

# **THE STATE OF CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

## Policy and Issues Dialogue



Regional Roundtable Background Paper – Ontario

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## 1. Introduction

This paper is intended to provide an overview of the state of tangible cultural infrastructure (or “bricks and mortar”) in the province of Ontario. Using an e-mail list provided by the Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities, survey questionnaires were sent to government officials with responsibilities for cultural infrastructure at all three levels of jurisdiction, as well as to individuals from cultural organizations and cultural facilities. Since the response rate to this survey was low, additional research was carried out to identify programs, policies, plans, strategies and reports on Ontario cultural infrastructure. Contacts were also made with key individuals in organizations to seek clarification or additional information.

Based on this research, there is evidence of a cultural infrastructure “renaissance” in some parts of the province, but like the early stages of the 15<sup>th</sup> century renaissance, this rebirth is most evident in larger urban centres. It is being driven, to a great extent, by ideas about the creative class and the creative economy, popularized by Richard Florida, Meric Gertler and others, as well as by a pent-up demand resulting from government cutbacks in the 1990s and the curtailment in 1987 of municipal government’s power to allocate a portion of development charges to cultural infrastructure projects.

Florida’s central thesis is that members of the creative class are attracted to “creative centres” – places that are “the economic winners of our age” (Florida, 2003, p. 8). What attracts them is not the traditional infrastructure of “sports stadiums, freeways, urban malls, and tourism and entertainment districts,” according to Florida, but “abundant high-quality experiences, an openness to diversity of all kinds, and, above all else, the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people” (p. 9). Despite this somewhat negative assessment of investment in tangible infrastructure as an attractor, many municipalities in Ontario have focussed upon cultural infrastructure as a means of revitalizing downtown districts and of branding their communities as places where creativity can thrive. In doing so, larger cities, at least, have been able to respond to the policy priorities of senior levels of government, particularly in the economic sphere.<sup>1</sup>

As Barbara Jenkins of Wilfrid Laurier University has observed, “New cultural buildings are simultaneously national symbols, ‘brands’, and integral players in what Zukin (2001) has labelled the ‘Artistic Mode of Production’” (Jenkins, 2005). However, it appears that the cultural organizations that operate these buildings often struggle to meet basic standards for artistic production and are not primarily motivated by the broader imperatives of economic development. In addition, not all municipalities have what Florida has called the “density of creative capital” to function effectively as incubators of “creative spillovers” and innovation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Despite frequent references to Florida in policy documents, it would appear that policymakers at all levels have been influenced more by research such as the New England Council’s *Creative Economy Initiative* and the Americans for the Arts’ *Arts & Economic Prosperity* studies that consider the “creative cluster,” the “creative workforce” and the “creative community” as interdependent factors in economic growth.

<sup>2</sup> In a May 2007 paper, Florida and several colleagues carried out a statistical analysis of the density of creative workers in 240 geographic metropolitan areas in the United States to quantify linkages between the presence of these workers and metropolitan patenting activity.

## 2. Existing state of cultural infrastructure

There is no comprehensive inventory of cultural infrastructure in Ontario that covers all the various categories of cultural activity: museums, libraries, performing and visual arts venues and government-operated facilities. However, there is a good deal of information scattered throughout the system that provides a sense of levels of support, if not of levels of need.

### 2.1 Heritage

For the heritage sector, there are four broad sources of information on numbers, locations and types of heritage infrastructure:

- The Parks Canada – Historic Places Initiative’s *Canadian Register of Historic Places*, which can be searched by community or location
- The *Ontario Heritage Properties Database*, which can be searched by community, type or date of construction
- The Ontario Museum Association’s *Guide to Ontario Museums*, which can be searched by community, type or location
- The Ministry of Culture website of community museums funded by the Museum Operating Grant Program, which provides links but is not searchable

While useful from an historic and tourism perspective, none of these databases provide details on the physical state of the facility or on plans with regard to capital investment. (Website addresses for these resources are included in the Bibliography.)

### 2.2 Libraries

Feedback received from a member of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries indicates that the FOPL is planning an inventory of public library infrastructure in Ontario, as well as an inventory of ongoing library infrastructure projects. At the moment, the FOPL website only contains links to member libraries (Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, no date). The Ontario Ministry of Culture also provides a website linking to Ontario public libraries (Ontario Ministry of Culture, no date, “Ontario Public Library ...”).

### 2.3 Performing and visual arts

In the areas of performing and visual arts, two organizations have been active in developing inventories of infrastructure need – ArtsBuild Ontario and Réseau Ontario.

#### ArtsBuild Ontario

ArtsBuild Ontario is a collaborative initiative of eight arts service organizations: Artist-Run Centres and Collectives of Ontario, Dance Umbrella of Ontario, Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario (in collaboration with Association des groupes en arts visuels francophones), Ontario Association of Art Galleries, Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, Théâtre Action (in collaboration with Association des théâtres français du Canada), Theatre Ontario and the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts. ArtsBuild has been active since 2001 in documenting the capital and facility needs of small and mid-sized performing and visual arts

organizations.<sup>3</sup> In a March 2001 discussion paper entitled *Coordinated Approach to Arts Infrastructure Development in Ontario*, the Facilities Strategy Committee, the forerunner of ArtsBuild Ontario, noted that there had been no significant public infrastructure investment in Ontario non-profit arts facilities for over six years and that deferred maintenance and capital repairs were causing operating inefficiencies and health and safety problems (Facilities Strategy Committee, 2001, p. 1). That paper examined four options for addressing these problems:

- Funding through an Ontario-based foundation
- A federal/provincial tax credit program
- A focus on financing, technical assistance and leveraging private support
- A case-by-case review of capital projects under existing programs. (Facilities Strategy Committee, 2001, pp. 3-9)

In September 2001, the same group released a comprehensive study by Sandra Tulloch and Catherine Smalley entitled *Spaced ... Out? A Study of Facility Needs of Small and Mid-Sized Performing & Visual Arts Organizations in Ontario*, which documented the huge pent-up need for cultural facilities development and concluded that “Ontario’s new SuperBuild Sports, Culture and Tourism Partnership Fund and the federal component of that Fund do not begin to address the needs across the province and the criteria for applicants have effectively shut out the bulk of small and mid-sized arts organizations from the first investment round.” (Tulloch & Smalley, 2001, p. 13). A subsequent survey in 2006 confirmed this conclusion, showing that the main sources of funding for capital expenditures among the small and mid-sized arts organizations surveyed was their operating budget (45%), followed by individual corporate fundraising (40%) and Ontario Trillium Foundation grants (37%) (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2006, p. 6).

In 2005, the ArtsBuild consortium secured a \$216,700 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation over three years to work on establishing the most effective mechanism for addressing the “facilities deficit.” In summer 2006, it worked with Ipsos Reid on a survey of small and mid-sized performing and visual arts organizations. Among the 164 respondents (a 43% response rate), it found that 82% were currently planning at least one capital project and that a total of 109 capital projects were planned in the next three years. Total cost for these projects was estimated to be in the \$100 million range (Arts Build Ontario, 2007b, p. 3). Other pertinent findings include the following:

- 20% of respondents own a facility
- 87% of all owned facilities are outside of Toronto
- 32% of those leasing are doing so from their municipality
- 45% of all facilities were constructed over 75 years ago
- 28% of facilities are designated heritage buildings

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<sup>3</sup> ArtsBuild Ontario defines small to mid-sized organizations as those with operating budgets of up to \$3 million annually and, in the performing arts, less than 500 seats.

