

New Brunswick needs more creative people

Published Wednesday October 1st, 2008

A2 Erin Dwyer
For the Telegraph-Journal

Calling all artists, entertainers and musicians. Leading social theorist Richard Florida believes New Brunswick's cities need more of you.

According to the author of *Who's Your City?*, the province's bohemian index - a measure he developed of the number of artists, entertainers and musicians relative to the general population - falls below the mark of what's he's found in prospering cities such as Boston, San Francisco and Washington.

"The bohemian index isn't as high as I'd like," he said in an interview.

"It's not incredibly high, but actually Fredericton, it's almost at the national average."

According to Florida, a high concentration of bohemians in an area creates an environment that attracts other types of talented or high human capital individuals. The presence of such human capital, in turn, attracts and generates innovative, technology-based industries.

Florida has written in his best-selling books, *The Rise of the Creative Class* and *The Flight of the Creative Class*, that as cities hinge on creative people, they need to attract creative people. This means developing the kinds of people climates that appeal to these artist-types.

So it's no wonder that Florida questioned Stephen Harper's \$43-million cuts to the arts in the last month. Although he hadn't looked at the cuts specifically, he said investment in the arts is one of three key areas he'd like to see Canada spend more money on.

But he had a word of caution about how the money should be spent.

"It's less about building traditional arts and cultural institutions and more about funding and investing in actual working artists and musicians," he said.

Part of Canada's great legacy is this incredible group of comics, actors, artists and musicians who are known all over the world, he said.

"It has this incredible musical, film, entertainment and art that has infused the world and I think Canada should get a little more mileage out of that. So I think, if anything, into the future we are going to have to increase (spending)."

Yet, Florida is not sure of who should do the spending - whether it the role of the federal government, the provinces or cities.

"But certainly, as a general stipulation, I think we have to bolster our arts, culture and creativity and to do that increasingly by supporting the actual artistic, cultural produce -- and not just by building great cultural institutions."

Florida also said Ottawa should be upping its investment in science and technology.

"We need much more aggressive building of world-class universities, institutes and centres in the here and now because that talent is up for grabs."

He further added that Canada needs to strengthen its cities through urban spending "It's an additional burden on Canada to make fantastic cities people want to be in -- not because I like cities or because they are socially important to me -- but because they are the economic engines of our economy."