

## *Partnering for the Future*

An Address to the Canadian Club of Toronto  
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As I read the papers every day I pray that we are doing the right thing. The future after all does not belong to us. The future is however ours to shape. The world we leave must be more secure and more enlightened; it must be cleaner and healthier; more tolerant and more compassionate and more peaceful than the world we entered. That is – is it not – our collective challenge. The world we leave behind will be our legacy. And we in this room have a significant role to play.

The necessary questions that will light our path to the future will come from a profound understanding of our past. The most fruitful place in which to find these questions is our culture. Recently the novelist Ian MacEwan pointed out that it is impossible to imagine a cultured person flying those planes into the World Trade Centre. For anyone who reads novels or contemplates paintings or enjoys plays or dance or opera is aware of the existence of lives and convictions other than their own. Such thoughtless barbarity could not be contemplated by a cultured mind. In this way there is a very direct link between art, and a tolerant and peaceful future. It is therefore imperative in a divided world that our collective cultural inheritance not only be preserved but enjoyed.

My father as a corporal in the United States army fought alongside many of your parents and those of scores of other nations in the Second World War. That victorious partnership was forged in response to the greatest threat to global freedom that the world has known.

One of the central rights that were ardently defended in that war was the right for disparate cultures to coexist within national borders. In the second half of a century divided by the Second World War one country stood out above all others as an example to the world of this cultural co-existence. That one country – with two official languages and embracing of all cultural, religious and ethnic differences was the country that my American parents chose in which to bring their children into the world.

The world that I desire for my children is a world best represented by Canada and the community that most defines the Canada that I love is Toronto.

Toronto is poised to become a beacon to a twenty-first century world. We are fortunate enough to live in the most multicultural city in the world. To *be* a multicultural city is one thing, but to adequately reflect a city that is becoming more diverse every day - is another. We must engage all of our communities in the future of our city, and the most effective way to do so is to reflect the new face of Toronto in our cultural institutions.

We love to talk about Toronto being the greatest city in the world. Yet if we are really honest with ourselves I think we would have to admit that it is not ...yet. It *is* the most diverse and this is the beginning of greatness in a new world. But are the stories of this diversity being adequately told in our cultural institutions ....not yet.

The Toronto International Film Festival has probably done more to share the stories of disparate cultures than any institution in Canada. Toronto audiences – now the most avid moviegoers in the world regularly attend Indian, Iranian, Spanish, Turkish, Argentinean, Chinese and Canadian films. Having found success at the festival these films are traveling to all regions of the country telling global stories to Canadian audiences. Does the Festival have a home in which to carry its programming and educational outreach outside of the confines of the month of September...not yet

The Canadian Opera Company despite a budget at least 10 times smaller than the major companies of the world is at the artistic forefront of the opera world. In the last year alone we have witnessed Robert Lepage's Bluebeard/Avartung, Francois Gerard's Oedipus and Atom Egoyan's Salome. One would be hard pressed to match this remarkable triumvirate of visionary productions anywhere in the world. Does this brilliant company operate out of one of the world's great opera houses....not yet

Does the venerable National Ballet of Canada under the leadership of James Kudelka, who the New York Times recently called easily ballet's most original choreographer, have a stage worthy of its achievements...not yet

The AGO's future has been brilliantly imagined under the leadership of Matthew Teitelbaum ...is it one of the greatest art institutions of the world ...not yet

Does the Royal Ontario Museum have a home worthy of its extraordinary collection...not yet

Has the architectural genius of Daniel Libeskind, Frank Gehry, Jack Diamond and Kuwabara, Payne, McKenna and Blumberg - combined with the leadership of William Thorsell, Matthew Teitelbaum Richard Bradshaw and Piers Handling reinvigorated Toronto's flagging tourist industry...not yet

Now the temptation when speaking to a room of business, philanthropic and government leaders and into a camera that exponentially expands the size of this room is to once more hammer home the argument that we in the cultural industries have been harping about since time immemorial. That argument (and how frustrating it is to have to argue) is simply this. Investment in culture is investment in the economic engine of a community. An investment with a huge return.