- 69% of organizations report insufficient access to space (public presentation, administrative, rehearsal/production, or storage/service areas) (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007a).

ArtsBuild Ontario subsequently met with the Ontario Minister of Culture to urge the introduction of a cultural infrastructure program which, according to its Strategic Plan, is currently under consideration by the Ministry (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, p. 8).

### **Réseau Ontario**

Réseau Ontario, a group of 22 multidisciplinary and specialized arts presenters and 12 school boards that coordinates touring of francophone performers in Ontario, has also been active in documenting capital infrastructure needs. In 2005, the Réseau, in collaboration with Théâtre Action and the Association des professionnels de la chanson et de la musique, carried out an inventory of performing arts spaces in francophone Ontario. An experienced consultant surveyed all 42 performing arts spaces, documenting the capital needs in each one. He grouped them into four categories:

- Catégorie A – Salle professionnelle – 4 sites
- Catégorie B – Salle semi-professionnelle – 7 sites
- Catégorie C – Salle sommaire – 2 sites
- Catégorie D – Salle alternative – 29 sites (Réseau Ontario, 2005, p. 28)

The study concluded that only 26% (11 performing arts venues out of 42) met the technical standards required for professional performing arts presentations (Réseau Ontario, 2005, p. 7). To bring Categories C and D facilities up to acceptable performing arts standards, Réseau Ontario estimated that each one would require an investment of \$20,000 to \$40,000 to improve logistics (such as stage equipment), \$7,000 to \$17,000 to improve lighting and \$10,000 to \$12,000 to improve sound (Réseau Ontario, 2005, pp. 18-22). A low end investment of \$37,000 in each facility would amount to about \$1.07 million. At the high end, \$69,000 per facility would be required for a total cost of just over \$ 2 million. However, Réseau Ontario recommended that a better solution would be to build new venues or renovate existing facilities to bring them to the Category A or B level.

The Ontario Ministry of Culture is responsible for repairs and renovations of provincially owned and operated cultural facilities, which are deemed to be “attraction agencies” (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2007-08). According to the Budget Estimates for 2007-08, \$8 million has been set aside for repair and rehabilitation of these cultural agencies under the Ministry of Culture’s Culture Capital Program – Vote 2804 (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2007-08; communication from David McLachlan, Ministry of Culture, November 5, 2007).

Some municipalities have been active in documenting their cultural infrastructure needs, but this has usually been done in conjunction with the development of cultural plans or strategies, which are described in section 3 below. This picture is incomplete, however, because not all municipalities have produced cultural plans. Participants at the Ontario Round Table where this paper was discussed suggested that a more complete picture might be derived from an examination of Community Improvement Plans, which in Ontario are intended to:

- focus public attention on local priorities and municipal initiatives
- target areas in transition or in need of repair, rehabilitation and redevelopment

- facilitate and encourage community change in a co-coordinated manner
- stimulate private sector investment through municipal incentive-based programs (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2006).

This suggestion may very well yield a more precise estimate of the cultural infrastructure deficit, but would require additional extensive research.

In summary, based on the information above, it can be safely said that about \$110 million in cultural infrastructure needs in Ontario have been documented. However, while we have a very incomplete picture of the condition of heritage and library infrastructure, it is likely that need in this area is also quite high and could double the total investment requirement to over \$200 million.<sup>4</sup> For example, a 2006 Heritage Conservation Programs Survey indicated that 86% of the 167 municipalities who responded (a 37.5% response rate) had some type of museum or heritage organization in place to look after local heritage. However, only 14 responding municipalities participated in the Heritage Property Tax Relief Program, and those 14 alone had 1075 eligible properties (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2006).

### 3. Existing policy framework and funding

#### 3.1. Federal and provincial governments

The current policy framework for cultural infrastructure investment has grown out of the increased attention paid to cities and communities by both federal and provincial governments in the past several years. For most of the 1990s, federal funding for cultural infrastructure under the Cultural Initiatives Program and the Museum Assistance Program had either been reduced or frozen due to fiscal restraint. However, at the turn of the millennium, the climate for cultural investments became much more welcoming.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), which provides grants to not-for-profit and charitable organizations for operating, project and capital purposes, began making cultural infrastructure investments in 1999. Small municipalities with populations under 20,000 were also permitted to make applications for arts, culture, library, sport, and recreation grants. (Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2007a). Between April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007, OTF made 1,689 capital grants worth \$67.5 million. This represents 24% of OTF's total allocation during this period. Almost 450 of these capital grants were made in the arts and culture sector, for a total of \$16.3 million. In the 2006-07 fiscal year, \$21.2 million was allocated to capital, which represents 22% of OTF's total allocation. Of this amount, \$4.9 million (or 23%) was allocated to the arts and culture sector.<sup>5</sup>

At the federal level, renewed interest in community infrastructure issues was manifested in a number of ways. In 2000, the federal government signed a partnership agreement with Ontario – the Canada–Ontario Infrastructure Program – that contributed \$680 million over five years for investments in physical infrastructure (delivered through the SuperBuild Program – see below). Of the total amount, \$110 million was specifically designated for cultural infrastructure (Tulloch & Smalley, 2001, p. 40; Jenkins, 2005, p. 8). This investment

<sup>4</sup> Participants at the Ontario Round Table, many of whom were from the municipalities, suggested that even this estimate might be too conservative.

<sup>5</sup> Personal communication from David McLachlan, Ministry of Culture, November 2, 2007.

was followed by such policy pronouncements as the “New Deal for Cities and Communities” in 2004, as well as the creation of the Cities and Communities Branch at Infrastructure Canada and the Cities Secretariat at the Privy Council Office.<sup>6</sup>

In the cultural sphere, the federal government also made significant funding available under the Tomorrow Starts Today initiative, which was announced in 2001. Part of this package included an \$80 million allocation for Cultural Spaces Canada, a new program to support the improvement, renovation and construction of arts and heritage facilities and the acquisition of specialized equipment.<sup>7</sup> Since 2001, Cultural Spaces Canada has contributed a total of \$148,095,202 to 533 projects across Canada. Of this amount, \$42,504,986 or 28.7% was for capital projects in Ontario. The ten largest Ontario recipients were:

- Stratford Shakespearean Festival, Stratford – \$3,950,000
- Great Canadian Theatre Company, Ottawa – \$3,045,000
- Corporation of the Town of Parry Sound – \$2,966,000
- Toronto Artscape Inc. – \$2,400,000
- Shaw Festival Theatre Foundation, Niagara-on-the-Lake – \$2,160,000
- Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill – \$2,000,000
- Corporation of the City of Kingston – \$2,000,000
- Science North, Sudbury – \$2,000,000
- Centennial Centre of Science and Technology, Toronto – \$1,000,000
- Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto – \$1,000,000  
(Department of Canadian Heritage, no date, “Cultural Spaces Canada...”)

