



November 25, 2024

Dear Members of Kitchener City Council,

**Re: Support for the 2025 Budget and Investment in Community Events**

On behalf of the Caribana Ignite Festival, we are writing to express our full support for the proposed 2025 budget, particularly the strategic focus on "creating an economically thriving city together." We are particularly encouraged by the recommendation to allocate an additional \$200,000 towards supporting community events, a forward-thinking investment that will undoubtedly enrich our city culturally, socially, and economically.

It was the first ever Caribana event outside of the city of Toronto, and our experience working with the City's Special Events team has shown us the transformative impact of such collaborative efforts. Their expertise, guidance, and commitment to fostering community-driven initiatives have been instrumental in the success of our festival and many others. I think overall what resonated was a belief in the power of bringing people together.

For Caribana Ignite, the City has been more than just a partner—it has been an enthusiastic facilitator of authentic cultural experiences and a champion of diversity.

**The Impact of Partnership**

Caribana Ignite brings the vibrant cultural heritage of the Caribbean community to life through music, art, dance, and food. It is more than an event; it is a celebration of identity, a space for connection, and a driver of economic opportunity for local vendors, performers, and small businesses.





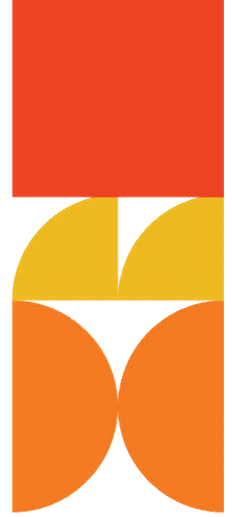
Caribana began in 1967 as a contribution to Toronto’s cultural landscape via Expo 67, and we were proud to bring Caribana to Kitchener. While we have been proud to lead this celebration, we could not have achieved this success without the leadership and support of the City’s Special Events team. The team provided a sustainable framework that allowed us to build upon our vision while ensuring that community-driven festivals like ours remain accessible, inclusive, and financially viable. What I appreciated most was the city’s unfettered approach to the preservation of our cultural elements, allowing our community to represent itself authentically.

**Why Increased Investment Matters**

The City of Kitchener is situated within the most diverse regions in Canada and an additional \$200,000 to support community events is not merely an allocation of funds—it is an investment in the people, neighborhoods, and businesses that make our city extraordinary and diverse. Events like Caribana Ignite contribute to the economy by attracting visitors, creating jobs, and supporting local enterprises.

We firmly believe that this additional funding will enable more events to emerge, flourish, and deliver these benefits citywide. Moreover, it will further empower the City’s Special Events team to expand their support to a broader range of organizers, ensuring that diverse voices and stories continue to find platforms in our community. If we do not make investments to support community events, we lose the attraction of being a leading city to live, work and play.





**A Shared Vision for the Future**

The proposed budget reflects a shared commitment to building a thriving city—one that values its residents, embraces its diversity, and invests in its future. By prioritizing community events, the City is reaffirming the importance of culture, creativity, and collaboration in driving economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

With this in mind, we encourage City Council to approve this budget and the proposed investment. We couldn't have done Caribana Kitchener 2024 without the support of the City, and the future of Caribana 2025 and beyond.

**Respectfully Submitted-**

**Geraldine Stafford**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geraldine Stafford", written in a cursive style.

**Festival Director  
Caribana Arts Group (Caribana Ignite)**

