

# MAKING AN IMPRESSION ON THE ARTS

Lana Hall

The City of Vaughan is exploring a potential partnership with two established arts and culture organizations that would strengthen the profile of the city's arts and cultural sector, in hopes of bringing new talent, educational and economic opportunities to the growing municipality.

Late last month, the City of Vaughan, the **McMichael Canadian Art Collection** and the **Vaughan International Film Festival (VFF)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together to advance the city's arts, culture and creative industries. As part of the MOU, the signatories would also work together to support the development of a new Creative Industries Centre of Excellence, which would include new exhibition, educational, event, studio and theatre spaces for Vaughan's creative communities.

The collaboration seeks to "catalyze Vaughan's creative economy as a launchpad for the arts of Canada by attracting talent, creating training, educational and exhibition opportunities, and providing a significant economic catalyst for artists and creative entre-

preneurs in Vaughan," according to the MOU.

Both the City's 2010 Business Strategy, "Building a Gateway to Tomorrow's Economy" and its 2019 Strategic Business Plan highlighted the creative industries as an emerging sector in Vaughan and a potential area of focus for economic development activities as the municipality grows.

"The creative and cultural industries have been identified as key opportunities to develop the local business community and attract talent to Vaughan,"

City of Vaughan spokesperson, **Cassandra Cleveland** tells *NRU*. She says the partnership will also function as a place-making project, designed to bring innovative public spaces and programming to the growing area.

As part of the MOU, the City of Vaughan will also explore ways to improve transit connections to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection gallery and the surrounding Kleinburg Village, and consider streetscape improvements and parking facilities to

encourage tourism, says Cleveland.

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Photo showing the McMichael Canadian Art Collection gallery in Vaughan. The art gallery, along with the City of Vaughan and the Vaughan International Film Festival recently signed a memorandum of understanding to work collaboratively to advance Vaughan's arts and culture sector. The partnership seeks to explore the development of a new Creative Industries Centre of Excellence in Vaughan, which would provide dedicated space for arts and culture programming, education, performance and events in the City.

SOURCE: MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION



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The partnership is an important step in nurturing **York Region's** arts and culture reputation, and could pave the way for similar partnerships in other municipalities, says **York Region Arts Council** director of programming and operations, **Monica Pain**.

"We're excited to see an example of when different organizations come together to strengthen the artistic community," she told *NRU*. "I also believe that through this partnership it's going to be an example for the other nine municipalities in York Region. Every single one of them has the passion to bring arts and culture to their communities, so I think that this MOU will really set an example of what can happen when organizations come together."

Pain is also hopeful that the partnership will result in expanded, dedicated space for arts and cultural programming and performance in Vaughan, which is badly needed.

The partnership also dovetails with the McMichael Art Collection's planned expansion,

for which construction is expected to start in early 2025. The collection, which is the largest publicly funded art gallery in Canada that focuses exclusively on Canadian and Indigenous art, is located on 100 acres of land in Kleinburg and has been open to the public since 1966. The McMichael gallery's planned expansion will increase the current building's footprint by 52 per cent, providing more space for education, exhibitions, dining and outdoor events.

"The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is proud to play a central role as one of Vaughan's Creative Industries Centres of Excellence," said McMichael Canadian Art Collection executive director **Ian Dejardins** in a statement. "Through this partnership and our future plans, we hope to make Vaughan a vital cultural destination for all."

The Vaughan International Film Festival was established in 2013. It operates as a non-profit dedicated to advancing independent film in the GTHA, through public film

screenings, panel discussions and educational opportunities. It runs a four-day festival each summer featuring a curated lineup of public screenings and other creative industry events. The new partnership would give VFF dedicated space to expand its programming.

"This partnership will allow us to expand our events, professionally-led industry programming and film attraction initiatives to reach greater audiences and raise the profile of Vaughan as a destination for film production," says VFF co-founder and chair **Antonio Ienco** in a statement. 🌟

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- Monica Pain

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