At the provincial level, in May 2000 Ontario announced the SuperBuild Sports, Culture and Tourism Partnerships (SCTP), a \$300 million program to be delivered over five years (Tulloch & Smalley, 2001, p. 40). Its purpose was to invest in sports, culture and tourism infrastructure through renewing, enhancing and improving municipally-owned or endorsed local sport, recreation, culture and tourism facilities, and major cultural and tourist attractions owned by provincial or not-for-profit organizations. Although the stated objective of the SCTP was to support culture and recreation infrastructure throughout Ontario, as Barbara Jenkins has pointed out, this funding was in fact allocated according to how it “fit into the cultural tourism framework” and the province’s strategy of creating a concentrated area of cultural attractions to lure visitors to Toronto. (Jenkins, 2005, p. 8). Accordingly, in May 2003, the federal and provincial governments announced \$233 million in capital investments under the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program in seven cultural institutions in the City of Toronto: the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canadian Opera Company, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Ballet School, the Royal Conservatory of Music, the George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art and Roy Thomson Hall (Jenkins, 2005, p. 5).<sup>8</sup> Outside of Toronto, major projects supported included the Art Gallery of Hamilton, the Bruce County

<sup>6</sup> Neither of these organizations now exists.

<sup>7</sup> Communication from Sally Han, Department of Canadian Heritage, October 23, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> The *ReNew Ontario Progress Report 2006 – Summary* lists the total investment at \$166.5 million for six institutions, omitting Roy Thomson Hall.

Museum, the Irving Greenberg Theatre Centre in Ottawa and the proposed (but not yet fully funded) concert hall for the Ottawa Chamber Music Society (Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, 2006, p. 15). Since municipalities were only permitted to submit one project annually to SuperBuild, those that made it through the gate tended to be those with higher profiles that had been identified as long-standing priorities. Currently, the SCTP Initiative is managing a number of approved projects scheduled to be completed by March 2008 and is not accepting new applications.

Complaints by organizations such as ArtsBuild that cultural infrastructure funding has been heavily skewed toward tourism attractions in the major centres appear to have had an impact on the provincial government, which in the past two years has made several notable infrastructure policy and program announcements:

- In May 2005, the government launched ReNew Ontario, a \$30 billion strategic, five-year infrastructure investment fund to repair, revitalize and expand public infrastructure (Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, 2006).
- In December 2006, the Ministry of Finance announced a \$190 million economic stimulus package to assist Ontario workers and communities affected by slow economic growth, of which a total of \$8.3 million went to citizenship and culture centres, heritage facilities, libraries and museums (*2007 Ontario Budget, Section G*, p. 102). In February 2007, the Ministry of Culture allocated \$6.8 million under this package for libraries and museums across the province<sup>9</sup> (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2007b).
- The 2007 Ontario Budget announced the establishment of a \$140 million Rural Infrastructure Investment Initiative (RIII) intended to support construction-ready projects in five priority areas, including sports, recreation and cultural facilities. (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2007b, p. 104).
- Also in the 2007 Ontario Budget was an allocation of \$2 million to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission to support the heritage sites at Fort Henry and Upper Canada Village (Ontario Museum Association, 2007b).
- In August 2007, the Ontario Trillium Foundation announced that its budget was increasing from \$100 million to \$105 million in the first phase of a 20% increase announced in the 2007 Ontario Budget. As a result, it increased its maximum capital grant to \$150,000 from \$75,000 (Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2007b).
- During the recent Ontario election, the Liberals outlined a comprehensive cultural platform in the document, *The Ontario Liberal Plan for Creative People, Prosperous Province, 2007*. A number of the items were specific to cultural infrastructure while others were related:
  - Maintain and rebuild cultural infrastructure by revitalizing local arts and culture through a three-year, \$40 million cultural capital program. This program will help municipalities provide artists with space to do their work.
  - Promote cultural centres

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<sup>9</sup> This included \$1.6 million for the Fort Frances Public Library, \$500,000 to the Minto Heritage Facility in Wellington County, \$170,000 to the Art Gallery of Algoma in Sault Ste. Marie, and \$50,000 to Bonnechere Museum in Eganville.

- Provide municipalities with the funds, knowledge and tools to help develop their unique cultural creative industries.
- Support organizations that strengthen community arts programs, such as the Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership, through an annual investment of \$5 million.<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding the flurry of recent announcements, sources of cultural infrastructure support in Ontario remain fairly limited. The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation occasionally provides some capital funding for cultural organizations. For example, in November 2006, the Fund provided \$8,900 for a feasibility study on a community arts centre in Sturgeon Falls (Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, 2006) but this appears to be a fairly rare event.

In the heritage area, infrastructure support measures appear to be particularly evanescent. The \$5 million Community Component of the Ontario Heritage Challenge Fund, announced in February 2000, which provided matching grants to not-for-profit organizations and municipalities to restore heritage sites or establish endowment funds, was fully committed by the end of the 2001-2002 fiscal year. (Ontario Heritage Foundation, 2001-02, p. 20). In 2003, the Historic Places Initiative established the Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund as a pilot project, but it has been closed to new applicants since September 2006. Under this program both the upgrading of the Royal Alexandra Theatre and the rehabilitation of the Gooderham and Worts Distillery in Toronto were supported (Parks Canada – Historic Places Initiative, no date, “Commercial ...”). These developments, coupled with the \$4.5 million cut to the Museums Assistance Program at the Department of Canadian Heritage in September 2006, have disappointed many in the Ontario museum community (Ontario Museum Association, 2006).

Libraries, perhaps because of the nature of their business, have had relatively stable support for digital equipment purchases since March 2000 under the Ministry of Culture’s agreement with Industry Canada for contributions under the Community Access Program to establish public internet sites (Ontario Ministry of Culture, no date, “Funding ...”). Public libraries in some parts of the province have also benefited from funding under the economic stimulus package announced in December 2006. For example, libraries in Fort Francis, Sault Ste. Marie, West Perth, Nipigon and Caistorville received capital grants in February 2007 for building and renovation projects (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2007a).

### 3.2. Municipalities

Ontario’s municipalities are home to a wide array of cultural facilities:

- 500 cultural facilities (art galleries, theatres, cultural centres)
- 1,100 municipal and First Nation public library service points
- 180 community museums as well as numerous heritage districts and buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites

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<sup>10</sup> Communication from David McLachlan, Ministry of Culture, November 5, 2007.

- Major cultural attraction agencies, such as Science North, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Art Gallery of Ontario. (Information provided by the Ontario Ministry of Culture)

Many municipalities in Ontario have or are working on cultural plans, which usually include some aspect of cultural infrastructure within them. The Ministry of Culture in its April 2005 *Ontario Municipal Cultural Planning Inventory Project* found that 149 of the municipalities surveyed had some form of cultural plan. Of that number:

- 57 (39%) had single issue plans related to specific cultural assets such as built heritage, museums, public art or facility management and use
- 56 (39%) had negotiated agreements related to cultural operations, such as facility operation by a third party on behalf of a municipality or use of municipal facilities by third parties
- 88 (61%) reported having cultural elements in larger plans<sup>11</sup>
- 34 (23%) reported having horizontal or integrated cultural plans that incorporated arts, heritage, cultural industries, libraries and other elements of cultural development across municipal responsibilities<sup>12</sup> (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2005b, pp. 6-10)

The Inventory found that there was an inconsistent use of terminology across municipalities, leading some to use “arts” or “culture” as an umbrella term, while others used “arts” and “heritage” as equal terms. There was also wide variation in the scope of what was included in the term with some municipalities including libraries as part of “culture” and others not. Other challenges included the difficulty of securing municipal funds for culture, insufficient access to models, best practices and expertise, and low levels of awareness of the value of cultural plans among senior staff. In addition, respondents pointed to the need for provincial or federal funds to supplement municipal cultural investment (pp. 14-15).

