

Corktown Residents & Business Association
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Executive Committee
City of Toronto

November 1, 2012

Mayor Ford and members of the Executive Committee,

Re: Executive Committee Item EX24.8 – Future of the Three Major Civic Theatres

I urge the Committee to consider very carefully two elements contained in the report from the City Manager before you today, and one completely missing. The two included are:

- the recommendation to: "include allowance for potential adaptive reuse and other innovative strategies for sustained use (3a)"
- the statement in the Summary: "The REOI process has also led to the recommendation that the City pursue divestment of the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts given its focus on commercial entertainment."

Adaptive re-use opens the door for big box stores or for recasting the existing facility into one for specialty uses rather than broader cultural activities. Not only would such uses be damaging to existing established businesses in addition to being totally inappropriate for a downtown with an international reputation. They would also increase by many orders the issues which have bothered the neighbourhood for years with trucks loading or unloading for events at the Centre. Such activity would pale alongside a truly commercial use.

Adaptive re-use also paves the way for a complete rejection of the value and significance of the interior of the building which is almost unique in North America.

With regard to the existing uses of the Sony Centre, the statement that it is focused on commercial entertainment totally ignores the cultural diversity presented in its many ethnic productions which distinguish it totally from the two theatres the report suggest should be kept (because no-one wants to buy them). The loss of this programme would be a loss to Torontonians from across the City who come to events at the Sony Centre because they cannot be housed elsewhere or simply because no-one else is producing them.

But most important, why is the offer which has come from existing management not even been referenced in the report? From my understanding, and the Committee would have to get all the details for itself, it is a perfectly viable proposal which takes the Theatre off the City's hands and yet retains its existing programming which benefits the whole City, not just downtowners.

I ask the Committee to ask this same question and get the answers before any further discussion takes place.

Respectfully,


Larry Webb
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cc: CRBA Board
Councillor Pam McConnell