Rather than barrage you with statistics to support this argument I want to play a very simple game with you. If you could each stand up now and lay your napkin over your head ---just kidding. This game is much simpler than that. It's the hackneyed game of

word association....with a twist. I am not going to ask you to shout out an associative word to each of mine...this would be a potential embarrassment to all of us. Instead I am going to name a handful of communities – cities and towns – and I want you to simply bring an image silently to your mind. Here we go.....Sydney Australia, Bilbao Spain, Stratford Ontario, Niagara on the Lake.

My guess is that the vast majority of sequential images that came to your minds were the Sydney Opera House, Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, The Stratford Festival, and The Shaw Festival.

In each of these cases a cultural investment has seared a previously sleepy community into the minds of the world while vastly improving the fortunes of those communities.

Having promised no statistics let me give you just two..... 9 Billion...and 190,000

That's 9 billion dollars annually generated in Toronto by our cultural industries and 190,000 jobs.

The total infrastructure that this city urgently needs is going to cost a lot of money. That money needs to be spent on roads and waterfront redevelopment and transit systems and culture.

We know that money spent on culture has an immediate and substantial return. The full slate of cultural infrastructure planned for Toronto which includes the ROM, The AGO, The Film Festival, The Gardiner Museum, The Royal Conservatory of Music, The National Ballet School, The Ontario College of Art and Design, The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts and one other which I will tell you about totals somewhere in the area of 700 million dollars. A large sum to be sure. Yet when applied against a figure of 9 billion dollars annually - before the additional revenues generated by the projects themselves - the investment seems not only reasonable but necessary.

I would like to invoke the memory of Winston Churchill - who during the London Blitz was challenged in parliament over a grant that he had awarded the Old Vic theatre for the performance of Shakespeare's plays. Those monies, argued the opposition, should be spent on the war effort. Churchill successfully defended his position, not with a barnstorming speech but with a simple question "If we can't hear Shakespeare then for what are we fighting?"

So from where I sit the formula is simple- invest in culture and let the arts build you your roads and aqueducts. This may sound naïve, yet one need only look at the recent economic turn-around of the city of Philadelphia to see the wisdom of this simple formula. A once great city fallen on bad times, whose inner core was suffering, recently invested in an Avenue of the Arts which not only revitalized the downtown core but proved to be the engine for the economic recovery of the entire city.

Anyone who has ever run a business knows that pride in the company means that productivity goes up. The same is true of communities. When our stories are being told, our differences being respected and encouraged, and our spiritual needs being attended to, the renaissance of this city will have truly begun. It is then in the hands of the people of Toronto to lead the way into the future

Together we can ensure that this city achieves its full and glorious potential. The opportunity is staring us in the face ...we must not flinch. The challenge is ours to take and the opportunity ours to lose.

We, the political, business and cultural leaders of this city, have a responsibility to lead the world into the future through an example of effective and multi-layered partnership. Our leadership must be proactive and unflagging and built as it is on a strong foundation of tolerance and peacemaking - of multiculturalism and democracy.

One vital partnership that every arts company needs to foster is a partnership with Government. The manifestation of this is the yearly trip to the venerable arts councils that represent all three levels of government. The Soulpepper Theatre Company, I am sad to say, is woefully under-funded from these sources.

Over five years our average government support has been 7% of our annual operating budget. This is way, way below the norm, and has forced us therefore to rely almost exclusively on private sector partnerships.

We continue to be under-funded by the councils not because there is no will, and not because our accomplishments have gone unnoticed by the councils, but simply because by the time we arrived on the scene the councils themselves were being woefully under-funded by their various governments. In order to give to the recently arrived Soulpepper the councils would have to steal from some previously funded company. This as you can see is a desperate situation for any nascent companies who cannot be guaranteed the kind of private sector support that we were fortunate enough to win.

When a city like Toronto is on the brink of a possible cultural renaissance that will substantially strengthen the economy of the city, province and country, then the councils, who more than any other source, are responsible for the operational vitality of our cultural institutions, *must* not only be *protected* but *bolstered*.

