

Address to the 51st Annual Meeting of The Professional Convention Management Association (Metro Convention Center, Toronto, January 8th 2007)

Most cities recruit your imagination. Toronto releases it. It is a place of allowance, unshackled by the tyrannies of ideology, agendas and political caveat. It is where diversity takes on a new meaning flying above the fanfare of multi-culturalism. It is where the world gets along with itself. An atmosphere of civility engine by creativity, with all the amenities offered by a world class city but with the advantage of trust. You can trust Toronto with the casual atmosphere of experimentation and possibility.

And that's what attracts the world to Toronto. You won't find the wounded narrative of the past. People come here because the city is being authored every day by people with no time for historical failures. The story of Toronto is in the curiosity of its citizens, eager to see what the global city of the future will look like. And Toronto is the city of the future. Where sustainability meets civic grace, where livability means prosperity because creativity is our hall-mark. We imagine ourselves. We are bonded by imagination. And that is the key to success in the global city.

You want formal art? We have it. You want bohemia? We have it. You want neighborhoods? We are famous for them. Go down the roster of delights and urban fantasy. We have the expected, but the unexpected? We leave that to the imagination of those who are imaginative.

Toronto is seen by those savvy in knowledge economies as the fourth most creative city in north America. In a knowledge economy, this makes us the new urban frontier. It is why Toronto is the choice as the international springboard for conventioning. not because we have successful strategies or special levers for attracting talent and investment, but because the people that come here are done with letting ideology get in the way of invention.

As ambassador for the arts and Curator for Humanitas Museum and Center for Global Cities I travel and lecture on global aesthetic. And regularly meet the pilgrims of glamour towns who confess they want to come to Toronto and live here. Why? Because the global citizen is hungry for something called "civic grace". Other cities want to come and see how it is done. We do what everyone else does, but with the seduction of civic grace—the thing you can't manufacture, you can't brand it into being, you can't fund it into existence. It is what all global cities want to learn how to do, and the Toronto copyright is secure.

So let me welcome you to Toronto. If you fall in love with it, it will be because Toronto will have let you re-imagine yourself. In a world that offers possibility, Toronto offers it without the price tag of cultural tensions. It's not a small gift. It is major

refreshment to a globalized world, and it is the gift of heart, the kind of heart the city of the future depends on.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco

Poet Laureate of Toronto
Curator of the Humanitas Museum and
Center for Global Cities