

Ortona Armoury Arts  
Building  
Concerns about Operational Funding  
and Community arts Agreement





OATA established in 1998.

Transformation of Ortona Armoury into an Arts Building.

Hosting diverse Artist Tenants, events: films, concerts, dance, artist studios and art exhibits.

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# Armoury host to many enterprises over decades

**A capsule of Edmonton's history**

History oozes from every brick of the old Ortona Armoury. Nestled in the river valley near the new condos of tony Rosedale, the 86-year-old building now has a very modern, high-tech use — it houses artists and Edmonton's large film and video co-operative. But over the years it has gone through a number of incarnations that mark many significant events in the city's history. From the heyday of the Hudson's Bay Co. to the dust bowl to the Second World War to the Commonwealth Games, this building has been connected.

Much of the building is occupied by the Film and Video Arts Society of Alberta, with sound studios and film and video editing suites.

Painters like Marlena Wyman, who is also an archivist, find the building inspiring.

"It's very conducive to creativity," Wyman says, adding she would not get the same level of inspiration from a modern office building.

Few people feel a closer attachment to the armoury than Helen Folkmann, a filmmaker and painter who is executive director of the film society and president of the tenant association in the city-owned building.

In fact, she'd love to make a film documentary about the building.

"It's not an empty shell," Folkmann says. "I think this building is a beautiful encapsulation of Canadian history in many ways."

It was built in the summer of 1914 — in just a few months — as a warehouse and livery stables for the Hudson's Bay Co. It was a good location for a warehouse, near the Low Level railway bridge and to barges on the river.

Original photos of the building show the trading company's crest prominently displayed in three spots. Arches in the brick and large rings in the courtyard walls

## EDMONTON INSIDE & OUT

If you know of any interesting people, places, issues or activities in the Edmonton region — from the serious to the ridiculous — we'd love to hear from you. Please send us your suggestions by phoning us at 498-5862, fax at 429-5500 or e-mail: msadava@thejournal.southam.ca.



The building, shown under construction Aug. 6, 1914, was originally a warehouse and livery stable for the Hudson's Bay Company. It was used as a creamery, a relief centre and a boys' school before becoming HMCS Nonesuch.



Helen Folkmann with photographic copies of the original armoury blueprints.

the navy, and a significant amount of remodelling was done, including construction of a drill hall and removal of the Bay company crests. Several pieces of the linoleum in the lobby from that era have a naval motif with pictures of anchors.

After the war it continued as HMCS Nonesuch until 1965, when it was decommissioned, handed to the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and renamed after the famous street battle in Italy involving the Loyal Eddies.

The building stayed in federal hands, but the regiment left in 1978 when the building was turned over to the Commonwealth Games organizers as the volunteer centre.

The following year the Ortona Gymnastics Club leased much of the building.

The city took it over in 1983 as a part of a land swap for Canada Place.

