

v2. Analysis of Arguments Against Dedicating the Billboard Tax to Art in the Public Sphere with a Priority on Youth / Marginalized Communities

1) "The arts avoided a 5% cut"

- The tax going to art was undermined on the basis of extreme financial hardship on the part of the city. Nobody accepts that the city would have been able to cut the arts by 5% in an election year sporting a 100m surplus. Corrective action needs to be taken.
- The billboard tax revenues are more than 5% of the present arts budget.
- It is undemocratic (i.e. without public consultations and council direction) to assume that a 5% cut could have been automatically applied to some of the city's most popular, already anemic and least resource intensive programs.
- 'The arts in general' is a different than 'enhancing public spaces with art' – our position and closer to Council's original direction to staff / the basis that the tax was communicated to the public, in council, two rounds of consultations and staff and consultant's reports.
- It is very clear that 5% was not universally applied; it looks like many agencies just got nicked a bit and any serious cuts had the funding replaced with the surplus.

2) 'The City never communicated that the billboard tax was going to art'

- This is ridiculous in the context of massive community support, eight public consultations, 9 years of work with city staff, council's original direction, city press releases, presentations by staff, over 45 statements in council and numerous private and as well as public commitments in the press by both the Mayor and Budget chief. (Click underlined for links.)

3) "Finance Staff have reduced the revenue projection to 3.5 million for 2010 and we have allotted all/most the funds to art this year (arts excused from 5% cut + 2% increase to CPIP + 107K for TIFF / 200K for Luminato)."

- The original projection for 2010 was a conservative 5.2 million after 2 years of work by staff and outside consultants. How can we trust a behind the scenes re-evaluation of revenue in the context of the city going from absolutely broke to a 100m dollar surplus? Seems like the same information shaping used to suck the air out of rational discussion as used in the budgeting process? Additionally in that nobody accepts that the city would have been able to cut the arts by 5% in an election year sporting a 100m surplus so the equation is off. There is no reason for Toronto to accept mediocrity.

4) "2% is enough, this is a victory"

- The 2% is not targeted to the arts or enhancing public spaces with art. The increase is essentially a 2% cost of living / inflationary adjustment to existing programs. For example it presently means only about 300K will go directly to Toronto's hundreds of arts organizations. (+200K added for Luminato and 107K for TIFF) This is essentially the status quo and will do close to nothing for the public as far as improving Toronto's public spaces and little for the arts (Check out the archive for the basis that the tax was communicated to the public: <http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bc/archive.htm>)
- It is 2.5 million short of the available billboard tax revenue for this year. A positive precedent should be set for next year when the fund reaches 10.4 million.

5) "Other priorities"

- Why is freedom of expression in public spaces, developing community ownership, acting on strong civic engagement while showing follow-through and integrity not a priority?
- Why is long-term investment into our future not a priority?
- Why is listening to the voice of young, creative and solution oriented Torontonians, supported by 70% of Toronto (EKOS & Environics Polls) - not a priority?

5) "The arts get enough already"

- After inflation, cultural funding has been stagnant since 1991. Most artists live below the poverty line and work non-arts jobs.
- According to the Martin Prosperity Institute average cities around the country have expanded their cultural

expenditures by more than 4 times as much as Toronto, putting the city on the low end of competitive growth.

- This is about more than funding the arts - it's about city beautification projects that can provide jobs, strengthen communities, engage youth, adults and seniors, reduce crime, increase tourism, create hope and develop pride.

6) "We don't have enough money in general"

- The city never has enough. Faced with this problem Torontonians created a source of funds (the Billboard Tax) to fund the city beautification projects they wanted.

- The revenue is only 0.04% of the budget this year, 0.09% of next - Torontonians will get no visible benefit if it goes to increasing funding for entrenched interests - but if it goes to art in public spaces the effect will be revolutionary in supporting youth arts programs and creating a more vibrant city.

- The city would not even have the funds without BeautifulCity.ca coming up with the idea and pushing it forward.

7) "There is no money left after enforcement"

- There is 3.4 million left in projected revenue after a healthy 1.8 goes to setting up and enforcing the billboard bylaw. + See #3

8) "Either we can dedicate the funds or fund social programs"

- The desired use of the billboard tax prioritizes funding high-need communities.

- The city would have these pressures regardless of the new funds.

- According to EKOS Research, 80% of Torontonians think that government investment in the arts in public spaces improves the local economy. A long-term perspective is necessary in developing healthy, inclusive and economically vibrant spaces. Fiscal stability should include strategic investment: a McKinsey and Co. study in 2006 found that "for every 1 dollar of public arts funding in a regional economy, 8 are generated."

- Investment today will mean more money for Toronto in the future.

9) "Next year"

- The city has always been in a 'financial crisis,' next year will be twice as bad and if not that it is likely that other people will be in control of the budget process. Don't sacrifice the innovative solutions of one generation for the mistakes of the previous.

- There have already been a large number of delays (8 at last count). This is not a game. Citizen led, volunteer efforts to improve Toronto should be respected and not endlessly drawn out.

WHAT WILL THIS DO FOR TORONTO ?

- Vibrant public spaces enhance property values and increase traffic for small businesses; they boost civic pride and tourism, build community cohesion and give something highly visible back to residents.

- Strategic investment is an important part of long-term fiscal stability. A McKinsey and Co. study in 2006 found that "for every 1 dollar of public arts funding in a regional economy, 8 are generated."

- Toronto is falling behind other cities in relative cultural spending: according to the Martin Prosperity Institute after inflation, cultural funding has been stagnant since 1991 and average cities around the country have expanded their cultural expenditures by more than 4 times as much as Toronto, putting the city on the low end of competitive growth.

View the entire position document here: <http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bc/BC-BudgetProcess.pdf>