

**Address to Mayor Miller and civic leaders at the celebration of
Live With Culture and *Toronto Life* magazine “face the arts” recipients and
Imagine: The Creative Cities Strategies Report,
Toronto, December 6, 2006.**

It has been a delightful evening. The Toronto Life Awards are a tribute, not just to the arts, but to the importance of art in the construction of citizenship.

The Creative Cities Strategies Report is a hallmark document; a blueprint, for all Canadian cities to come on board the 21st century as creative cities. The enthusiasms for Richard Florida aside, the creative agenda is urgent not just as a tool for prosperous economies, but for arriving at a sustainable and serene quality of life. For we will not have sustainable cities until we managed civic care, and creativity is the only means we have right now of reinstituting civic care. Many of you have heard me say this before; creativity is not possible without civic trust, and civic trust is possible through the exercise of the creative. Shared forums of wonder, the ability to play together, discover together, imagine together, even touch the sublime together--these are the seductions that creativity uses to restore a quality of trust to the civic body. Agendas won't do it, political exhortations won't do it. We are convinced, finally, that our diversity is our strength. We are convinced now that Toronto (as we hoped it would) has begun to fall in love with itself. If it isn't an out and out romance, we have pockets of infatuation. Even the hard-nosed skeptics have a crush on a city that not long ago was a plain dowager afraid of donning a few cosmetics.

Thanks to Rita Davies, Toronto's Culture Plan for a Creative City, a charismatic mayor and the curiosity of Torontonians finally awakened by the clarion calls of Nuit Blanche and other capital projects --we have a town that has everything going for it. And the Creative Cities Strategies Report is a roadmap for how to get us to where we want to go --right into the civic heart; the heart that wants to, not just be proud of Toronto, but wants to *rejoice* in Toronto. Rejoice! For as I said at the launch of the report --in the future cities will only be known for their enthusiasm.

All cities will have similar drawing cards, the same amenities, the same market seductions, with somewhat different clichés of tourism. All a city can offer is a style of enthusiasm that uniquely releases its gifts and talents. The report, we believe, is a major engine for that enthusiasm.

The report comes of several years work, funded by the Toronto and Ontario Governments, and is the distillation of the efforts of a leadership team that met on numerous occasions and traveled to other cities to compare best practices. It is a comprehensive report designed to persuade, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that “creativity means business”—literally. It is an inventory of Toronto's creative assets and an exhortation to lever those assets into a competitive signature for the future. It has no precedent, and it waits for your endorsement.

The people gathered here tonight are among the movers, shooters and shakers of this town, and there are many more. If we have social capital as a resource, we have in this room the capital resource of bright thinking. Toronto is not wanting for talent, or "strivers", as Andy Barrie would say, there is no shortage of ideas, initiatives, from Luminato to Humanitas, waterfront revitalization, museums, galleries, architectural design panels, festivals, the new opera house, ballet, bohemia...the list goes on and on.

Toronto must do one thing only to become a world class city –it must unite, not as a system of alliances and transient partnerships, but as a communion of ideas funneled into one thing –a loyalty for this town. A proclaimed loyalty that will not brook partial communication or vested interest –a loyalty that means we don't play the urban competition with our cards close to our chests, a loyalty that wells up from private affection into a proclaimed devotion to a family of urban grace.

All Canadian cities must do as much, if they want to enter the global arena. What makes other cities *possibly* more charismatic than Toronto is the solidarity of spirit that puts allegiance back into the civic. If the urban world is overtaking the national and regional as a point of civic referentiality, if most of the world's people will soon be in cities, then cities must rediscover loyalty.

My point is this. Creative Toronto cannot fail, if its constituent champions work together. Our resources and networks are such that we can usher industry, communities and culture into a communion of purpose.

We must learn to talk again about the good of the town, archaic as it may sound. It is the purpose of the creative agenda. We're not just fostering creativity, we're not just collaborating with wealth generation, we're not just furthering the arts, we're giving a city the only means it has of imagining itself as a way of life that is hopeful and serene.

Creativity doesn't just mean business. The business of life depends on it. We have too many languages, and this is our common language, creativity –it is a language that transcends cultures and has no need of translation.

On that note let me introduce something that on the surface may seem anomalous. Spirituality. Spirituality is a suspect word in the public debate. It appears irrelevant. But we are fooling ourselves if we think that diversity of spirituality isn't the next big challenge. Diversity of culture is a given, but sooner or later a city will need to be bonded by its primal energies, or fall into the European models of belief apartheid (and we all know the consequences of that).

We have no common spirituality. Creativity is it. Sooner or later, the spiritualities of citizens will yearn for release, articulation and public enjoyment. We cannot keep the primal forces that motivate the citizen at bay. You cannot ghetto beliefs, otherwise people will not only think "inside the box", they will feel "inside the box" – they will put their existentials into silos, and farm their energies into discrete efforts that shy from the light of civic joy. That's the good scenario.

The worst scenario is extremism and clandestine politics.

Creativity is the spirituality that gets people affirming the same wonder, the same source, with shared gratitude—and it is free from the caveats of stereotype and historical woundedness. It is the imagination seeking identity in the grander scheme of things. That is what is meant by a city as a sacred place. It is a sacred place because it introduces us to a higher version of ourselves. Without that aspiration, it is foolish for us to live in cities. Without that aspiration we are just vulnerable, waiting for the markets of the global to harvest us as laborers and constructors of life styles.

We hope that this evening is the first of many such encounters, clarifying the solidarity that is Toronto by the creative insight.

Creativity is a beautiful idea. If it fails it will be our undoing. The beautiful wins converts; the beautiful recruits the most pedantic into the surrender of their skepticism. All we have to do is not let the agendas spoil our focus, not let the exigencies of the fiscal spoil our excitement, not let the tired pessimisms of an old Toronto haunt a new generation of young and new Canadians and halt the inevitable future of creative Toronto.

We believe that the Creative Cities Strategies Report is rich. It invites further imagining. It's real enemy is not cynicism but self-interest, and this is our message to the town; all that stands between Toronto the good and Toronto the great is generosity of spirit—and that is the first gift of creativity.

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