

## **Arts and Culture**

**Indicator Type: Social**

**Domain: Living**

The cultural vision of the Toronto region has as its focus the creation and sustaining of a competitive urban centre. In its present incarnation, the GTA is envisioned as an urban centre that competes as a destination for visitors, as a place to live and conduct business. It is a place where the value added components of knowledge, creativity, design, information, and idea driven industries are encouraged and nurtured (Toronto Arts Council, 1997).

The many media of arts and culture provide significant contributions to the city. The diversity and vitality of cultural activities can promote economic health and competitiveness, community well being and a high quality of urban environment (Toronto Arts Council, 1995). The cultural sectors of any city contribute an important social component to the quality of life in an urban region. The arts and cultural sector's can also contribute to a city's economy. These economic contributions include employment opportunities, benefits to commercial theatre sector, and benefits to cultural tourism (Toronto Arts Council, 1995). For these reasons, it is important for the city to support its arts and cultural sectors.

### **Trends:**

One major trend that could be examined as a potential indicator of the vitality of arts and culture in the GTA is that of grants and funding made available for the arts. Data obtained from the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) indicates that in the years from 1996 to 2000, there was a general rise in grants awarded to individual artists by the TAC from \$647,172 to \$791,300. During the same reporting period, the data showed that there has also been an increase in grants awarded to organizations/collectives by the TAC from \$4,035,905 to \$8,053,824. The amount of available grant money has been rising over the past 10 years. In 1993/1994 the arts and cultural sectors in Toronto totaled 224,875 jobs, up from the 1988 level of 160,000 jobs (Toronto Arts Council, 1997; Toronto Arts Council, 1995). The 93/94 arts and cultural sector jobs made up 10% of all GTA employment. TAC estimated that in 92/93 the arts and culture sector generated at least \$10.5 billion for Toronto (Toronto Arts Council, 1995), while in 93/94 the arts and culture had an economic impact of \$8.4 billion (Toronto Arts Council, 1997).

However, in comparison to other cities of similar size to and with a large arts and culture sector like that of Toronto, the TAC has found that it has underspent in the area of arts and culture. For example, Montreal invested close to three times the amount of money spent in Toronto despite having a smaller population. London, in the United

Kingdom, spends \$116 per capita for arts and culture, compared to \$32 per capita spent by Toronto (Toronto Arts Council, 1997).

### **Linkages:**

The arts and culture sectors of the city can be linked to employment, economic impact for the region as a whole, and business location. There is a strong link between the non-profit arts sector and growth of the commercial theatre sector. Funding and grants go to help train, support and develop the skills of artists (Toronto Art Council, 1995). With the provision of grants funding, there has been a significant rise in skill development. A secondary benefit of the development of these skills is that non-profit arts in the city have facilitated and fostered the growth of commercial theatre in a very real way. Further effects of grants funding can be seen in economic terms with the boom in cultural tourism that Toronto has experienced over the past decade. Busloads of tourists arrive in the theatre district everyday, pouring millions of dollars into the local economy. The TAC found that cultural tourism is a \$1 billion industry in the region. Viewed together, the arts and culture sector provide a large measure of the high quality of life afforded to those living in the GTA. Studies indicate that it is this high ranking on the quality of life index, partly fostered by the arts and culture sector, that has attracted companies and employees to locate in Toronto (Toronto Arts Council, 1997). In this respect, the arts and cultural sector can be seen as providing important linkages both between and to the economic and social sectors.

### **Action:**

After the 1998 amalgamation of Toronto into the City of Toronto, the TAC has been largely responsible for the allocation of grants for the arts. The hope of the Toronto Arts Council has been that at the very least, the current cultural grants funding level contributed by The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and The City of Toronto is maintained and by encouraging local level municipal initiatives to support and foster the arts. The City of Toronto has had an action plan for contributing to the arts since 1991. The 1991 Official Plan of Toronto called for achieving a goal of public art expenditure of 1% of its annual capital budget (Toronto Arts Council, 1997). However, it has not been successful in reaching this goal. The TAC would like to take action by earmarking a percentage of gross City of Toronto property-based revenue for arts and culture spending.

### **Difficulties:**

In addition to regional differences in data collection and indicators, due to the amalgamation process, there are also inconsistencies in data collection and reporting methodologies across the new city of Toronto. As a result, data collected after 1998 cannot be interpreted effectively as it cannot clearly indicate whether the increase in grants is due to additional funding to the Toronto Arts Council or from the amalgamated funds of the community arts councils of other former municipalities.

### **Future prospects:**

It is hoped that some form of regional cohesion will help foster long-term economic strategies involving the arts and culture development.

As more data becomes available from studies conducted by the new City of Toronto it will be clearer how arts and culture contribute to the City of Toronto as well as true levels of funding provided to the arts and culture.

### **Source of Information:**

Toronto Arts Council (1995) *A Cultural Vision: Toronto Arts Council Submission to the Greater Toronto Area Task Force*. Toronto, Ontario.

Toronto Arts Council, *Annual Report*, 1996

Toronto Arts Council, *Annual Report*, 1997

Toronto Arts Council, *Annual Report*, 1998

### **LINKS:**

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