

AZIZ, MICHAEL | Ward 2 Candidate | [www.vote-aziz.com](http://www.vote-aziz.com)  
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## QUESTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTORAL CANDIDATES:

**How to Reply:** Whether you respond to one question, a handful, or all, we appreciate your time and dedication to your community. The following questions are from artists and culture workers across York Region. Please insert your responses below the question(s) you choose to answer. Save the document and email it back to [Samantha@yorkregionartscouncil.com](mailto:Samantha@yorkregionartscouncil.com) AND [Jessica@yorkregionartscouncil.com](mailto:Jessica@yorkregionartscouncil.com).

### COMMUNITY / PROMOTION / ACCESS:

What will you do to ensure the general public has greater access to experience and enjoy the arts in your municipality?

I will work with my counterparts on council to ensure that arts and culture in our community are provided more attention. The arts are, without a doubt, an important segment of our community and I will be more than happy to work with YRAC and other organisations to ensure that artists and arts workers are supported more in our community. Perhaps, as council, we can assess the feasibility of lowering the rent that art groups are required to pay, at the Burr House, for example.

What is one small concrete example of supporting the arts that you can do on a monthly basis?

I will certainly have ongoing conversations with YRAC and others to ensure that there is a growing presence of the arts in our community. Attending and promoting local arts events will be part of my focus.

With many jobs being developed in media arts related fields, what are your plans to ensure talent stays in the region instead of moving to innovative hubs like Waterloo, Vancouver and Silicon Valley?

I am always open to learn from the many and various organisations that operate in Richmond Hill and Ontario at-large. This issue will be part of my discussions with YRAC and other organisations; keeping talent in the region is vital to our growth, both socially and economically. I would like to see a space for mixed-use arts/cultural hub in Richmond Hill.

How will you contribute to growth of the arts in the future for the next generation of artists?

I will always be open to listening from local arts groups and staff to ensure that this part of our community continues to thrive.

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**INTRINSIC VALUE:**

What municipal arts and culture events/programming do you attend and support, and have you purchased work created by local artists?

I attend cultural events whenever and wherever possible. I enjoy attending Jazz fests, including the weekly jazz musical events that took place over the summer, at the Centre for Performing Arts.

**PLATFORM:**

In your list of the ten top priorities of your platform, where would supporting the arts place on your list? Why there?

Supporting the arts is one of many ways to build our community and, in lieu of ranking this priority, I will continue to emphasise that this is a priority for me on which I will remain focused.

Arts and culture are a barometer of the health of a community, town, or city. How will you profile/give a place to arts and culture in your municipal structure, strategic planning, marketing and reporting of achievements?

I see “arts events” as part of a greater whole to develop a thriving community. I like to consider all these priorities as part of an ecosystem, all working together to create a thriving community.

What kind of municipal policy would you propose to encourage artists to be able to work and live in your municipality?

I am not sure as to the current policy on this but, if it isn't already in place, I would like the Town to be purchasing local art to decorate its town-owned buildings. This is very similar to the “Community Benefit Agreements” policy that I am proposing (for more on this, please visit my website).

**SPACE:**

How will you ensure that artists in your municipality receive affordable space to create and showcase their work?

Do you think artist studio space rentals should be added to the new Richmond Hill Public Library expansion and other similar community venues?

We would have to assess the feasibility of this. If there is a demand for this, then absolutely. I find that it would be beneficial to have multi-purpose rooms, therefore not restricting use of rooms to any one group or organisation.

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How do you envision the inclusion of local art in the public realm?  
Local art should be part of all community events, whenever possible.

#### **EDUCATION:**

Where do you see arts education fitting into your electoral platform - in school programming, health programs and/or community programs?  
All of the above. I believe our community centres already provide painting and theatre programs.

#### **FUNDING:**

Do you believe that it's vital to have municipal granting programs to fund local artists and arts organizations to create and present work in your municipality? If so, how will you advocate for this funding? Absolutely. As an elected official, I am accountable to **all my constituents** and I am a firm believer in that local artists are such an important piece of our society. I am an advocate of participatory budgeting (for more information please visit <https://www.vote-aziz.com/election-2018>) and that's how I intend on addressing such issues around funding.

There is a noticeable gap between arts spaces (studio, exhibition, performing, etc.) for emerging and professional artists in York Region, making it challenging for artists to stay in the area while growing their professions. What do you think the municipality's role is in funding spaces for emerging to mid-career artists? I, too, feel that not enough is being done to address this gap. We need to create more arts spaces and not drive away local artists from York Region. Richmond Hill plays a key role in supporting the arts - for instance, through the Community and Cultural Grant Program - and I will do all that I can to improve programs and services for the arts.