

## Ottawa lags U.S. cities in wedding culture, business

### Creative resources can generate economic opportunity, expert tells officials

By Patrick Dare , The Ottawa Citizen    October 30, 2009

OTTAWA — Canada has cities with lots of creative and tolerant people, but it falls short of the United States in turning culture into tangible economic benefits, Richard Florida told officials at City Hall Friday.

Florida, an author and business professor at the University of Toronto, said cities such as Ottawa have huge potential for the coming post-industrial economic age in North America.

The American-born expert made his name advancing a theory that cities prosper when they're attractive to a "creative class" of artists, high-tech workers, musicians and gays. On Friday, he said Ottawa has 40 per cent of its workforce in the creative class of the economy, when the average in North American cities is 30 per cent. And the city is doing well at being a tolerant society, a feature that attracts creative and productive people of diverse backgrounds.

But he said the creative cultural activities in Canada are not getting much of a "commercial bang" in the entertainment industry, one of the huge sectors of the new economy.

He said cities should get creative people, such as artists and academics, together with people who can run a business and sell things, to foster growth in this part of the economy. Culture, such as big art galleries, needs to "get off its high horse" and become more responsive to the marketplace, said Florida.

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Ottawa isn't as diverse a city as Toronto or Vancouver, he said, but it's still a very interesting city. The interaction of people from around the world will be a great creative source that should generate economic opportunity, he said.

In response to questions from city councillors and staff, Florida said Ontario should be putting business education into its high school curriculum due to the huge shift in the economy and the end to traditional one-employer career patterns (indeed, on Friday, Ontario's education minister announced more support for financial-literacy education in the provincial curriculum, with details to come next week). Young people, he said, are going to have to create their own jobs.

Florida said the key to a city succeeding is attracting talented, creative people. One of the best ways to do that is with aesthetically pleasing surroundings; a place with beautiful trees, clean air and historical buildings that are preserved.

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