

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Sign by-law revenue

One of the loudest voices backing the city's new sign by-law and billboard tax, **BeautifulCity.ca Alliance**, has released a position paper recommending where the revenue from the new tax should be allocated through the budget process.

The paper is being released with recommendations just days before council's budget committee releases the 2010 operating budget.

After nearly two years of work by staff and consultants to create a city-wide sign by-law, council approved the new by-law and the accompanying billboard tax last December. The tax is estimated to drum up revenues of about \$7.8 million in 2010 and \$10.4 million in 2011.

Throughout the work on the new by-law, the tax and council's debate, it was understood that the revenue would be put toward funding arts and culture in the city but a motion passed by council at its December meeting puts the final decision firmly in the budget allocation process.

The alliance of organizations, which includes a number of arts groups, is concerned this process will result in the money being allocated elsewhere.

"The alliance is agreeable to putting 10 per cent of the new revenue the organization has brought to the table towards balancing the city budget in 2010," the position paper states.

"In exchange, the alliance requires that in the 2010 budget, 90 per cent of all incoming billboard tax revenues (minus enforcement costs) be invested in the public realm improvements."

"This will be in accordance [with] how the tax was both conceived and sold to the public."

The alliance is also calling for 90 per cent of the revenues to be provided to the **Toronto Arts Council**, which will distribute it as follows: about \$2 million to fund accessible youth arts programming in priority neighbourhoods; about \$2 million to public realm improvements in any ward; and about \$4 million to artists, arts organizations, festivals.

Suggested alternatives would be to distribute the funds to the target groups through the city's community resource unit, public realm unit and community investment program or through a new public realm improvement and arts fund.

Also included in the alliance's position paper is a breakdown of polls and studies done by **EKOS Research** and the **Martin Prosperity Institute** respecting public support for the by-law and tax if revenues were dedicated to the arts.

The budget committee meets Tuesday and city manager **Joe Pennachetti** and CFO **Cam Weldon** will present the 2010 operating budget.

NRU

- To read the position paper: <http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bc/BC-BudgetProcess.pdf>