Despite these perceived barriers, there has been a great deal of activity at the municipal level in recent years to develop cultural policy frameworks of various kinds. It is beyond the scope of this brief overview paper to provide a complete picture of this activity, but it is worthwhile to examine a sample of these plans to understand their approach to cultural infrastructure investments.

### **Toronto**

In May 2000, Toronto City Council commissioned a culture plan that was intended to position the city as an international cultural capital. The *Culture Plan for the Creative City*, adopted by Toronto City Council in 2003, was a ten-year action plan to guide the city’s cultural development. Cultural facilities and infrastructure were a central element of the strategy, which aimed to create a “boulevard of creativity” in the heart of the city. Significant

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<sup>11</sup> These included larger centres such as Ottawa, Toronto, Cornwall and Sarnia, as well as smaller centres such as Thorold, Sioux Lookout and Hearst. Regions and counties, such as Waterloo, Halton, Huron and Wellington, also reported references to culture in their official plans.

<sup>12</sup> In 2005, only eight municipalities had comprehensive plans – Toronto, Ottawa, the Region of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo, Markham, Kitchener, Mississauga and Strathroy-Caradoc. Thunder Bay and St. Catharines had cultural policies at that time, and Burlington, Bayham, Oakville, Orillia and St. Catharines were in the process of developing cultural plans.

capital support was sought (and obtained) from the federal and provincial governments and the private sector for several flagship projects that were intended to serve not only the citizens of Toronto, but also to attract tourists and confirm Toronto's place as a world-class "creative capital" (Jenkins, 2005, pp. 7-8).

To address the needs of non-flagship cultural facilities, in 2002 the City created the Culture Build Grant Program to invest in the physical infrastructure of small and medium-sized cultural facilities. Since 2002, this Program has disbursed about \$1.65 million for this purpose (City of Toronto Culture Division, p. 8). The City also has a capital budget for renovation and repair of city-owned museums, cultural centres, heritage sites and theatres that amounts to approximately \$8.0 million per year (City of Toronto, 2005, p. 10). In addition, it has used a provision of the *Planning Act* (Section 37) to grant height or density increases for new developments in return for capital benefits, such as inclusion of space for non-profit arts and cultural facilities, public art, conservation of heritage resources, streetscape improvements or cash contributions. For example, in 2005 a \$1 million benefit from a Section 37 agreement went toward Toronto Artscape's restoration of the Wychwood TTC streetcar repair facility and conversion into a multi-tenant arts facility (City of Toronto Culture Division, 2005, p. 9).

### **Ottawa**

The presence of the federal government's national cultural facilities, such as the National Arts Centre and the four national museums, has had an impact on the City's own investments in cultural infrastructure. Local residents have been well-served by these and other amenities, but local area arts and heritage practitioners have frequently voiced complaints about the lack of adequate space for local artists and local collections. In addition, both the local library and city archives have faced chronic facility shortcomings.

In April 2003, as part of the Ottawa 20/20 planning process, the City produced both an arts plan and a heritage plan that proposed (among many other things) a strategy to address cultural infrastructure problems. Central to the plans was, once again, the notion of the "creative city" which would have not only economic benefits, but also improve quality of life (City of Ottawa, 2003a, p. 5).

A 2002 Arts Plan Facility Inventory had shown that 91% of existing local arts facilities were at capacity and that all existing venues required renovations (City of Ottawa, 2003a, p. 49). Two strategies in the *Arts Plan* were specifically aimed at increasing access for artists, audiences and communities to new and improved space and at establishing a vibrant focus for the arts in community cores (City of Ottawa, 2003a, pp. 7-8). The *Heritage Plan* identified an urgent need for two major new facilities: a Heritage Gateway that would present the "Ottawa Story" and a Preservation Centre that would centralize collections management, storage and preservation activities for both city-run and non-profit community museums (City of Ottawa, 2003b, pp. 30-31). In March 2003, the Ottawa Public Library released a Service Delivery Framework that described facility needs for its branches. In October 2005, the City produced a *Cultural Facilities Framework* to document need and propose strategies to meet that need. It identified approximately \$125 million in arts, heritage and culture infrastructure priority projects (City of Ottawa, 2005, p. 12). The City's Cultural Facilities Fund, which provides matching funds to cultural organizations for facility renovation or acquisition projects, was able to provide only about \$300,000 in 2006 in response to these needs (City of Ottawa, 2007a).

The City has made some progress in addressing a few of the major priorities, most notably in negotiating public-private partnerships (P3s) to build the Orléans Arts Centre and to include a

new theatre for the Great Canadian Theatre Company in a mixed-use residential/commercial centre (the Irving Greenberg Theatre Centre). However, one high-profile P3 project – the Ottawa Chamber Music Society Festival Hall – has recently encountered a roadblock with delays in obtaining confirmation of federal and private sector funding putting the project in jeopardy.<sup>13</sup> In addition, in February 2007, the City’s Community and Protective Services Committee asked the Ottawa Public Library (which is seeking to replace the Main Library) and the Archives Steering Committee to work together to identify potential savings from co-location (City of Ottawa, 2007b).

### London

In 2004, the City of London established a Creative City Task Force to examine “how London can become a more creative city and how to translate that into improved assessment growth and economic prosperity for our city” (City of London, 2005, p. 2). In April 2005, it produced a report that recommended, among other things, that the City adopt its proposed action plan and undertake a number of other measures to address cultural infrastructure shortcomings. Strategic goals were “to plan and invest for the future of our new creative city through prudent capital investments” and “to revitalize our public spaces, neighbourhoods, main streets and communities” (pp. 7, 39, 43). Among the Task Force’s recommendations were that the City:

- Provide arts, heritage and cultural communities with access to municipal space for studio, rehearsal, storage and administrative space
- Explore the feasibility of establishing the Canadian Literary Hall of Fame in London
- Declare its intention to open a performing arts centre by 2015 and put 50% of any operating surpluses into a reserve fund to finance its portion of the costs of construction
- Develop policies on “live/work/play/display” space to provide for multi-purpose use of studios and apartments
- Utilize Section 37 of the *Planning Act* to allow increased height and density of development in return for facilities and services
- Lobby the Province for a realty tax incentive program for the preservation of historic buildings, as well as for Cultural Tax Incentive Zones to encourage cultural industries clusters
- Make an annual contribution to the Endowment Fund for Heritage Preservation administered by the London Community Foundation
- Promote the location of cultural facilities within Community Improvement Districts (City of London, 2005, pp. 39-49).