It is therefore with no little dismay that I join my colleagues in reaction to the recent budget announcement in our province that left culture out of the picture. I know that minister Tbouchi fought very hard for the inclusion of OAC funding and I'm sure he is as disappointed as we are.

While I heartily applaud the current government's Superbuild program that has made all of the afore-mentioned renaissance projects a reality, I would hate to see us build the cottage on the island and not be able to afford the boat.

Thankfully it is not too late to make yourself heard. The government is currently undergoing a throne speech consultation and is asking for your input. Please make yourself heard. Let the government know that their partnership with our cultural institutions is not complete and that to ignore the operational needs of our cultural institutions is a road to disaster.

We have in this city many remarkably generous corporate supporters who in partnering with cultural institutions have shown tremendous leadership. Recently we applauded the 20 million dollar gift to the Opera House by Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. As Izzy Sharp said at the groundbreaking last week, this was a good deal for both sides of the gift. So it can be for many more corporate partnerships with the arts.

At Soulpepper we have been extremely fortunate to create partnerships with several corporations, most notably the Scotiabank Group who have signed on as our season sponsor for the third consecutive year. How Soulpepper benefits from this partnership is obvious. But the reason that our sponsors return year after year is not purely philanthropic. They too get something out of the deal. For some it is marketing exposure for some it is entertainment benefits for staff and clients and for some it is a philosophical synergy between the organizations that makes the partnership rewarding. In the end it is our responsibility as beneficiaries to ensure that we service each and every corporate sponsorship in such a way as to not only ensure continual support for our own organizations, but to make sponsorship of the arts a priority of every Canadian corporation.

Another partnership that is vital to the survival of our cultural institutions is with the Media. Although Soulpepper has enjoyed a fairly positive relationship, I feel that our media has not kept up with the advancements in Canadian culture over the last two decades. We all rely on the media to create the kind of public awareness that is vital to our survival, and yet I am constantly bewildered by the relative lack of prominence given to Canadian culture versus American.

One of the ways we will be able to mark our nation's coming of age is when the arts coverage in our papers, magazines, radio and television contains the same ratio of local to American coverage as that of other international cities.

We need to emulate the lionization of cultural figures in Quebec by that province's media – a reality which has had a profound impact on the viability of Quebecois arts.

In the last two weeks tremendous excitement was generated by two announcements of individual Canadians partnering with cultural institutions. To be at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Opera House and to hear that the board of governors had personally committed 13 million dollars, and that R. Fraser Elliot had personally committed 10 million, was to see a grand and hard-fought dream becoming a reality.

In the same way we all were thrilled to learn of Michael Lee-Chin's 30 million dollar gift to the ROM campaign. This gift, as Margaret Wenthe pointed out in the Globe, was

particularly gratifying not only for its size but, coming from the son of Jamaican and Chinese parents, this gift, in one shocking act of generosity, bridged a gap between the old world Toronto and the new face of this multicultural city. The example has been set to engage all citizens of our community in our renaissance.

As cultural institutions benefiting from the largesse of all of these partnerships the responsibility is ours to ensure that in animating what we build we clearly reflect the new face of Toronto.

And thus we are led to the most important partnership of all. In order to partner *for* the future we must partner *with* the future. The greatest lesson we the founders of Soulpepper have learned in the last five years is the power of mentorship. Just as we have benefited from the wisdom and expertise of the generation that preceded us so to are we committed to the mentorship of the generation who will blaze a path through this century.

What came as a surprise to all of us is how much our own artistry has benefited from the act of mentorship. At the centre of all artistic pursuit is the notion of examination through inquiry. While for the artist this inquiry is a vocation and a goal for which we strive, for the young the question is the natural response. To be surrounded by this youthful energy and curiosity reinvigorates our artistic life. So it was that last year Charmion King –one of the grand dames of Canadian theatre – having performed Uncle Vanya the night before, and anticipating both a matinee and evening performance on a day which just happened to be her 76<sup>th</sup> birthday, rose early in order to spend the morning coaching 15 year old Nina Smith.

