

## Creativity is economic engine for cities

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"Canada's creative economy is in transition. The face of Canada is quite literally changing-- we are getting older and much more diverse. We are connected, we have large bandwidth, and we are interacting with the world. We are more creative."

-- Conference Board of Canada Report,

Valuing Culture Measuring

and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy, released in August

Does art matter? The question has been posed by many people in many different ways during the past few weeks. What is the value of arts and culture to the county and at home in our community?

Richard Florida, a professor of business and creativity at the University of Toronto, tackles the issue of the value of culture in an economy. He has penned a number of books that investigate the impact of the creative economy, including the book, "The Rise of the Creative Class."

The book has been an international best-seller and stimulated much discussion on creative class and the value to the economy.

Florida theorizes that creativity is the next economic driver in a global market -- and not the traditional economies that relied heavily on natural resources.

Florida says the "centre of gravity has shifted from traditional industrial regions toward new axes of creativity and innovation." He suggests economic growth will occur in places where creative people cluster. The thought of creativity spurring economic growth is a paradigm shift for many cities and individuals.

Rare was the individual who thought they would grow up to be a painter, musician or artist and make a lot of money while doing it. We all know the cliché of starving artists.

The thought has often been extrapolated to imply that the creative industries have no value.

Increasingly, in the age of technology, we are seeing that, in fact, creative industries indeed have value and have the potential to make a great deal of money.

Animation companies, gaming companies, advertising, movies, film and television are all creative fields that have made millions of dollars. Greater Sudbury is just starting to get a taste for how these industries can benefit the city.

Television productions like Meteo Plus, animation companies like March Entertainment and companies like MIRARCO have all found fertile soil in Sudbury and are contributing to the local economy in many identifiable but quiet and successful ways.

On his recent visit to Sudbury, former Winnipeg mayor Glen Murray praised Sudbury for having a local government that is supportive and open to building a creative city.

Murray outlined some of the struggles and opposition he had as he encouraged Winnipeg to embrace a more creative approach.

He recommends an integrated planning approach that incorporates land use, culture and economics. In Winnipeg, they built a bridge that was architecturally unique; the result was a desire for people to be in the area and a desire for businesses to set up.

One creative structure spurred a creative cluster of businesses and tenants. People want to be where culture thrives. Re-branding Sudbury as a cultural community entails a major shift in thinking, planning, implementing and economic development. Maybe it is time to re-position Sudbury as not just the nickel capital of the world.

Mining lives here, but so do artists, animators, film makers, graphic designers, musicians, actors, dancers and many other creative souls. There are many quiet supporters of the arts out there. Now is the time to make your voice heard.

The vote on the community projects -- both the performing arts centre and the multi-use centre -- will take place Wednesday starting at 5 p. m. Last week, I incorrectly identified the date as Oct. 14.

This is an important date, but for an entirely different vote.

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