

February 7, 2018

To the committee members reviewing the Western Canada Lottery Act:

My name is Eli Purchase and I've lived in the Northwest Territories all my life. I've been in Yellowknife for the last eight years and I'm looking forward to raising my child here.

I want to start by thanking the GNWT for reviewing this very important legislation and providing us all an opportunity to come here today to voice our opinions. I also want to thank everyone who is here to show support and speak out for their priorities. Engagement in the governance process is incredibly important and everyone here should be commended. Thanks to everyone here supporting my view that lottery funding should be available to the arts, but also thank you to everyone from the sports community. The health and wellbeing provided by sport is very important and the work you do to ensure the wide variety of options available for kids, adults and elders is crucial to the people of the territory.

I am here today to speak in support of amending the lottery act to allow art as an activity that can be supported by lottery revenues. In other jurisdictions across Canada lottery funding is available not only to Arts, Sport and Recreation, but also health and education initiatives. Yukon, BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec all follow this format. Saskatchewan funds Indigenous culture and traditional activities that includes art. The Atlantic Provinces use lottery funding as general revenues which are unrestricted. Yukon has ticket sales that are almost 40% less than the NWT, yet use a large portion of its revenues on the Arts. While I understand the importance of this funding to sport, it is also of critical importance to supporting a vibrant artistic community in the territory.

I am not asking that a specific amount of funding go to the arts. I am not demanding that we match Yukon's level of support as such a change would be devastating to sport in the NWT. I am simply asking that the legislation be changed to allow the arts to be considered in funding decisions. Whether it is allowing arts organizations in the territory submit proposals to the current review system, or providing a small amount of funding directly to existing arts funding programs in ITI, ECE, or the NWT Arts Council. There are many ways that this could be implemented without the need for increased bureaucracy or increased expenses to the GNWT and with minimal impact on the existing beneficiaries of lottery funding in the NWT.

Art is an important form of recreation that enables creativity both individually and as a part of a group. In the same way that sport fosters physical and mental health, so does art. A dancer rehearsing three times a week gains the same health benefits and sense of camaraderie as a hockey player. In the same way that a climber grows their mind through solving a difficult climbing problem, a painter grows their mind solving colour and brush stroke technique. The feeling a runner gets flying down the road during a race and being encouraged at rest stops is the same as the feeling an actor gets on stage during a performance. I know because I participate in all these activities.

I use art and sport as a form of recreation and there are many people in the territory who do as well, or who solely use art but are unable to benefit from the lottery funding available to sport in the NWT. I serve on both arts and sports board of directors here in Yellowknife. I was a part of the Yellowknife Climbing Club that built a bouldering wall in Kam Lake, a precursor to the climbing wall now being installed in the field house. I know how difficult fundraising is and I know how important this money is to Territorial Sports Organizations. The absolute last thing I want to do is to make this an Art versus Sport issue because it is not. Art, sport, and recreation are all important to a healthy society and I am a firm believer that funding for all these endeavours should be increased on a regular basis.

For all these reasons I think it is only fair that the Western Canada Lottery Act be amended to allow lottery revenues to be used for the arts. Thank you again for this opportunity and have a wonderful day.

Eli Purchase

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