

## The case for strong cities

Published Thursday October 2nd, 2008

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Richard Florida is an expert on the role that cities play in economic growth. In his best-selling books *The Rise of the Creative Class*, *The Flight of the Creative Class* and *Who's Your City?*, he argues that the strength of the 21st century economy lies in tapping the power of cities as places where creative people live and work.

On Wednesday, Mr. Florida brought his ideas to New Brunswick - a province already engaged in major efforts to transform the urban economy.

New Brunswick is trying to make the transition from exporting natural resources to a more diverse economy. Most of that new economic growth will occur in cities, and Mr. Florida brings an unparalleled knowledge and perspective to the political debates New Brunswickers are engaged in.

He emphasizes the importance of developing cities as appealing environments for creative people - the wellsprings where innovation, creation and commerce flourish.

As he observed recently in an interview with the *Telegraph-Journal*, this province is well positioned to benefit from global growth in creative industries. New Brunswick is relatively close to the Boston-Washington, D.C. corridor that generates \$2.2 trillion in economic activity. Developments in the energy sector are already drawing the attention of New England businesses, and members of America's creative class are becoming aware of New Brunswick's potential. The province is making other international connections as well, through foreign students attracted to New Brunswick's universities.

In terms of its geography, natural beauty and rich history, New Brunswick is an appealing location. The province has an opportunity to build on these advantages by strengthening the creative economy, from research and development and higher education to animation, computer gaming, the arts, music and film. Some of the reforms required will involve economic development policy; others must focus on equipping cities to thrive as regional centres.

The provincial government will soon release a report on municipal reform. It is expected to call for a reduction in the number of local governments and new efforts to strengthen New Brunswick's cities. We hope legislators will pay due attention to Mr. Florida's remarks.

Cities are more than administrative districts. They are complex, creative communities - the centres of activity where economic growth occurs.