



Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge  
2021 Municipal Election  
Arts Survey: Candidate Response

## **Candidate: Ben Christensen**

### *1. What is your vision for the arts sector within the City of Lethbridge?*

In the past few years Lethbridge has seen a decline in the performing arts. I'd like to find ways to encourage it to return in our community.

### *2. What do you believe are the benefits of investing in the arts and how do you view the role of City of Lethbridge in arts investment.*

Investment in the arts in any community plays an essential role in attracting tourism and promoting unique culture within that community. I believe that our city should spend less on visual arts and more on the cultural arts. I believe this will revive some of the life that has been missing from our vibrant community.

### *3. Please share your thoughts on public art and its role in our community.*

I believe that visual art is important to the culture of any city. With the presence of the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Casa, and the university art program that we have a diverse variety of visual art faculties and venues in our city. Previously I attended an event at SAAG that combined the Ventus Womens Choir and a display of local artwork. I would like to see more events like this in our city that showcase both the visual and performing arts. I'm deeply disappointed to see the decline of patronage for community theatre, and the Lethbridge Symphony Orchestra. I'd like to see this change.

### *4. Lethbridge City Council has demonstrated their commitment to building a performing arts centre in their recent Capital Improvement Program. Do you support this commitment and if so what is your proposed strategy for completing the project?*

I support municipal initiatives for the arts. With the addition of Casa only a few years ago, and the recent improvements to the Yates theatre I'd like to see this funding better allocated to programs that can allow these venues to be used to their fullest potential. One of the issues that has hindered the arts in our city is the cost of renting the city's upgraded Yates Theatre. I'd like to see this venue utilized to greater potential and would consider allocating the funds for the new centre to be better used to help local groups in the visual and performing arts be able to access the Yates more easily, even if this means offering a subsidy to offset the cost of accessing the venue to smaller groups who may wish to use it.

Another unfortunate decline has been the use of the Enmax Centre. The Enmax Centre used to host regular big-name performers in our city from Nickelback to Lady GaGa and other popular acts. I've seen usage of the venue decline over the past few years and would like to go back to

the days of having major artists and performers recognize our city as a place to perform instead of being lured by the bigger venues located in neighbouring larger cities.

I'd also like to see Lethbridge become a place that attracts more interest from the film and television industry. I believe we have a lot to offer to film if we can promote our city as an attractive place to film feature films and tv. With us being such a close neighbour to Fort Macleod which attracts these productions I believe our city should also benefit from the tourism that such films attract.