



National

THE ARTS

Conference to explore creativity in urban centres

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In a partnership with the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto - headed by urban thinker Richard Florida - the city of Toronto will spend \$10,000 on an international conference this June on "cultural mapping."

The conference, highlighted in yesterday's city budget, will be called Placing Creativity. It will include international cultural policy researchers and "explore the connection between place, creativity and the economy."

The event, billed in a budget document as a "major gathering of international thinkers," will focus on the geographic discipline of "cultural mapping," which looks at the way artists and art institutions cluster and the effect they have on neighbouring businesses.

Rita Davies, head of the city's culture department, says the conference will examine, among other things, how rapid gentrification can harm arts communities, citing the recent fights over condominium developments on Queen Street West as an example.

"With Queen West, we learned that what's important is to get ahead of that curve, understand where those communities are, and what we need to do, whether it's through zoning or other kinds of policy to ensure their stability," Ms. Davies said in an interview.

Speakers at the academic conference include British-based cultural policy expert Colin Mercer and urban sociologist Richard Lloyd of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, as well as local experts.

Dr. Florida, whose work argues that cities must attract creative people and industries to stay globally competitive, is not a participant, organizers said.

Earlier this month, Dr. Florida and co-author Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, laid out a blueprint for Ontario's future in a

report commissioned by Premier Dalton McGuinty, arguing the province should nurture and develop the creative skills of its workers as its manufacturing sector withers.