

Dear Mayor and Council,

Here you will find our briefing note on the project of culture bus in the city of The Blue Mountain

Thank you by advance for your attention,

Presenters: Hannah Johnston-Wheeler and Nicolas Schirmann from the Master of Public and International Affairs (MPIA) at the Glendon College, York University in Toronto

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**UNCLASSIFIED
For a decision**

BRIEFING NOTE TO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS TOWN COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Cultural Bus to Fight Social Isolation and Improve Access to Cultural Activities.

OBJECTIVES: To address social isolation and limited access to cultural activities for remote residents of the Blue Mountains urban core by proposing the creation of a traveling cultural bus to improve accessibility, strengthen community connections, and encourage socialization of older adults, as part of a broader community engagement effort to reduce isolation and improve the social and cultural inclusion of the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF BLUE MOUNTAINS

Establish a mobile bus service:

- Establish a mobile bus service offering cultural and educational activities directly in rural and remote areas.
- This community bus will offer accessible spaces for sharing and meeting to as many people as possible.
- The bus will allow the movement of both the participants and the equipment necessary for the activities.

Set in place varied and enriching activities:

- Encourage book sharing and allow access to public library resources.
- Access to community spaces
- Create group dance, singing, and cooking classes.
- Promote community celebrations with a large number of residents.
- Set up group sports activities to promote physical health.

Encourage outdoor activities:

- Lead outdoor activities.
- Institute hikes in the natural areas of the Blue Mountains.
- Allow everyone to benefit from the local natural heritage.

Optimize local partnerships:

- Work with local libraries, schools, cultural groups and festivals to diversify the cultural offering and maximize the impact of the bus on the community.
- Examples include the Wild School Blue Mountains, a private school specializing in outdoor education, the Probus Blue Club for retirees, or cultural groups such as the Blue Mountains Film Festival and the Georgian Bay Folk Society.

Implementation

- To use communal premises as the basis for the project, but also other private infrastructure.
- Consider partnerships with companies or farms in the sector for activities that require more space.
- Establish consultations to determine the frequency and schedules to accommodate the largest number of participants.
- Develop cooperation between operators of existing tourism infrastructure to benefit local residents.

Follow-up on policy

- Consult citizens to improve service.
- Conduct a study of the effectiveness of this policy on social isolation.
- Highlight the positive effects of the measure on the dynamism of the municipality.

KEY POINTS

- **Elderly population:** 3,215 inhabitants of the municipality are over 65 years old which represents about 35% of Blue Mountains residents. This population is most at risk of prolonged social isolation and difficulty accessing cultural activities in the downtown area.
- **Social isolation and limited cultural access:** Residents of the Blue Mountains are dispersed and the community lacks adequate public transport in remote residential areas thus complicating the movement and social inclusion of some of the residents.
- **Target population:** Seniors and residents of rural areas lacking social engagement will be particularly targeted, as well as those with mobility problems or limited access to cultural activities.
- **Prevention of cognitive decline:** Participation in cultural activities, stimulation and lifelong learning are essential for older adults to maintain their cognitive health (Mayo Clinic, 2014).
- **Long-term impact:** This initiative aims to reduce social isolation and improve quality of residents' lives, energizing the municipality and attracting new families to compensate for the ageing of the population.

CONTEXT

- The Municipality of Blue Mountains is facing exponential growth in its senior population that will continue to grow in the coming years.
- Access to cultural activities and infrastructure is limited for some of its residents, especially for residents of remote areas and for those with mobility difficulties.
- Ensuring the social inclusion of these inhabitants is therefore desirable in order to maintain the demography and dynamism of Blue Mountains.

CURRENT SITUATION

- The dispersal of housing and the lack of public transport make it difficult for a large part of the population to access cultural activities.
- These challenges can make it difficult to develop a close-knit community and include the remote or elderly with the rest of the population.
- This can also complicate the development of intergenerational and intercultural ties and the attractiveness of Blue Mountains as a community.

CONCLUSION

- Promote social cohesion.
- Involve the entire population in cultural and sports activities.
- Reduce the isolation of residents, especially the elderly, who are more affected by loneliness across Canada.

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