This sort of commitment is par for the course for Soulpepper artists because in passing on what we have learned, we have taken back at least as much as we have given. And so as we look to our organizational future we are focused very specifically on an environment that not only facilitates this two- way street but is in fact defined by it.

I applaud all of the initiatives in this city that are dedicated to the shaping of our cultural future. To the National Ballet School and its greatest graduate / champion Karen Kain, to the Royal Conservatory of Music, to the Ontario College of Art and Design, and to the Canadian Film Centre we all owe a great debt of gratitude. It is in these institutions that our cultural future is being assured. For we can build all the infrastructure we want, but without artists to fill them we would have a very hollow collection.

As a Toronto based theatre artist and artistic director I am envious of these training institutions that feed the galleries, museums, opera, ballet, concert and sound stages of this city.

Does Toronto have the premiere *theatrical* training centre in North America, a unique environment in which the senior artists of today are mentoring the artists and audiences of tomorrow ...not yet.

But imagine if you will

.....a single roof combining architectural heritage with cutting –edge design under which Canada’s extraordinary cultural and artistic diversity is being celebrated and incubated every day...

...on any given day, elementary students are being guided through the glories of Shakespeare; teenagers are receiving mentorship from senior artists; three classes of undergraduates and two classes of post-graduate students are studying acting, directing, playwriting, technical production and design; Atom Egoyan is teaching a Masterclass on filmmaking...

...while Chan Ka Nin’s new opera is being rehearsed alongside a production of *King Lear*

... 1000 of Toronto’s arts enthusiasts are split between five spaces where the Soulpepper ensemble and Theatre Francais du Toronto are performing Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and Samuel Beckett’s *En Attendant Godot* in rotation, a new Thomson Highway play is being premiered, Dancemakers is performing Serge Bennathan’s latest creation; a new Deepa Mehta’s film is being screened; and - in an intimate cabaret venue - a hot new Salsa band is performing.

Throughout this day and into the wee hours - students, artists and patrons alike are conversing animatedly over a pint of local beer about Canadian culture and how to shape its future.

This dream, a joint venture between Soulpepper Theatre Company and George Brown College manifests itself in a 44,000 square foot multi-disciplinary Performing Arts, Training, and Youth Outreach Centre which will *anchor* the remarkable Historic Distillery District revitalization in downtown Toronto.

It will consist of five separate performing arts and screening spaces ranging in size from 100 to 400 seats, production and administrative facilities, and nine teaching and rehearsal studios - all wired for film and video capability.

It will provide a home for the Soulpepper Theatre Company, a home for the celebrated George Brown College undergraduate acting program and a home in which to launch two professional training initiatives that will be unique in Canada:

the Soulpepper Academy - a post-graduate theatre training program for actors, directors, and playwrights that is directly linked to a professional theatre company.

and the GBC/Soulpepper Production and Design Program. Linked to active theatres, this program will teach through applied knowledge in a professional arena.

Soulpepper's award winning youth outreach initiatives, currently oversubscribed and confined to the summer months, will expand and operate year round.

As well as housing the activities of George Brown Theatre and Soulpepper this facility will also be the permanent home for several previously nomadic theatre, dance, and music companies. As such, the mentorship of the students in the building will be shared with all resident companies, facilitating applied knowledge multi-disciplinary training.

As well the facility will be a Showcase Platform for the finest performing arts companies from across Canada and the world.

The finest in Canadian arts, arts education, and youth outreach initiatives will be centralized in this facility. With the addition of a broadcast partner there is an opportunity to share the fruits of the above with all Canadians.

This project crystallizes the theme of my speech today - partnering for the Future -

Combining the strengths and answering the needs of Canada's leading performing arts and arts education organizations -enabling all disciplines and backgrounds to work and grow together – by creating a unique environment in which the senior artists of today are mentoring the artists and audiences of tomorrow.