In response, the City has established a Creative City Committee and an Urban Design Committee to enhance built space. A Downtown Task Force will produce a report in spring 2008 on how arts and culture can help to revitalize the downtown core. According to the former Chair of the Creative City Task Force, “The Creative City concepts are now a thread

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<sup>13</sup> According to a November 9, 2007 article in *The Ottawa Citizen*, staff at Ottawa City Hall are “recommending that if the current deadline isn’t met, the city should pull its contribution and ask the province to spend its money in a different way, too.”

running throughout our Official Plan review, setting new standards in the community for builders and developers.”<sup>14</sup>

The City has a number of financial incentive programs to help owners and landlords improve existing heritage buildings, including the Endowment for Built Heritage Program (mentioned above) and the Downtown Facade Program, which provides long-term, interest-free loans for facade improvements and interior upgrades. The Planning Division has also proposed a Property Tax Incentive Program for the owners of heritage-designated properties (City of London, 2005, p. 47).

### **Oakville**

In February 2006, the Town of Oakville produced a Cultural Facilities Analysis that conducted an inventory and examined the adequacy of municipally-owned cultural venues – the Centre for the Performing Arts, Oakville Galleries, Charles Sovereign House, the Erchless Estate Museum and the exhibit and meeting space provided at Town Hall. This analysis was intended to feed into a Master Plan to be released later that year.

In June 2006, the Town of Oakville approved a Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library Master Plan to “establish a parks, recreation, culture and library policy framework that enhances the quality of life of all residents by promoting social, learning, cultural and recreational opportunities” (Town of Oakville, 2006b, p. 1). It identified a number of cultural infrastructure deficiencies, but with a slightly different emphasis than Toronto, Ottawa and London. While acknowledging recent discussions on “creative cities” and the “creative class”, the Master Plan focused on the needs for “entry level, cost efficient programs that emphasize basic skill development for local and ‘amateur’ artists and participants” (p. 56, emphasis in the original). In this vein, it recommended that Town Council consider the establishment of a “Creativity and Innovation Centre” in downtown Oakville to serve the local arts and culture community. This would involve renovations and enhancements to existing cultural facilities, including the Central Library, Oakville Galleries and the Oakville Centre of the Arts, to create “a street-level cluster of creativity, technology and information-based service agents” (p. 58). As well, the report recommended that the needs of the arts and cultural community be taken into consideration in the design of new multi-use community centres in other parts of Oakville (p. 59).

In response to another recommendation in the Master Plan, the Town of Oakville has undertaken a process to develop a Cultural Plan which involves the community in strategizing about the future. Consultations will take place during winter 2008, with a spring 2008 target for a draft report, followed by more community consultation, leading to a final report in late summer 2008 (Town of Oakville, 2006b).

### **Thunder Bay**

In 2004, the City of Thunder Bay undertook a *Cultural Policy Study* to reexamine the assumptions behind its 1991 Arts and Heritage Policy (updated in 1998). The study concluded that, while arts and heritage contributed to economic vitality and quality of life in the community, many aspects remained fragmented, uncoordinated, unrecognized and under-resourced. In addition, there were missed opportunities for community development due to

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<sup>14</sup> Personal communication from Councillor Gord Hume, October 18, 2007.

the inability of the City to attract cultural entrepreneurs and to work effectively with the Aboriginal community (City of Thunder Bay, 2004).

In February 2005, City Council adopted a new Cultural Policy which created an enhanced profile for culture within the Recreation and Culture Division, established a Cultural Services Advisory Committee and developed a new granting program for the City's major cultural institutions. The enhanced Cultural Services unit was also asked to develop and promote Cultural Districts within the City, in consultation with the Heritage Advisory Committee and the Mayor's Task Force on Civic Pride. These Districts were to benefit from zoning and tax incentives for owners of heritage buildings, artists and creative entrepreneurs wishing to open studios or shops in these Cultural Districts (City of Thunder Bay, 2005, pp. 8-9, 17).

### **Barrie**

The City of Barrie's cultural plan – *Building a Creative Future* – was presented to City Council in February 2006. It recommended a ten-year strategy for the community that would “make arts and culture a prominent component of Barrie's economic and social development strategies” (City of Barrie, 2006).

A major part of the plan dealt with the need to make capital investments in cultural facilities in downtown Barrie. Like Oakville, the Barrie cultural plan envisioned a Cultural Community Centre that would “coalesce the arts community and provide the impetus to sustain a larger performing arts centre.” However, unlike Oakville's plan, this strategy was clearly linked to the professional cultural community, “whose collective budgets represent a significant economic sector” (City of Barrie, 2006, p. 43). Using Vancouver's Granville Island as a model, *Building a Creative Future* proposed a number of elements of this Cultural Community Centre including:

- A visually prominent identifiable “gateway” building
- A flexible, multi-form 250-300 seat theatre
- Theatre technical and production space to be shared by theatre groups
- Rehearsal space
- Cultural organization office spaces
- A 300-350 seat concert hall / music room
- A 1200 seat performance venue
- An outdoor performance space to accommodate summer festivals
- An ad hoc waterside public stage
- An upgrade to the public library to allow it to host literary events and readings
- Relocation of the Georgian College School of Design and Visual Art to a prominent downtown location
- Art and design retail stores in the downtown area
- Prime meeting and reception facilities downtown
- Increased exhibition space

- A 100-150 seat screening room
- A permanent farmers' market
- Rentable space for working artists
- A local museum to collect and display artifacts from Barrie's past
- Cultural storage space outside the downtown area (City of Barrie, 2006, pp. 47-50)

This ambitious plan to reshape the downtown area as an arts and culture development area was to be tested with a Gap and Opportunity Analysis "to examine all relevant facility direction through the lens of culture and wealth creation" (City of Barrie, 2006, p. 43).

### **St. Catharines**

The City of St. Catharines developed its Municipal Cultural Policy in 1999, and it was approved by City Council in March 2000. The Plan recommended that an arts facility inventory be completed and that collaborative opportunities between these facilities be investigated (City of St. Catharines, 1999, pp. 10-11). These goals were not immediately acted upon, but in 2004, the St. Catherine's Culture Committee produced a cultural investment policy entitled *Investing in Our Future*. The goals were to:

- Provide access to cultural opportunities for all St. Catharines citizens
- Enhance St. Catharines desirability as a community in which to live, work and play
- Celebrate and encourage cultural and artistic diversity
- Promote civic identity
- Stimulate economic development and cultural tourism opportunities.  
(City of St. Catharines – St. Catharines Culture Committee, 2004, section 1.0).

In June 2004, City Council approved a new funding program based on the policy which included a cultural development component.<sup>15</sup> Under the Community Development component of the Cultural Investment Program, equipment and small capital costs can be considered (City of St. Catharines, 2007).

The City of St. Catharines is currently undertaking an inventory of facilities used by performing arts groups in the city, and will soon be reviewing facilities used by the visual arts community. A feasibility study undertaken by the City of St. Catharines in 1999 for a performing arts centre will be updated this winter, in conjunction with Brock University. In addition, Phase 1 of a region-wide cultural asset mapping process is being finalized and includes cultural infrastructure. This will cover the entire Niagara region and will be unveiled at the end of November 2007.<sup>16</sup>

### **Woodstock**

Over the past several years, there had been a variety of informal reports and studies presented to City Council suggesting that the Art Gallery needed to be replaced. During the work on the

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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication from Rebecca Cann, City of St. Catharines, October 31, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication from Rebecca Cann, City of St. Catharines, October 31, 2007.

