

Feb 17, 2010, Toronto  
For Immediate Release  
City Hall Desk > Arts Desk



## Budget Process: BeautifulCity.ca Set to 'InVoice' City Hall

>> *Zero new money in budget for enhancing public spaces with art // BeautifulCity.ca Town Hall: 'InVoice' March 1<sup>st</sup> 6:30pm City Hall, Committee Room #2 // View video of previous town hall here: <http://vimeo.com/5639645> <<*

Toronto, Canada // After unanimous endorsement by the PGM Committee followed by a 29/12 win at Council in Dec. 2009 (drastically improving regulation of billboards) the final decision on the billboard tax for art has been set to occur at some point during the budget process. The new tax was justified as going to enhanced funding for art in public spaces in staff and consultant reports, public consultations, city press releases, over 45 times in Council and a wide variety of media outlets after.

In yesterday's Staff Recommended 2010 Operating Budget, zero new money has been allotted to enhancing public spaces with art. The rationale is that the arts avoided a 5% cut in general. However, the billboard tax revenues are significantly more than 5% of the present arts budget. It is also undemocratic (i.e. without public consultation, council direction or a vote) 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. Additionally, 'the arts in general' is a different than enhancing public spaces with arts (Executive Committee's original direction and the basis that the tax was sold to the public in consultations.)

A large number Councillors stated their support for enhancing public spaces with art through the new tax. Budget Chief and Toronto's Official Youth Advocate, Councillor Shelley Carroll moved the billboard tax revenues to the operating budget process as a safeguard to effectively direct the funds. In council she repeatedly underscored the need to follow-through on the city's commitment to the Agenda for Prosperity and Culture Plan. After the vote she was also reported in Inside Toronto as promising that the funds would be targeted toward to the arts. Mayor Miller was also recorded as saying that he would "to use the new revenues to achieve the goals of our cultural plan," In council, Councillor Rae stated "I am committed, deeply to the funds, going to, as the Hemson report suggested into the public realm and to the arts." Spacing reported that "every single member of Budget Committee has expressed their support for a billboard tax that funds arts and public realm enhancements."

BeautifulCity.ca understands the budget pressures and has proposed a solution in our policy document. The Alliance looks forward to working with these councillors to ensure that the new funding is dedicated towards enhancing public spaces with art.

### Quick Facts

1. According to EKOS Research, only 18% of Torontonians are supportive of a billboard tax with the funds going into general revenue.
2. Over 4500 people have signed a petition of support and over 60 organizations have endorsed BeautifulCity.ca
3. The city would not even have the tax without the arts community inventing the idea and pushing it through for the past 8 years.

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### 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  
Artsvote  
Canadian Youth Arts Network  
CARFAC Ontario  
Centre for Information & Community Services of Ontario  
Centre for Integral Economics  
Chinese Canadian National Council, Toronto Chapter  
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  
Sketch  
Social Planning Toronto  
Spacing Magazine  
Stunt Creative  
Style in Progress  
Sunnyside Community Association  
TakingITGlobal  
The Faculty Of  
The Gladstone Hotel  
The Remix Project  
The Stop Community Food Centre [them.ca](http://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

4. The revenue is only 0.04% of the budget this year, 0.09% of next – Torontonians will get no visible benefit if these funds go instead 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.
5. According to EKOS Research, 80% of Torontonians think that government investment in the arts in public spaces improves the local economy.
6. After inflation, cultural funding has been stagnant since 1991 and most artists live below the poverty line and also work non-arts jobs.
7. 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.
8. 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."
9. Vibrant public spaces enhance property values, boost tourism, give something visible back to residents and will help build the city for the long-term.

### Call to Action

- Call your city councillor and ask them to support the funds going to enhancing public spaces in accordance to how the tax was conceived and sold to the public and council.
- Register your arts, public space or arts related organizations to give a deputation at Budget Committee (buc@toronto.ca) with your name, title, deputation subject and address for March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Show your support at the BeautifulCity.ca Town Hall: 'InVoice,' on March 1st 6:30pm in Committee Room #2 at City Hall.

### Resources

Watch a Recap Video of PGM & Council:

<http://www.beautifulcity.ca>

Download Position Paper (including transcripts, EKOS Poll):

<http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bc/BC-BudgetProcess.pdf>

Register for Town Hall Updates:

<http://tinyurl.com/yzwsno7>

Download this press release:

<http://www.beautifulcity.ca/bc/BC-PR11.pdf>

### Media Inquiries

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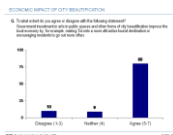
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**MEDIA LINKS AND RESOURCES** - Please click text to follow links or go to <http://www.beautifulcity.ca>



TAKE ACTION



EKOS STATS



BREAKING NEWS



COUNCIL VIDEO (1/2)



POSITION DOC



1<sup>ST</sup> TOWN HALL VIDEO



INVOICE TOWN HALL