



Arts, Culture & Media
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH

Sent Via Email to: exc@toronto.ca

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

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

I have recently become aware of the report noted above and am writing to express my concern that this report recommends the City should move in a direction injurious to the arts scene in Toronto, particularly as it addresses the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts and its conclusion that the Centre should be divested by the City.

Such a conclusion fails to recognize and respect the critical voice and significant contribution the Sony Centre makes to Toronto as an historic venue and, most importantly given the incredible diversity of the Toronto community, as the only venue of its kind that programmes artistic performances from around the world to honour the thousands of people from the range of over 100 cultures that live in Toronto. As a global City, the Sony Centre exemplifies the City of Toronto's motto *Diversity Our Strength*.

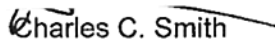
The programming at the SONY Centre is a model for Toronto and the City should continue to fund the Centre's invaluable work. It is a model I reference in my courses at the University of Toronto and include in my work with the project I founded and lead called Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (<http://cpamo.posterous.com/>), an organization that works with presenters across Ontario and over 40 Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and arts organizations. Given the vantage points that I am in, I can assure you that the SONY Centre is an integral part of the diverse cultural scene in Toronto and should be supported by the City.

However, if the City decides that, despite the Centre's good work, it will not fund the Centre, it is imperative that any severing to a third party require that the venue continue to be run not only as a theatre but a theatre whose primary mandate is the presentation of programming from diverse artists and for diverse communities. To do anything else, particularly to divest the theatre for some sort of "adaptive reuse", runs the risk of losing the largest 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 multicultural 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.

Sincerely,

 Charles C. Smith

Lecturer, Cultural Pluralism in the Arts, University of Toronto Scarborough, 1265 Military Trail,
Toronto, M1C 1A4, ccsmith@utsc.utoronto.ca

Project Lead, Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO)
416.686.3039

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