

Attn: Municipal Issues / Arts Desk  
November 2, 2009

## Toronto Unveils Billboard Tax for Art

>> 11 Million in Arts and Culture Funding Expected to Bolster Regional Economy and Give Teeth to New Billboard Bylaw. <<

November 2nd Toronto, ON - The City of Toronto has released a draft bylaw regulating outdoor advertising and introducing a new tax on billboards for art. The bylaw will be reviewed at the PGM Committee on Nov. 4th at 1:30pm. Aiming to beautify and increase freedom of expression in public spaces, Beautifulcity.ca has advocated for this city building idea since 2002.

Beautifulcity.ca is a broad-based coalition of over 50 Toronto organizations including the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Elementary Teachers of Toronto, Evergreen, The Stop Community Food Centre and Social Planning Toronto. Geographically, support for the proposal has been Toronto-wide, with endorsements from Lakeshore Arts in the West, to the Scarborough Arts Council in the East to UrbanArts in the North. Nearly three thousand individuals have signed a petition in support. According to an Environics poll, 7 out of 10 Toronto voters are supportive of the tax. This data is also backed by an earlier Pollara poll.

Once implemented, the new bylaw and tax will mean an historic increase to Toronto's arts budget, potentially doubling the numbers of artists receiving grants and funding hundreds of new arts projects across every Toronto ward. Allotting revenue to art will mitigate some of the harm billboards cause to the beauty of public spaces. Billboards are one of the only forms of advertising where the viewer is not compensated for their attention with educational or enjoyable content. Boasting strong long-term profits and growth the outdoor advertising industry has no such built-in responsibility to the public as people do not have a choice but to view the messages.

The tax for art will also help spur the economy. A McKinsey and Co. study in 2006 stated that "for every 1 dollar of public arts funding in a regional economy, 8 are generated," and in 2008, the Martin Prosperity Institute found that "the fact that average cities around the country have expanded their cultural expenditures by more than 4 times as much as the City of Toronto has put Toronto on the low end of competitive growth."

Towards the aim of diversifying access to public space, the proposal entails a funding priority on marginalized communities and youth art. This will not only make Toronto a more fair and reflective city -- but also healthier. According to a report from the University of Pennsylvania "Low income neighbourhoods with higher cultural participation are four times more likely than average to have low delinquency rates. Neighbourhoods with an active arts scene are nearly three times more likely to see their poverty rates decline and their population increase."

Devon Ostrom - one of the founders of Beautifulcity.ca states, "This is a chance for the city to really shine - nothing like this has been done before. It not only represents an historic commitment to art and a long-term investment in the economic health of the region, but will make the city a more humane and beautiful place to live in. People are at least 50% a product of their environment - a cityscape where people are addressed and treated as creative agents and as citizens is a more entrepreneurial, innovative and vibrant city."

*The Consolidated Billboard Bylaw and Third Party Signage Tax will be heard on Nov. 4th 1:30pm at Planning and Growth Management, Committee Room 1.*

### RESOURCES

Industry Arguments Against the Tax / Bylaw:

[http://www.beautifulcity.ca/What\\_Is\\_The\\_Industry\\_Saying.pdf](http://www.beautifulcity.ca/What_Is_The_Industry_Saying.pdf)

Draft Beautifulcity.ca Town Hall Video:

<http://www.vimeo.com/6874807>

Councillor's Brief and Public Opinion Polls (300 KB PDF)

<http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bcbf/BCBF-Brief-v10.pdf>

Research Cited and Free Use Images:

<http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bcbf.asp?id=29>

### INQUIRES

Devon Ostrom

[devon@beautifulcity.ca](mailto:devon@beautifulcity.ca)

647 267 4221

Julia Che

Agents of Change

[julia@beautifulcity.ca](mailto:julia@beautifulcity.ca)

416 928 1978



Julia Che  
**Agents of Change**  
[julia@beautifulcity.ca](mailto:julia@beautifulcity.ca)  
416 928 1978

### BEAUTIFULCITY.CA ALLIANCE

411 Initiative for Change  
ACS Student Union  
Agents of Change  
Art City  
Art Gallery of Ontario  
Artreach Toronto  
Arts Network for Children and Youth  
Artstarts  
Artsvot  
CANADIAN Youth Arts Network  
CARFAC Ontario  
Centre for Information & Community Services of Ontario  
Centre for Integral Economics  
Dandyhorse Magazine  
Elementary Teachers of Toronto  
Eva's Initiatives  
Evergreen  
Fairlawn Neighbourhood Centre  
Grassroots Youth Collaborative  
Illegalsigns.ca  
Kate Henderson Intellectual Property & Trademark  
Lakeshore Arts  
Lotus Leaf  
Manifesto  
Mural Routes  
No.9 Contemporary Art & the Environment  
OpenCity Projects  
Regent Park Focus Youth  
Media Arts Centre  
Ryerson Students' Union  
Scarborough Arts Council  
Schools Without Borders  
Social Planning Toronto  
Sketch  
Spacing Magazine  
Style in Progress  
Sunnyside Community Association  
TakingITGlobal  
The Faculty Of  
The Gladstone Hotel  
The Remix Project  
The Stop Community Food Centre  
them.ca  
Threads 4 Humanity  
Toronto Arts Council Foundation  
Toronto Cyclists Union  
Toronto Public Space Committee  
Toronto Youth Cabinet  
University of Toronto Student Union  
Urban Arts  
Well and Good Art Space  
Why Not Theatre  
Youth Action Network