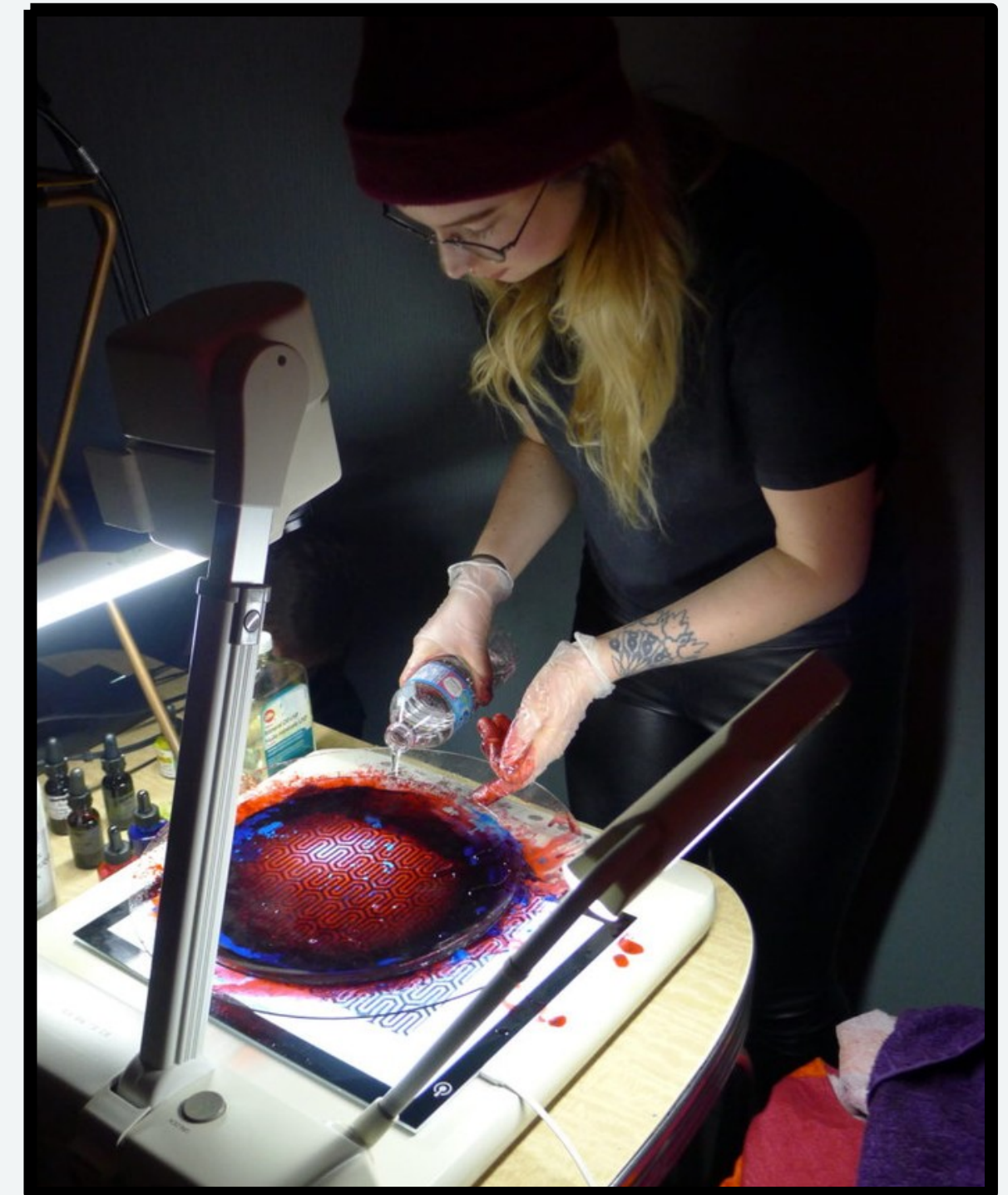
Despite the history of the building, it is only on the city's "B" list of heritage buildings, which doesn't provide the same level of protection afforded to buildings on the "A" list.

By Mike Sadava

for most of the 1920s. In the '30s it served a variety of purposes, most notably as a staging area where people fleeing the Saskatchewan dust bowl, and received food and blankets. At different times it also served as headquarters for a cartage company, the Alberta Poultry Pool and a boys' training school before

ment in 1939 for \$1 as part of the Bay's contribution to the war effort.

The building became the HMCS Nonesuch, the place where







Ortona's closure for extensive renovations in 2019  
Community sidelined from the process.  
No community involvement  
in renovations and future operational decisions.