Recreation and Leisure Master Plan in 2005, it was strongly recommended that the City pursue replacement of the current gallery. As a result, the Art Gallery Advisory Committee wrote a report suggesting that a new gallery be constructed by 2010 at an estimated cost of between \$3 and \$3.5 million. Council approval in the 2008 capital budget is being sought for architectural plans, with anticipated planned capital expenditures of about \$1.75 million in 2009 and \$1.5 million in 2010. The current appraised value of the Woodstock Art Gallery collection is around \$2 million, and since the community is undergoing unprecedented industrial growth, the Committee believes that a capital fundraising campaign could potentially raise as much as \$1 million in donations.<sup>17</sup>

### **Prince Edward County**

In 2004, Prince Edward County – a rural area with a population of about 25,000 people - commissioned an Economic Development Strategy that identified culture as one of the four pillars of the local economy and observed that arts, culture and heritage resources in the County were underdeveloped. In 2004-2005, the County embarked on a visioning exercise that was intended to guide development over the next five years. The visioning process took place in parallel with the development of *Leveraging Growth and Managing Change – Prince Edward County Strategic Cultural Plan*, which was adopted by County Council in 2005.

The Strategic Cultural Plan focused on cultural resources in the County, which it defined as “its built environment and cultural landscapes; heritage sites; cultural facilities; arts, heritage and cultural organizations and businesses; movable objects and collections; programs and activity” (Corporate Research Group, 2005, p. ii). The Plan produced a map of the County’s cultural resources and developed three broad strategic themes to maximize the impact of these resources:

- Managing growth to ensure that development did not undermine the County’s quality of place;
- Extending and improving “cultural places and spaces” – the places where culture happens in the County;
- Building on existing strengths and overcoming barriers to collaboration in cultural tourism (Corporate Research Group, 2005, p. iii).

With regard to the issue of tangible cultural infrastructure, the Plan indicated that many of County’s cultural resources were taken for granted and that development pressures could erode local identity and quality of place. On the other hand, significant opportunities were identified with regard to the County’s large stock of heritage buildings and its largely intact main streets (pp. 18-19). A number of actions were incorporated into the Plan to address these issues. For example, it was proposed that cultural facility and infrastructure needs be integrated into the 10-year capital budget projections for the County, that space in County buildings be upgraded for cultural use, and that a cultural component (such as gallery space) be incorporated into new construction. As well, it proposed that a County Cultural Centre be created to serve as the hub of a cultural district consisting of the redeveloped Regent Theatre, Picton Post Office and Armouries, as well as a new library building. In the longer term, the Plan proposed development of a curatorial centre to act as a space for shared collections storage and a conservation facility for local heritage institutions (pp. 29-30). Finally, the Plan

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<sup>17</sup> Personal communication from Bob McFarland, City of Woodstock, November 4, 2007.

suggested that subsidized access to space in County buildings be provided for cultural activities and that a specific facility (“the Heights”) be redeveloped as an arts centre and live-work space for artists (p. 34).

### **Other municipalities**

Responses to the survey for this paper elicited a few other comments from other municipalities about cultural infrastructure plans and programs.

- Reference to cultural infrastructure was made in the City of Welland’s most recent Recreation Masterplan.<sup>18</sup>
- The Mississauga Arts Council last completed an inventory of cultural facilities in Mississauga in 1985. In 2005, an Arts Review Task Force identified a range of issues affecting the local arts sector, including some infrastructure issues, but this report was not intended to be comprehensive in scope. There is a shortage of space available generally for cultural production and presentations. Mississauga’s premiere performing arts facility is not perceived to be sufficiently accessible to community cultural groups. Community theatre groups are lacking rehearsal and production space. The City’s public art gallery is located in the Civic Centre in a poorly visible location. There are no municipal programs for new cultural facility development. Existing facilities are supported on a one-off basis with little consistency between facilities. However, the Office of Arts and Culture, a new division within the City of Mississauga, will be developing a Master Plan for Arts and Culture over the next two years that will address cultural infrastructure, as well as other issues.<sup>19</sup>
- The Town of Newmarket is investigating a cultural plan.<sup>20</sup>
- The City of Peterborough will soon be launching a major project to complete a Municipal Cultural Plan.<sup>21</sup>

## **4. Emerging trends and challenges**

The most prominent trend that has emerged in the past decade is the movement toward “creative cities” which has been taken up enthusiastically by all levels of government as a means of promoting community economic development and quality of life. In this context, cultural infrastructure is viewed as an incubator of creative businesses and creative people. For example, a 2006 study led by Meric Gertler of the University of Toronto tied the future success of Toronto to “its ability to attract and retain creative people, and enhance the creative capabilities of workers and businesses across the economy” (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006, p. 9). While Toronto clearly views itself as a “world class” creative capital, many other smaller cities and towns in Ontario with more modest cultural assets have

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<sup>18</sup> Personal communication from Rebecca Cann, City of St. Catharines, October 31, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Personal communication from Jennifer Kaye, City of Mississauga, October 22, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication from Jennifer Leveridge, Newmarket Public Library, October 25, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication from Erik Hanson, City of Peterborough, October 29, 2007.

also adopted this philosophy as a guide to their cultural infrastructure investments. While these assets are undoubtedly important to these communities, it may be somewhat unfair to place such heavy expectations on them as engines of economic growth. Nevertheless, municipalities appear to be relying heavily on such arguments to convince senior levels of government, the private sector and their own elected officials to invest in cultural infrastructure.

The emerging trends and challenges that follow have been situated within this “über trend,” which appears to be shaping most public sector responses to cultural infrastructure needs. They have been divided into two categories – facility trends and challenges and governance trends and challenges – in recognition of the fact that facility needs may not always match what is possible in terms of administrative and political arrangements.

#### **4.1. Facility trends and challenges**

##### **Crumbling and inadequate cultural infrastructure**

The supply of arts and cultural facilities in Ontario expanded throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Most were built as single-purpose entities and financed through public partnerships between federal, provincial and municipal governments using a one-third, one-third, one-third funding formula. However, diminished funding opportunities in the 1990s led to significant deferred maintenance requirements, while the expansion of the capital stock necessitated larger maintenance outlays annually. Facilities are aging and in need of repair or replacement, although one-time investments in major cultural renaissance projects and one-time special regional funding have benefited some areas. Many organizations in smaller centres are homeless or make do with makeshift or borrowed space in schools or churches (information provided by the Ontario Ministry of Culture).

Many heritage facilities have outgrown their original buildings and are having difficulty managing their collections and exhibiting collections in adequate conditions. The visual arts community in particular needs new digital technology for creation, production and exhibition of works. The equipment needs to be updated continuously due to the rate of technology advancements (information provided by Cultural Spaces Canada).

For Ontario’s francophone cultural community, access to adequate infrastructure is an acute problem that has had a significant negative impact on programming (which is limited by poor infrastructure) and on the retention of audiences (Réseau Ontario, 2005, pp. 7-8).

##### **Locational difficulties**

Artists and cultural organizations tend to be priced out of areas that have become popular because of their activities. Maintaining any small creation/incubation facilities in a real estate market as hot as Toronto’s is a challenge. On the other hand, serving remote communities, particularly in Northern Ontario is also a problem, especially for the francophone cultural community (information provided by Cultural Spaces Canada).

