

# The State of Cultural Infrastructure in Ontario

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# Cultural infrastructure “renaissance” 1999-2007

Driven by:

- Availability of capital funding
- Pent-up demand
- Popularity of “creative economy” arguments (Florida, Gertler, others)

# Inventories of cultural infrastructure

- Provincial inventories for:
  - small and mid-sized visual and performing arts facilities
  - francophone performing facilities
- Partial provincial inventories for:
  - museums and heritage facilities
- No inventories for public libraries
- Some inventories at municipal level, e.g. heritage properties

## State of small to mid-sized performing and visual arts facilities

- 82% planning at least one capital project
- 109 capital projects planned over next three years – total cost=\$100 million
- 20% own facilities – of these 87% are outside Toronto
- 45% of facilities older than 75 years
- 28% are heritage facilities
- 69% have insufficient space

# State of Francophone performing arts facilities

- Of 42 francophone performing arts spaces:
  - Only 26% (11) meet technical standards for professional performing arts presentations
  - About 74% (31) require major upgrades to bring up to standards
  - Estimated cost of upgrades – between \$37,000 and \$69,000 each

# State of heritage infrastructure

- Provincial picture is incomplete
- Only 14 municipalities are participating in Heritage Property Tax Relief Program
- Those 14 municipalities alone had 1075 eligible properties
- There are currently over 50 heritage conservation districts in Ontario

# Federal / provincial government infrastructure support measures

## Federal:

- Cultural Spaces Canada Program

## Federal-Provincial:

- Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program  
(delivered through SuperBuild Program)

# Provincial government infrastructure support measures

- SuperBuild – Sports, Culture and Tourism Partnerships
- Ontario Trillium Foundation capital grants
- Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership
- ReNew Ontario
- Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
- Rural Infrastructure Investment Initiative
- Heritage Property Tax Relief Program
- Community Access Program (libraries)

# Municipal cultural plans - 2005

- 149 municipalities had some type of cultural plan
- 39% had single issue plans
- 39% had negotiated agreements related to cultural operations
- 61% had cultural elements in larger plans
- 23% had horizontal or integrated plans (incorporating arts, heritage, cultural industries, libraries and other elements of culture)

# Overview of Municipal Cultural Plans

- Most utilized “creative city” or “creative cluster” arguments to justify infrastructure investments
- Inconsistent terminology and differing scopes makes it difficult to compare plans
- All plans documented serious cultural infrastructure shortfalls and inadequacies

# Facility trends and challenges

- Crumbling and inadequate cultural infrastructure
- Locational difficulties
- Changing infrastructure needs
- Financial and human resource problems (in both cultural organizations and municipalities)

# Governance trends and challenges

- Über trend – assumption that cultural infrastructure can be an incubator for a creative economy
- More intense competition among cities and facilities for cultural capital
- Coordination problems among stakeholders
- Inconsistent policies and programs

# Program / policy innovations

- Financial innovations
  - new programs (municipal, provincial?)
  - operating endowments
- Tax measures
- Legislative / policy measures
  - Section 37 of the *Planning Act*
  - 2005 amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act*
- More strategic use of municipal cultural plans

# Facility / partnership innovations

- Creative clusters or creative districts: e.g.
  - Distillery District, Liberty Village
- Affordable space for creative individuals and organizations: e.g.
  - Artscape developments
  - urbanspace Property Group developments
- Public-private partnerships (P3s)
- Technical advice and resource-sharing
- New non-cultural partners

# Conclusions

- Uneven access to cultural infrastructure support
- Unknown level of potential need in some sectors (e.g. libraries)
- Risk of creating unrealistic expectations about economic development potential of cultural investments in smaller communities
- Basic needs of many cultural organizations out of sync with funder goals and expectations

## Funding Sources used for capital expenditures over the past 5 years