**: Affordability and Turnover Concerns**

**tripled rent affecting artist stability.**

**Lack of consultation on Arts Habitat's short-term lease model Risk of rapid turnover and loss of invested artists.**

**loss of community innovation**

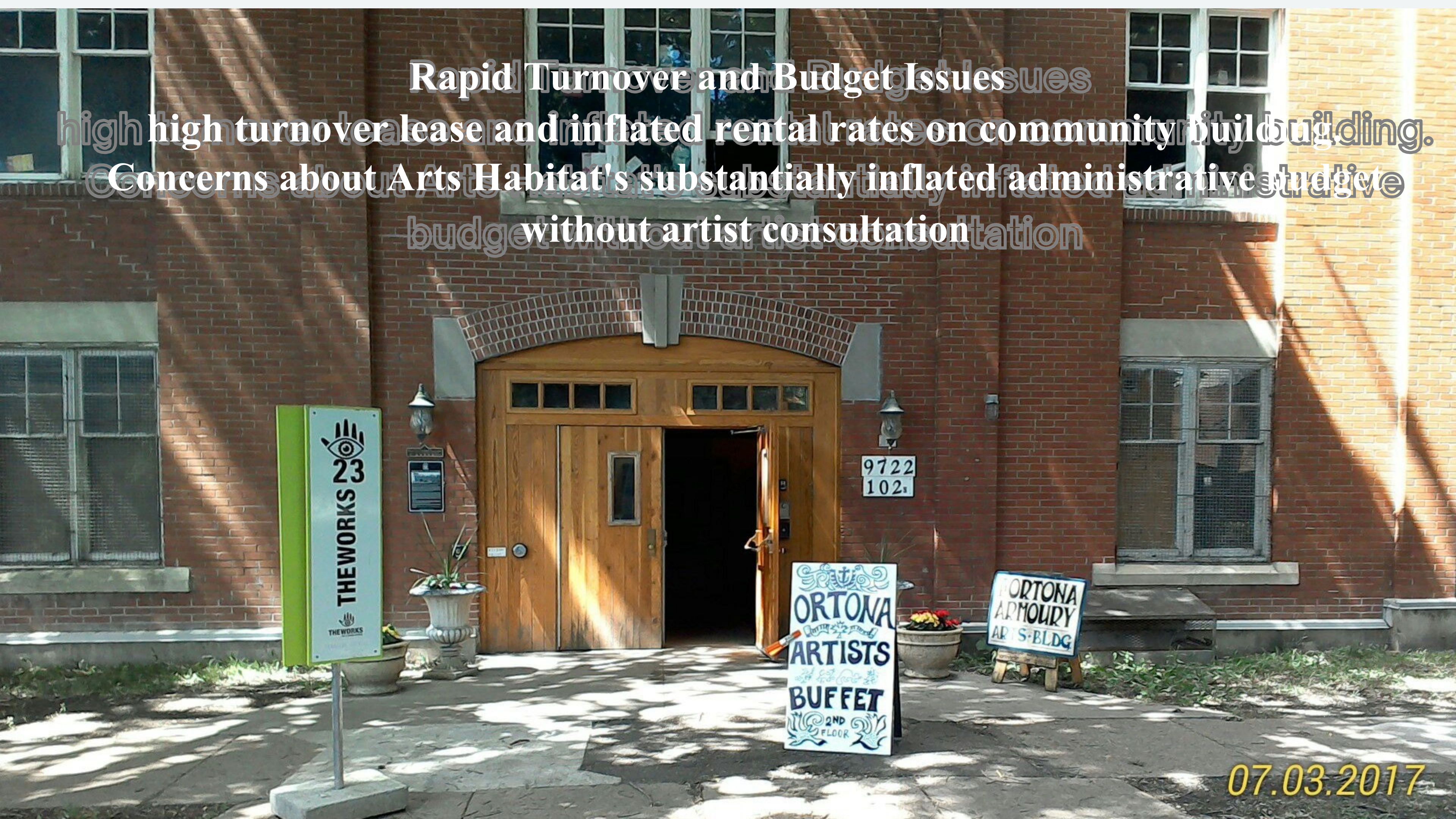


# Rapid Turnover and Budget Issues

high turnover lease and inflated rental rates on community building.

Concerns about Arts Habitat's substantially inflated administrative budget

without artist consultation



07.03.2017



## 2018 Operating Expenses

(O&M) \$31 321

Insurance \$ 1 696

Utilities \$ 24 549

**2018 Cost to City = \$ 57 567**

## OATA Expenses:

Artistfees \$ 6 500

Janitorial \$ 3 250

management \$ 6 500

**2018 Cost to OATA = \$ 16 250**

## Proposed:

## 2024 Operating Expenses

**Arts Habitat \$ 713 125**

**2024 Cost to City = \$ 713 125**

**12X INCREASE**





## Arts Community Success

Elements of the thriving arts community.

Key success factors: affordable rent, dedicated invested artists, versatile community spaces, low cost to the city.





**Call for a reevaluation of the current situation.  
Inclusion of artists in discussions about the arts community .  
Emphasis on a cost-effective and artist-centric model for  
community vibrancy.**





- **Creating a successful artist-run building involves providing affordable and flexible studio spaces for artists at various career stages.**
- **Involve artists in decision-making, and maintain transparent communication for long-term success and sustainability.**



# Simple solutions

## Proposed amendments to the agreement:

1. lock in a rate of \$6 \$q ft./annum, as per the letter of intent of intent
2. provide RENEWABLE sub-leases to artists
3. 20-50% of the Operating Budget to artists:  
(for artist lead projects and artists in residency programs)





THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
TIME AND

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**CONSIDERATION**