

NEXUS

Strategies

Sent Via Email to: exc@toronto.ca

Executive Committee Secretariat
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

November 14, 2012

**Re: Executive Committee Item EX24.8 – Future of the Three Major Civic
Theatres - Directions Resulting from REOI No. 9101-12-7008**

I am writing to express concern regarding the Report on the Future of the Three Major Civic Theatres and I wish to address specifically the results of the Report as it relates to the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts.

The Report's conclusion that the Sony Centre should be divested by the City fails to acknowledge the significant contribution that the Sony Centre makes to the fabric of Toronto. Not only is it a historic venue but, most importantly, it is the only venue that programmes artistic performances from around the world to honour the thousands of people from multiple cultures that have come to call Toronto their home. We are a global City and the Sony Centre is the epitome of our motto Diversity Our Strength.

The City should continue to fund the Centre's great work.

If however the City decides that, despite the good work the Centre does, it should not receive taxpayer dollars, at the very least, any divestment to a third party should require that the venue continue to be run not only as a theatre but a theatre whose primary mandate is the presentation of multicultural programming. The Report's reference to divest the theatre for some sort of "adaptive reuse" would run the risk of losing the one venue in the City that unites and celebrates all of our cultures on a grand scale. It would be disgraceful for our City, which prides itself on being the most diverse city in the world, to even be seen as considering this as a viable option.

I urge the Executive Committee to:

1. reject the Report's recommendation to divest the Sony Centre or at the very least

2. amend the Report to:
 - a. eliminate the possibility of "adaptive reuse"
 - b. require that the theatre be maintained as such and
 - c. require that any divestiture be made only to a third party who would commit to continue the Centre's multicultural programming mandate that has come to perfectly exemplify the very essence of what makes Toronto so unique throughout the world.

As someone who is a passionate supporter of the arts in the GTA, I continue to be integrally involved in the evolution of the representation of the diverse artistic voices in the region. From the time I co-founded the ROM's South Asian advisory committee in the mid 1990's, where we raised over \$3 Million to create Canada's first South Asian Gallery, to being on the board of my wife, Lata Pada's, award-winning Indian dance company, Sampradaya Dance Creations, I feel very strongly that a venue such as the Sony Centre is integral to the continuing growth of Toronto, and a critical avenue to share the stories of our collective, rich artistic histories.

Sincerely,

✓ ✓
Hari Venkatacharya
President

cc: Executive Committee Members

Mayor Rob Ford (Chair)
Councillor Paul Ainslie
Councillor Michelle Berardinetti
Councillor Mike Del Grande
Councillor Doug Holyday
Councillor Norman Kelly
Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti
Councillor Peter Milczyn
Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong
Councillor Cesar Palacio
Councillor Jaye Robinson
Councillor David Shiner
Councillor Michael Thompson