

Deputation delivered July 28, 2011, as part of the City of Toronto Core Service Review

Dr. Sara Diamond, President OCAD University

I speak to you today as the President of Ontario College of Art and Design University. We do not receive funding from the City of Toronto. For 135 years our students, alumni and faculty have helped to weave the fabric of Toronto's world class visual arts, galleries, media art, community arts, design, digital culture and cultural tourism - contributing to the annual \$9 billion of cultural GDP in Toronto. Our students come from every part of this great city – from Etobicoke, Scarborough, North York - they arrive here from all over the world in order to live and learn in a metropolis that has become a cultural beacon.

For the sake of the next generation we believe that the arts in this city must remain a public/private partnership. Public money – in particular that of the Toronto Arts Council, or the City's contribution to the spectacularly successful Nuit Blanche -acts as leverage, creating the infrastructure or providing the upfront catalyst that enables artists to act as creative contributors and in turn produce more value. We need to think of this investment like a form of early stage start-up funding, as seed money, or as a proportion contribution to a budget that in turn allows the cultural economy to pay back thousands of times beyond the initial investment made, with a 1:17 ratio of ROI. For example, Torontonians spent \$4.8 billion on cultural goods and services in 2008 and Nuit Blanche alone brought in 138,000 out of town visitors, in turn contributing to \$34.7m of economic benefit in 2010.

In the digital era the art and design talent pool of individual artists feeds the heated digital media and ICT industry and the Ontario technology corridor – screen based industries alone contributed \$1.1 billion/year to a larger cluster worth \$12.2 billion in GDP. We need the public portion of investment to maintain this virtuous circle and keep those jobs here.

The leverage is not only economic – as well as contributing to quality of life, this public/private partnership allows the arts to play their fundamental part in providing cohesion in a city as diverse as Toronto with tremendous positive impacts on youth engagement.

Of course it is legitimate and necessary for the city to review delivery mechanisms and institutions, look for efficiencies, amalgamate and modernize services, and eliminate redundancies - to find budget savings and to ensure quality. However, the City of Toronto should tread cautiously in eroding arts funding – in particular the Community Partnership and Investment Program, for fear that our city will see a flight of both its arts talent and many others – not only elites – who rely on the arts to bring meaning to their daily lives or as the wellspring of talent for their companies. A city devoid of the arts will not have the capacity to compete on the world stage.