##### **Changing infrastructure needs**

Many arts facilities in communities across the province were designed as single purpose facilities but now many are multi-purpose in nature, thereby requiring badly needed retrofits and refurbishments. Facilities are needed that are designed to encourage and facilitate emerging multi-disciplinary creation and creative expression by Ontario’s diverse population,

including its children and youth. There is a need for community cultural centres – particularly for youth. Live/work facilities are also required to meet the needs of artists, who are often displaced as arts districts become targets for development and subsequent gentrification (information provided by the Ontario Ministry of Culture).

### **Financial and human resource problems (organizations)**

Numerous surveys have documented the acute difficulties experienced by small and medium-sized cultural organizations in finding the resources to address facility problems. ArtsBuild Ontario and Réseau Ontario have highlighted the following issues:

- **Financial** – competition for infrastructure funding with other municipal projects (such as sports or tourism), unrealistic capital campaign budgets, unrealistic fundraising targets, inaccessibility of debt financing (or its opposite, excessive debt burdens), loss of earned revenue during renovations, unexpected delays in project completion due to delays in accessing funds from multiple partners, unexpected increases in operating costs due to a new or expanded facility, lack of provision for increased operating costs (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2001, pp. 15, 17-18; ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, p. 11).
- **Technical** – lack of access to technical assistance when planning capital projects, insufficient planning time for capital projects (resulting in either poor design or missed funding agency deadlines), lack of technical expertise to maintain new facilities or equipment (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2002, p. 17; Réseau Ontario, 2005, p. 13).
- **Human** – capital projects that exceed the management capacities of organizations, organizational stress caused by diversion of programming resources to fundraising or project management (ArtsBuild, 2001, pp. 15-16).

In the heritage area, the Ontario Ministry of Culture has documented several resource barriers to capital investments in heritage conservation:

- **Human** – lack of political support, lack of knowledge about available programs, lack of human resources to access and manage funds from provincial programs, impatience with “bureaucratic processes,” reluctance to embark on labour intensive projects
- **Financial** – lack of funding at local level, impact of capital improvements on access to insurance, loans, etc.
- **Technical** – lack of expertise to manage heritage capital projects (especially in rural areas) (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2006).

### **Financial and human resource problems (municipalities)**

The Ontario Municipal Cultural Planning Inventory Project identified several challenges for cultural officials on the municipal side of the equation as well:

- Securing municipal funds for capital infrastructure within a context of competing priorities
- Impact of delays in securing support from other levels of government and the private sector for major capital projects
- Lack of access to models, best practices and expertise

- Low levels of awareness of the value of cultural investments among senior municipal staff, elected officials and the community (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2005b, p. 15).

In addition, municipal authorities consulted at the Ontario Round Table indicated that amalgamation had had a negative impact on the number of cultural infrastructure investments that were funded over the first half of the post-millennium decade. Before amalgamation, each municipality in a region could potentially submit a project for provincial funding under programs such as SuperBuild, but after amalgamation only one region-wide priority project could be submitted from all the former jurisdictions. Changes to accounting practices that are scheduled to take effect in 2010 were also cited as a potential barrier to investment in cultural infrastructure because after that date planning for such infrastructure will no longer be counted as part of capital budgets.

## 4.2. Governance trends and challenges

### **More intense competition among cities and facilities for cultural capital infrastructure investments**

With the popularity of the “creative city” concept, there may be growing competition for what are still relatively scarce dollars for cultural infrastructure investment. An early sign of this is the federal government’s decision in November 2007 to launch a competition among developers in nine Canadian cities to build a new Portrait Gallery of Canada. Two of the criteria for this competition are that:

- The population and tourist potential at the location need to be large enough to ensure its financial viability and sustainability.
- The Gallery needs to be in an environment conducive to cultural collaborations and financial support from the private sector, philanthropists, and individuals (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2007).

Complaints from jurisdictions (such as Saskatchewan and New Brunswick) without cities large enough to meet these criteria echo those of small and medium-sized cultural organizations that they have been cut out of major infrastructure programs because they are “unlikely to be considered a “major” provincial cultural or tourist attraction” and are “generally not able to attract corporate and individual support at the high level of their larger colleagues” (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, pp. 11-12). If this trend continues, the unequal competition for capital funding will only intensify.

### **Coordination problems**

Both cultural organizations and municipalities face the challenges of leveraging funding from multiple sources when undertaking major capital projects. As has been noted above, many organizations and municipalities lack the expertise to manage complex projects, but beyond this lies the challenge of working with multiple stakeholders, all of which have differing goals, timelines and accountability requirements. Particularly difficult is the problem of “who’s in first,” as funding from some sources is usually contingent upon support from other stakeholders. The corollary to this is “who’s in last,” which sometimes puts projects in jeopardy due to long delays in setting in place the last pieces of the funding puzzle.

### **Inconsistent policies and programs**

As has been noted by ArtsBuild Ontario in several of its publications, cultural policies and programs are seldom sustained over a long enough period for adequate planning to take place. Some programs, such as Cultural Spaces Canada, have had their life extended several times, with long periods of uncertainty about whether or not it would continue. Other programs, such as Ontario's SuperBuild Sports, Culture and Tourism Partnerships, are theoretically open to all, but in practice the bulk of resources have tended to go to larger institutions and communities (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, p. 11).

A chronic problem is the tying of cultural infrastructure support projects to municipal priorities. Despite the current emphasis on creative cities as engines for economic growth, cultural projects have tended to remain lower on the list of municipal priorities than other investment areas, such as sewers, roads, hospitals and recreational facilities. As ArtsBuild Ontario has pointed out, this "disenfranchises a vast majority of the arts community" (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, p. 12) and probably the heritage community as well.

## **5. New and emerging opportunities and partnership models**

Despite the many problems outlined above, there have been many successful examples in Ontario of cultural infrastructure projects and practices that have the potential to serve as models. This section will provide a brief overview of these innovations, grouped under two categories: program/policy innovations and facility/partnership innovations.

### **5.1. Program/policy innovations**

#### **Financing**

Over the past six or seven years, cultural associations have been actively proposing various new means of financing cultural infrastructure projects. One that is gaining support among small and medium-sized cultural organizations is the establishment by government of a permanent, independent capital finance fund designed specifically to meet their needs. This fund would offer grants at 50 to 66% of project costs to level the playing field for smaller organizations without the private fundraising capacity of larger organizations. It would also be the first funder to commit to a project and would make building acquisition, as well as renovation, eligible for support (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, pp. 11-12).

Recently, a few municipalities have established their own cultural capital funds, including the City of Toronto's Culture Build Grant Program, the City of Ottawa's Cultural Facilities Fund, the City of London's Endowment for Built Heritage Program and Downtown Facade Program, and the City of St. Catharines' Cultural Investment Program. However, none of these programs have adequate resources to meet more than a fraction of local needs.

In the private sector, while many donors have made generous contributions to capital costs, very few have made provisions for the ongoing operation of new or renovated cultural facilities. An exception is Ken Thomson, who in 2002 provided both \$50 million for renovations and \$20 million to endow future operations (Art Gallery of Ontario, 2006).

