

## **RESPONSE BY: RAMIN FARAJI, REGIONAL CANDIDATE COUNCILLOR RICHMOND HILL**

### **COMMUNITY / PROMOTION / ACCESS:**

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

Providing and granting space to showcase art shows and/or art classes especially for kids and seniors. I strongly believe that art can bring people together as the language of art has no boundaries. I am hopeful that with more frequent art and culture events, sense of community will strengthen within residents of Richmond Hill.

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

Attending and advertising the events in advance through personal and professional means to ensure more of Richmond Hill residents are aware of the events.

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?

We should start from our own Town Hall. We should strive to recruit local talent to assist in upcoming town events and ensure they are recognized for the work. Town's website, as well as many businesses in Richmond Hill, are constantly updated with new graphics and videos which could use the artistic touch of one of our local talents. I am committed to support our local businesses and using our local talent for media arts, is a good example of that.

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

I will ensure our school and community programs include a number of art and culture classes for our kids and youth to reinforce its base for the next generation. I believe kids learn a lot more creation of art when they get to meet the artists. I would encourage schools to attend art exhibits or invite artists to exhibit their work at schools to facilitate this relationship.

### **INTRINSIC VALUE:**

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

My wife, Farzi and I usually attend the Annual Arts & Studio Tour, and just the other day we showed up at the Curtain Club for the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these tours and purchased some lovely photographs of old Richmond Hill (Heritage Buildings) from Rhonda Starr.

A few weeks back, we were at the Burr House for the Culture Day to visit the craft gallery, and my wife picked out a beautiful jar. Art is one thing we don't put a price on, and it's priceless to be able to meet and speak with the creator/artist and so much better if you know them in the community.

In early September, we visited a very unique art exhibit called Chairs Have Voices. We met the artist Ale Groen and his wife Caroline Groen, who are trying to bring innovative art from downtown Toronto to Richmond Hill. We posted about this event on social media and let our friends know in the media to cover events similar to this to promote the local art exhibits.

## **PLATFORM:**

[In your list of the ten top priorities of your platform, where would supporting the arts place on your list? Why there?](#)

Art, culture and entertainment is one the main items on my platform, as I hear more and more from the residence how limited the options are in Richmond Hill and they commute to Toronto or neighbouring cities for a concert or theatre. My vision for Richmond Hill is to create a balanced community where we can all live, Work/attend School as well as enjoy arts/culture.

This is an important matter to my family and I as we enjoy and attend art and music shows, but as an aspiring community representative (Regional Councillor) I also view this as a challenge for our economy. If our local artists are not supported, our local businesses suffer. And if our residents have to travel out of town to experience art, then the money is spent out of our community.

[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?](#)

Very good question. I believe art can save lives and I have seen that become a reality meeting artist who had volunteer their time to teach painting or play music for seniors and kids with special needs. The beauty of art is that it has no language barrier and helps us to connect on another level. Art and culture go hand in hand with Mental Health in our community. As you know revitalization of downtown Richmond Hill is on my agenda. Beautifying our downtown is not only pleasing to the eye and is good for our local business, it will also increase the sense of safety and security.

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

My top priority is making Richmond Hill a place where we all want to live and work. Many people in our town commute to Toronto for work. This means public transport issues, long commutes and less time with our families. I envision a Richmond Hill that has a thriving economy and is a hub for innovation. If our hard-working families could live and work here, some of our biggest cost and transit issues would be mitigated. My plan includes:

- Economic development that will draw innovative companies to Richmond Hill, creating good jobs right here.
- Opening a top-notch higher-education center that will draw professors and students from across Canada, bringing opportunity for our children.
- Both of which, will, in turn, create sustainable campuses that grow our community and our culture.

I believe that together we can build a livable community. As Regional and Local Councilor, I will focus on smart development projects. By building places we can all enjoy, performing arts

places, green spaces, recreational centers and the like we can truly create a community that's thriving.

## **SPACE:**

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

I will work very hard to ensure art classes, and non-for profit exhibits are permitted in our many beautiful green spaces/parks available throughout Richmond Hill, free of charge, and are accessible to all residents. This way the artist can connect with people and advertise their art, which is mutually beneficial.

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

Absolutely! Our community venues should accommodate all sorts of education, including art and culture.

How do you envision the inclusion of local art in the public realm?

To start, I will work with our stakeholders in downtown Richmond Hill to board up the underdeveloped lands and will commission a local artist to create murals to beautify our downtown as a temporary measure, until council can plan a more comprehensive strategy for downtown. This way a local artist can showcase their work, and beautify the town with their work.

## **EDUCATION:**

Where do you see arts education fitting into your electoral platform - in school programming, health programs and/or community programs?

As I mentioned, I believe art education goes hand in hand with mental health program and they are essential for our youth. Our school and community programs should provide a various range of classes/opportunities for kids to learn and experience art.

## **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?

Definitely! I believe municipalities should advocate, support and provide the space and facilities for local artist to showcase their work.

Given my skills and experience, I am the only candidate that has the ability to find the necessary savings elsewhere to pay for these programs, without further burdening the taxpayers.

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?

The Town must support and advocate for local artists and art organizations. The support could come in different ways, not just financial. I believe we should utilize our schools and community spaces better after work hours. These spaces could be rented and utilized for art exhibits. As a municipality we should also be mindful of the required space/facilities some of the art forms require, to incorporate them in the design of any new community venue/space.