

# TORONTO LEADS AGAIN

## Toronto Creates

A strategy for artists, film and screen, music, design, games, public art, creative space, ownership and global cultural reach.

**Campaign Policy Proposal - Not a City of Toronto Publication**



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*People first. Families first. Machines serve. Democracy decides. Nature sets the constraint. Art gives the future meaning.*

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## Why this matters



*Creative technology should expand human authorship and production capacity while creators retain meaningful credit and ownership.*

### Human authorship in the machine age

Toronto can embrace AI tools while keeping people at the centre of culture. Creator rights, attribution, ownership, consent and the value of human-made work should remain visible policy objectives.

### The whole production stack

Creative policy should connect affordable space, grants and commissions to production infrastructure, compute, training, financing, IP ownership, distribution and export markets.

## Executive Summary

Toronto Creates treats culture as both a public good and a production economy. The strategy connects creators, spaces, film and screen, music, design, games, public art, digital tools, ownership and audiences rather than treating each as a separate grant file.

Human authorship remains central in the AI era. Better tools should expand what creators can make while credit, consent, compensation and intellectual property remain meaningful. Toronto OVO, Creator Compute Credits, the Creative Space Bank and First Credits are designed to connect creation to production and ownership.

The first term builds forward from Culture Connects and Toronto's existing screen-sector work while improving creative-space affordability, permitting, paid pathways and international market access.

## Major commitments

- Align campaign cultural actions with Culture Connects and existing City programs.
- Create a Creative Space Bank and stronger space-affordability navigation.
- Launch Toronto OVO as a creator/export platform tied to Toronto-owned work.
- Provide shared production and compute access where it expands creator capability.
- Expand paid First Credits placements across film, music, design, games and digital production.
- Improve location, permitting and public-realm coordination for production.

### How this fits the governing program

Financial treatment: first-term actions in this report must reconcile to Report 03. Unsigned partner funding and unverified technology savings are not booked in the municipal base case.

## How to read commitments and numbers

| Status                                | Meaning                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OFFICIAL BASELINE</b>              | Current public evidence or an inherited program.                                          |
| <b>ADOPTED CITY TARGET</b>            | A target already approved by the City; not a new campaign promise.                        |
| <b>CAMPAIGN COMMITMENT</b>            | A first-term action proposed by the campaign, subject to lawful Council/budget authority. |
| <b>CAMPAIGN TARGET</b>                | A measurable result the campaign proposes to pursue.                                      |
| <b>PLANNING ASSUMPTION / SCENARIO</b> | A decision-support input, not a guarantee.                                                |
| <b>PARTNER-DEPENDENT OBJECTIVE</b>    | Requires another government, agency, utility, institution or private partner.             |
| <b>LONG-RANGE ASPIRATION</b>          | Part of the 25-year direction; future Councils retain democratic authority.               |

## Key public baselines and planning anchors

| Indicator                         | Value         | Date / status                                | Use in this report                                |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Jobs in Toronto                   | ~1.624M       | 2025   Official survey baseline              | Current economic scale.                           |
| Net new jobs                      | 23,410        | 2025   Official survey result                | One-year result; do not extrapolate mechanically. |
| Screen-sector direct annual spend | Up to ~\$2.6B | Current strategy high case   Sector baseline | Direct spend, not City revenue/payroll.           |

| Indicator                                 | Value           | Date / status                      | Use in this report                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Screen workforce                          | ~40,000         | Current strategy   Sector baseline | Skilled workforce scale.                            |
| Studio space                              | Almost 3M sq ft | Current strategy   Sector baseline | Industrial/creative capacity.                       |
| New cultural-space target                 | 1M sq ft        | 2025-35   Official target          | Track secured/construction/opened.                  |
| Additional City culture investment target | \$35M           | 2025-35   Official target          | Inherited target; separate from campaign increment. |

## Toronto Today and Inherited Work

### Current Conditions

This strategy begins from the programs, infrastructure and conditions Toronto already has. Existing work is identified as the inherited baseline; new campaign commitments are stated separately. Baseline facts that control the plan Baseline What the evidence says Culture Connects Targets: 1M sq. ft. new cultural space over ten years; at least one free City-supported cultural experience per resident per month; +\$35M cultural investment over ten years; 1,000 creative export/artist exchange projects. [CULT1] Implementation More than 82% of the original 28 Culture Connects actions were in progress after year one. [CULT3] Screen economy Annual direct spend as high as \$2.6B; 40,000 skilled workers; almost 3M sq. ft. studio space; top-five North American production hub according to the City strategy. [CULT2] Technology shift Virtual production, AI-assisted workflows, robotics and games/immersive production can alter the production stack; policy should support capability and

ownership rather than choose artistic winners. Employment Community & Entertainment was Toronto's fastest-growing employment category in 2025, adding 4,230 jobs (+7.9%). [JOB1] Throughout this report, official baselines, campaign calculations, campaign proposals and partner-dependent decisions are identified separately.