Central to the plan is the notion of Sustainability. By servicing the most pressing need of our secondary partners – space – we are able to create a revenue stream that not only pays for the operating expenses of the building, but which also allows the joint venture partners to expand core programming.

Housed as it will be in the historic distillery district, the project reinvigorates our architectural inheritance by revitalizing these extraordinary buildings and filling them with the energy of creativity thus fueling the economic engine of our city by creating vibrant civic infrastructure.

The result will be a vital and sustainable performing arts centre which celebrates the past while investing in the future - unique not only to Toronto ... to Ontario...and to Canada...but indeed unique to North America.

In order to invest in our future in this way we need to engage in a vast array of partnerships which enhance not only the business case for the project but also enhance its philosophy.

The greatest strength that this project has going for it is the partnership between Soulpepper and George Brown College - two organizations that operate in the same arena, share a core philosophy, and yet are not *competitive* but *complementary*.

In GBC we get a partner with expertise in building management and a strong financial covenant. More specifically we have a partner that can envelop our training academy into their well-oiled educational machine.

The additional exclusive partnership between the Soulpepper Academy and the Canadian Centre for Advanced Film Study under the visionary leadership of Wayne Clarkson will assure that the George Brown College/Soulpepper Theatre Program will immediately become the prime theatrical training destination in Canada.

As well as sharing costs and revenues Soulpepper and GBC will share administrative and artistic resources. In such a facility GBC will be able to expand their programs to include design, production, and stage management programs. In all of these areas Soulpepper and our secondary partners will benefit. Shared production and storage facilities will also contribute to the viability of this project.

Additional partnerships with various small arts organizations will answer their needs by providing first rate intimate performance venues in which costs are reduced through shared marketing, production and technical support.

We have also had extremely fruitful discussions with Isobel Basset who immediately embraced the symbiotic potential of a partnership between the joint venture and TVO.

This dream would not have been possible without our development partner Cityscape. David Jackson sits at the head table in representation of his 3 other partners John Berman, Jamie Goad, and Matthew Rosenblatt. "The boys" as they are known are, as we speak, making an extraordinary contribution to the city and its cultural life. You need only take a walk down to the corner of Parliament and Mill Streets and wander about the city's busiest, fastest and most impressive renovation project, to understand the remarkable vision of these four men. Everything I said earlier about the revitalizing power of the arts is being manifested in this extraordinary arts-centric neighborhood.

For all the galleries and artists studios and retail outlets and restaurants that are rising daily from the whiskey soaked mud, it is this performing arts centre that will ensure a constant flow of traffic to the neighborhood on those cold Mondays through Thursdays when the pre-purchase of a theatre ticket is the only incentive to leave home. Cityscape's understanding of this reality and their passionate commitment to the project's fulfillment are greatly appreciated and will be rewarded.

The dream is ambitious. It will need to take advantage of government, business and individual partnerships. However we must not in all of our exciting plans for cultural growth forget the relatively small projects that will develop the artists and technicians who will in the future enliven the larger theatres that exist, and are soon to exist, not only here in Toronto but nationwide.

Once our project is on its way I will be reopening discussions with William Thorsell, Piers Handling, Matthew Teitelbaum and Richard Bradshaw and other cultural leaders.

My hope is that the result of these discussions will be a shared bi-annual celebration of focused multiculturalism starting with a city wide year long festival of Italian culture that celebrates the extraordinary contribution of Italian Canadian immigrants whose numbers makes Toronto the biggest Italian city outside of Italy. I choose Italy or 2006. William the next choice is yours.

In closing I would like to play one more quick round of word association. I'll name the community—you find the image. Here we go ....New York City.

I fervently believe that for future generations Daniel Libeskind's visionary reconstruction of the World Trade Centre can supplant the horrific image that we can't forget.

In the same way I believe that the same architect's visionary contribution to this city in the shape of a new Royal Ontario Museum, Frank Gehry's AGO, Jack Diamond's Opera House and Tom Payne's Soulpepper George Brown Arts Centre will become beacons of hope for Toronto and the world, and that by partnering with our future we will together shape a legacy of which we can all be proud .

Thank You.