events in the city of Toronto is more than 10 million each year and cultural visitors accounted for 34 per cent of tourism spending in Ontario. So obviously, this is no small issue for Toronto.

As one way to address this, we have asked each of Toronto's 88 candidates in the four major parties to spell out their position on the arts and on this crucial funding issue, in particular. The Toronto Arts Coalition, a project of Toronto Arts Council Foundation, will publish the results on Monday Jan. 16.

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