## Vision and Outcomes

The strategy is organized around a small set of outcomes that residents and delivery partners can understand and measure.

- Creators can afford to make work in Toronto.
- Toronto retains more ownership and intellectual property from what it creates.
- Film, screen, music, design, games and immersive production grow as connected industries.
- Neighbourhood culture is visible in public space and accessible beyond major institutions.
- AI strengthens human authorship rather than erasing it.

## Visualizing the Strategy

Selected campaign visuals from the earlier reference reports are retained here because they explain relationships that are harder to understand in prose alone. They are explanatory illustrations; the surrounding text and tables define commitments, costs, authority and status.





*Toronto Creates links culture to the full production stack: artists, digital tools, studios, distribution and audiences.*



*Human authorship remains valuable in the AI era; better tools should enlarge the space for imagination and ownership.*



*Culture belongs in neighbourhoods and public space, not only inside major institutions.*

## Strategic Priorities

Toronto Creates is organized around the real creative production system: people, space, tools, paid credits, intellectual property, audiences and export pathways.

### 1. Toronto OVO creator/export platform

Toronto OVO is a creator/export platform intended to make Toronto-made culture easier to discover, present and sell while keeping creators visible as authors of the work. It can connect music, film, animation, games, design, fashion, publishing and immersive media to local and international audiences.

The platform would be built with creators and existing cultural institutions, with transparent participation rules and no transfer of creator intellectual property merely for access.

### 2. Creative Space Bank integrated with Culture Connects

Creative work needs physical space: rehearsal rooms, studios, workshops, galleries, production stages and small venues. A Creative Space Bank would map public, nonprofit and underused spaces, connect them to creators and coordinate affordability tools already available through cultural and real-estate programs.

The City would prioritize durable access, accessibility and neighbourhood distribution rather than short-lived pop-ups that disappear once an area becomes valuable.

### **3. Creator Compute Credits / shared production tools**

AI, rendering, animation, virtual production and game development increasingly require expensive compute. Creator Compute Credits would provide bounded access to shared production capability for eligible Toronto creators and small studios, linked to training and responsible-use standards.

Credits would be capped, evaluated and coordinated with Compute Commons so cultural policy does not create a separate duplicate infrastructure system.

### **4 Transparent City commissions and Toronto Yearbook.**

### **5. Film/TV/music/games/design/animation/immersive production pathways**

Toronto's creative economy spans production, post-production, performance, design, animation, games and emerging immersive formats. Policy should therefore support the whole production stack: space, permits, crews, equipment, training, financing connections, audiences and export pathways.

Sector-specific tools would align with Culture Connects and existing screen-sector strategies rather than rebrand existing City programs as new campaign inventions.

### **6. First Credits paid placements**

Breaking into creative industries is difficult because entry-level workers are often asked for credits they have not yet had a chance to earn. First Credits would create paid placements and mentored production experience tied to real projects, with fair labour standards and portfolio outcomes.

The program would prioritize pathways for young and underrepresented creators while ensuring placements do not replace established paid positions.

### **7. Toronto-owned IP and global distribution support**

A strong creative city should help creators retain and grow intellectual property rather than become only a low-cost production location. Business support, export networks, legal education and procurement can help Toronto firms and artists build catalogues, formats, characters, software and brands they continue to own.

Public support should strengthen creator bargaining power and market access without requiring the City to pick cultural winners.

### **8. Permitting/location/public-realm coordination for production**

Production interacts with streets, parks, buildings, residents and businesses. Better coordination can reduce conflict while making Toronto easier to film, perform and create in. A clearer one-front-door process would align permits, notifications, accessibility, traffic and site restoration.

The public realm remains shared space; production access should be predictable and efficient while respecting neighbourhoods and other users.

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# Targets, Scenarios and Planning Assumptions

## Planning Assumptions and Key Calculations

Show the arithmetic and its limitations so optimistic assumptions cannot quietly become promises. Calculation register Calculation / model Method / interpretation Creative-space pace 1,000,000 sq. ft. / 10 years = average 100,000 sq. ft./year if delivered evenly; real projects will be lumpy and should be reported by secured, under construction and opened space. [CULT1] Cultural-investment pace \$35M / 10 years = \$3.5M/year average incremental target in Culture Connects; the campaign's specialist allocation must be separated from inherited Culture Connects commitments to avoid double counting. [CULT1] Export target 1,000 projects / 10 years = 100 creative export/exchange projects/year average. An Atkinson administration would measure commercial/export outcomes separately from cultural exchange outcomes.