### **Tax measures**

Some municipalities make extensive use of tax relief programs to support cultural infrastructure projects. For example, 22 municipalities in Ontario have established heritage property tax relief programs to encourage downtown revitalization or to guide development and adaptive reuse (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2006).

Some municipalities have combined tax relief with creative financing arrangements. For example, Ottawa has entered into a Municipal Capital Facilities Agreement with the Orléans Town Centre Partnership to exempt it from development fees, property, education and land transfer taxes on the facilities surrounding the new Orléans Arts Centre. In return, the Partnership will design, build, finance, operate and maintain the Arts Centre facility (with the City signing a 30-year lease for the Arts Centre that will allow the Partnership to secure a loan at a preferred interest rate).<sup>22</sup>

The City of London's Planning Division has proposed a Property Tax Incentive Program for the owners of heritage designated properties, (City of London, 2005, p. 47) and the City of Thunder Bay was considering zoning and tax incentives for owners of heritage buildings, artists and creative entrepreneurs wishing to open studios or shops in designated Cultural Districts (City of Thunder Bay, 2005, p. 17).

### **Legislative and policy measures**

As noted above, the City of Toronto has used Section 37 of the *Planning Act* to grant height and density increases for new developments. In return the City has received either cash contributions or community benefits such as non-profit arts and cultural facilities, public art, conservation of heritage resources or streetscape improvements (City of Toronto Culture Division, 2005, p. 9).

In the 2005 revisions to the *Ontario Heritage Act*, new powers were given to the Minister of Culture to designate cultural heritage property of provincial significance to enable the prohibition of demolition or removal of such property. At the same time, municipalities were given greater power to prevent demolition of heritage properties and to undertake studies of areas for potential designation as heritage conservation districts (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2005a). For example, the City of Toronto has been very active in designating and developing heritage districts. The Distillery District has been redeveloped as a pedestrian-only village entirely dedicated to arts, culture and entertainment, and the Don Valley Brickworks is being restored and redeveloped into Evergreen Commons, a year-round experiential learning centre and cultural attraction (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006, pp. 24-25).

### **Municipal cultural planning**

Increased municipal interest in cultural planning may help to address concerns expressed by some in the cultural community about *ad hoc* approaches to cultural infrastructure development. For example, the County of Lennox and Addington was cited in the *Ontario Municipal Cultural Planning Inventory Project* as an example of successful integration of culture into decision making structures and processes. The result was significant culture budget increases that had a positive impact on the local museum, both in terms of operating budgets and capital improvements (Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2005b, Appendix 1).

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<sup>22</sup> Personal communication from Debbie Hill, City of Ottawa, August 9, 2007.

A 2006 international study of strategies for creative spaces concluded that “consistency and longer-term policy measures are important, in contrast to fragmented, short-term initiative-led regimes. Successful creative cities and organisational delivery was [sic] often underpinned by 10 year strategies and cross-departmental and multi-sector working” (London Development Agency, 2006, p. 9).

## **5.2. Facility/Partnership innovations**

### **Creation of “creative clusters” or “creative districts”**

As mentioned above, the City of Toronto has been active in the past several years in the creation of districts that feature cultural attractions and provide new space for cultural groups. More often than not, creation of these districts has been combined with historic preservation initiatives. Besides the Distillery District and the Don Valley Brickworks project, the City has worked with the local Business Improvement Association to convert Liberty Village (an inner-city mixed use neighbourhood of century-old buildings) into commercial spaces for various creative and service firms (Gertler et al., 2006, p. 41). Both the Town of Oakville and the City of Barrie have also prominently featured the creation of “creativity and innovation” districts in their cultural plans.

### **Affordable space for creative individuals and organizations**

Creative people are often priced out of creative districts as they become gentrified and redeveloped. The City of Toronto is home to a couple of innovative firms that have directly tackled this problem using a variety of commercial and non-commercial methods.

Toronto Artscape is a non-profit enterprise specializing in building creative communities. Its property portfolio includes seven buildings providing a mix of more than 200 affordable work, live/work and retail studios, galleries, rehearsal, programming, office and performance facilities. It provides a mix of services as well, including property management, property development, and research, consulting and development services. It also organizes a biennial Creative Places+Spaces Conference where ideas on creative cluster development are shared (Gertler et al., 2006, pp. 41-42).

The urbanspace Property Group is a developer that owns and manages three heritage properties in Toronto and that specializes in preserving and restoring historic spaces to adapt them for commercial activities in the creative sector. One of its properties, 401 Richmond, houses 138 cultural producers and micro-enterprises. The building is designed to encourage interaction and collaboration among its tenants (Gertler et al., 2006, pp. 42-43).

### **Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)**

The City of Ottawa has been very active in utilizing public-private partnerships to leverage support for the development of cultural facilities. As described above, it has used a P3 to build the Orléans Arts Centre and develop the land around it. As well, it has worked with a private sector developer and the Great Canadian Theatre Company to integrate the Company’s new theatre into an eco-friendly commercial development in return for waiving development charges. A P3 has also been used to include a community concert hall and rehearsal space in a commercial development on former City-owned land in the downtown area in return for waiving development fees and offsetting permit fees. This latter initiative,

however, as noted above, has been subject to various delays that threaten to derail the project (information provided by the City of Ottawa).

### **Technical advice and resource sharing**

A few umbrella associations have taken on the task of resource sharing among their constituents. Notable examples include:

- ArtsBuild Ontario, which provides workshops, online resources and advice to help organizations plan and manage capital projects (ArtsBuild Ontario, 2007c, p. 4).
- Toronto Artscape, which offers planning and consulting services on a fee-for-service basis to support capital project planning and development in the non-profit sector. It also partners with universities, governments and the private sector to undertake research in this area (Toronto Artscape, no date, “What we do”).

### **New non-cultural partners**

In a few instances, municipalities and cultural organizations have found unconventional partners for capital projects. For example, in Toronto, the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation has created an advisory Design Review Panel and plans to retain and reuse heritage buildings and develop live/work spaces for artists in the waterfront area (Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team, 2006, p. 26). As noted above, some projects in Toronto and Ottawa have also included developers and business improvement associations as key partners and stakeholders.

## **6. Conclusions**

This overview has shown a resurgence of interest and activity since the beginning of the decade in cultural infrastructure investment in Ontario. This renewed interest has coincided with the availability of funding from federal, provincial and municipal sources for capital projects in the cultural domain. However, this largesse has been distributed mainly to larger cultural institutions that can demonstrate economic benefits from their capital infrastructure investments. Smaller arts and heritage institutions continue to live with serious infrastructure problems. In some disciplines, such as libraries, the exact extent of capital needs is as yet unknown.

Municipalities in Ontario are becoming very creative with regard to cultural infrastructure investment and are using a variety of non-traditional mechanisms to finance and manage capital projects. Many have or will soon have municipal cultural plans and are building arguments in support of greater levels of cultural investment. Many of these arguments are economic in nature, which may create unrealistic expectations about the extent that cultural institutions, particularly in smaller centres, can produce the types of synergies that cultural clusters and creative districts bring to larger cities. For most of the cultural organizations surveyed, the goal of infrastructure improvement is to support their creative or curatorial missions, with economic benefits a secondary concern, suggesting that both funders and clients may have to adjust their perspectives before planning and executing major capital projects.

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