Screen productivity context \$2.6B high-case annual direct spend / 40,000 workers = ~\$65,000 direct spend per supported worker as a rough ratio; it is not wage or GDP and should not be presented as either. [CULT2] Planning arithmetic is used as decision support. Where official forecasts or project-specific engineering supersede a campaign screening calculation, the official or engineered value governs.

## Implementation and Delivery

### First 100 Days

The opening 100 days focus on creator access: map space, simplify production coordination, design the first paid-credit and compute-access pilots, and establish transparent commissioning principles.

- Publish the campaign-to-Culture Connects alignment table.
- Identify the first Creative Space Bank inventory and affordability tools.
- Define Toronto OVO governance, creator eligibility and export objectives.
- Launch a First Credits paid-placement partnership round.
- Create a permitting and location-production issue table across relevant City divisions.

### 2027-2030 First-Term Action Plan

During 2027-2030, Toronto expands affordable creative space, paid first credits, creator compute, transparent commissions, production coordination and pathways for Toronto-owned intellectual property to reach markets.

| Phase      | Action                                            | Lead / authority                          | Resident result                                                  |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Space      | Creative Space Bank and affordability tools       | Culture / CreateTO / partners             | More creators and organizations can remain in Toronto.           |
| Own        | Toronto OVO and IP/export support                 | Culture / Economic Development / creators | More value from Toronto-created work is retained locally.        |
| Equip      | Shared production and creator compute access      | City / institutions / private partners    | Advanced tools become more broadly accessible.                   |
| Pathways   | First Credits paid placements                     | City / industry / education               | Emerging creators gain real credits and networks.                |
| Coordinate | Production permitting, locations and public realm | City divisions / film office              | Toronto becomes easier to produce in without lowering standards. |

## 2031-2051 Long-Term Direction

The long-term creative objective is a city where artists and producers can afford to remain, own more of what they create and use Toronto as a platform to reach audiences around the world.

- Protect a diverse network of cultural spaces as land values and technology change.
- Strengthen Toronto-owned production, distribution and IP across screen, music, games, design and emerging media.
- Use public art and design to make infrastructure, climate and neighbourhood projects more beautiful and meaningful.

## Risks and dependencies

| Risk                                                         | Specific mitigation                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Culture policy becomes only downtown/institutional           | Measure neighbourhood access, space and participation.                                 |
| Shared technology benefits only established creators         | Use transparent eligibility, outreach and time-limited access rules.                   |
| AI undermines consent or authorship                          | Require provenance, credit and rights-respecting practices in City-supported programs. |
| Creative-space programs preserve space but not affordability | Track occupancy cost, tenure security and creator use, not square footage alone.       |

## Review and renewal

Creative programs will be reviewed with creators, venues, producers and audiences, using both economic evidence and measures of access, authorship and cultural participation.

# Accountability and Public Reporting

## Performance framework

Creative-sector reporting will track space access, paid placements, commissions, production activity, creator ownership, export reach and neighbourhood participation without reducing cultural value to one economic metric.

| Metric                                     | Baseline                               | Target / direction     | Horizon    | Responsible body               | Reporting |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Affordable/secure creative space supported | Existing City baseline where available | Increase               | First term | Culture / CreateTO             | Annual    |
| Paid First Credits placements              | Establish baseline                     | Increase               | First term | Culture / industry partners    | Annual    |
| Toronto-owned IP/export participants       | Establish baseline                     | Increase               | First term | Culture / Economic Development | Annual    |
| Production permitting/service time         | Establish baseline                     | Reduce avoidable delay | First term | Film office / divisions        | Quarterly |
| Neighbourhood cultural                     | Existing program                       | Broaden access         | First term | Culture / partners             | Annual    |



| Metric        | Baseline | Target / direction | Horizon | Responsible body | Reporting |
|---------------|----------|--------------------|---------|------------------|-----------|
| participation | baseline |                    |         |                  |           |

## Sources and Notes

Primary public sources are listed by organization and title. Campaign commitments, targets, scenarios and long-range aspirations are distinguished from adopted government policy throughout the report.

- [City of Toronto - Culture Connects 2025-2035](#)
- [City of Toronto - Film, Television and Digital Media](#)