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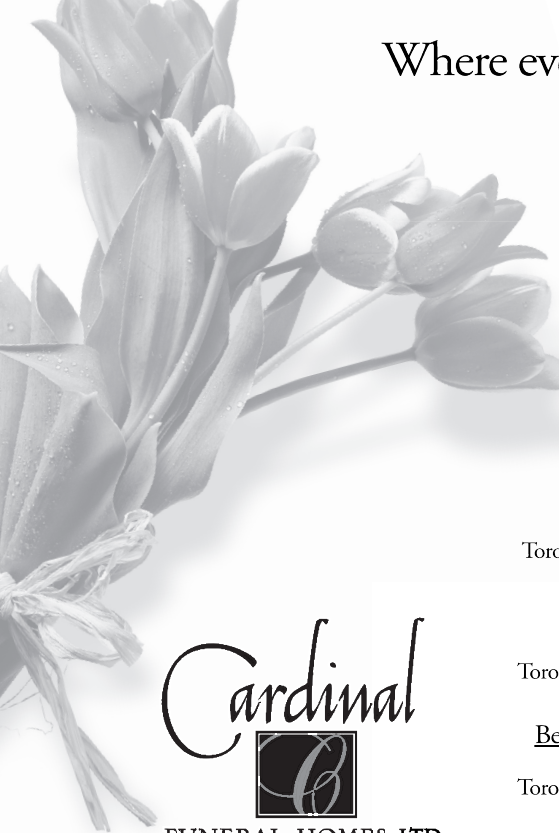


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CHATTER

The music hasn't died yet

The Metronome Project, an initiative to develop a "music city" on Toronto's western harbourfront, has requested \$40 million from the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund for Not-for-Profit Organizations.

On July 28, the federal government announced that they would be expanding their stimulus package to not for-profit organizations with a three-week deadline to submit.

"They had an online application process that, unfortunately, they put together so quickly that they didn't have a chance to test it and it actually didn't work, which was unbelievably frustrating," said John Harris, president of the Metronome Canada Foundation.

The respective governments wanted information about the nature of project, the benefits of funding it, the history of the foundation, and some financial documentation.

In addition to private contributions totalling about \$20 million from over 6,000 companies, the Metronome project—should it get the federal money— would become the most broadly funded cultural project in Canada.

By Harris' assessment, the funding may be deliberated and granted at a quicker pace than usual. "We think this will happen over the next few weeks, especially with the climate changing in terms of the possibility of a federal election."

"You would have to think that the Conservatives are going to do their best to get stimulus money to the marketplace because that is one of the things they have been accused of not handling effectively."

The Metronome Project is seeking to transform the Toronto Malting Silos, at the foot of Bathurst Street, into an environment where Canada's contributions to the world of music can be celebrated.

Elements may include educational facilities, a theatre, and other working spaces. There are also plans for M3, the Metronome Music Museum, which would promote Canada's role in world music.

Originally devised in 1999, the project has been long endorsed and they were able to establish a lease agreement with the City of Toronto. But funding has been difficult to get. "We reached sort of a plateau and although work continued, we didn't pursue raising money because we knew that without some federal and provincial involvement, doing this as a non-profit was not possible," said Harris.

Metronome was set back in 2001, when a request for \$12.5 million to match the provincial and federal SuperBuild fund was declined. Two years ago, it was further set back by a city staff proposal to use the site for a local initiative, the Toronto Museum. On Sept. 2, that project was abandoned by the City of Toronto.

"We know that a very large number of members of city council have always supported Metronome, so we are confident that if we have the funding secured, we could go back to the city and revise the original lease agreement," said Harris.

The Metronome group is now asking that backers come forward to show their support. An electronic petition has been created to help with that process. Currently, about 124 cities in about eight countries have done so.

Metronome will be notified about the request for funding, at the earliest, in October.

—Perry King

Art attack: given'er at the AGO

The Art Gallery of Ontario's (AGO) youth program Teens Behind The Scenes (TBTS) will continue its ten-year anniversary with special events and workshops.

"This 10 year anniversary has really pushed us to say we've got to do more," said Syrus Ware, the coordinator for TBTS. The exhibitions and the events will run until December 2009, while the special monthly youth events will run on an ongoing basis.

These functions are a way to showcase the program's decade of success.

TBTS is a way for teens to get involved in the art industry through hands-on job experience, co-op placements, internships, and volunteer hours that can be used towards a high school diploma. What makes the program unique is that their youth council takes charge by organizing events, field trips, and public art projects to help communities. It is because of this group that the program has been able to evolve into the success it is today, said Ware.

"They've worked with a bunch of community organizations and really tackled some complicated issues," said Ware of the 1500 or so teens that have participated in the program. "They really helped us re-imagine the way we do all of the work that we do. The result of this is the youthful perspective on things."

Upcoming events include a town hall meeting and a video launch with the Griffin Centre, a group that helps young people with intellectual disabilities. New workshops such as Free after Three have been created for people to drop-in any time rather than having to register. With TBTS being occupied with so many upcoming projects, Ware is optimistic about the future.

"I'm really looking forward to another 10 years of getting my mind kind of blown by the participants in the program and getting to try a whole bunch of new things. This is a really exciting moment for the AGO because we've re-imagined ourselves—literally—through the transformation of the building, and also through recommitting ourselves to providing an outstanding visitor outcome and to connecting with all of the communities."

The AGO is currently looking for new members on the youth council and gallery guides. Anyone who is interested can contact Syrus Ware at Syrus_Ware@ago.net or by phone at 416-979-6660 Ext. 403

—Matt Ho

Parkdale vs. the city

The Parkdale Residents Association (PRA) is taking legal action against the City of Toronto because of what it says was the City's failure to notify area tenants of a rent reduction.

Under the Parkdale Pilot Project, landlords of formerly unregulated rooming houses received a significant property tax deduction when the houses became regulated. A portion of this money was supposed to be passed on to tenants.

For several years, the City did not send notices out to many people living in these buildings.

According to the PRA, hundreds of tenants lost out on cheaper rent—estimated at \$20 to \$70 a month—because of the City's blunder.

"We're bringing an application asking the court to declare, first of all, that the city failed to meet its statutory duty because it failed to send the notices," said Brendan van Niejenhuis, the lawyer representing the PRA pro bono. "Second of all, we're asking for an order, if available, that the court compels the city to now issue the notices."

While the City is now mailing letters addressed to the occupants, the PRA feels these letters are uninformative.

"Tenants and landlords should discuss whether there is an entitlement to a rent reduction as a result of the property tax deduction," reads a sample notice. It goes on to state that the city is not responsible for deciding whether tenants should get a rent reduction.

"The PRA's position is that the City's recent 'information notices' do not provide tenants or landlords with any relevant information," van Niejenhuis later wrote in an email. "It is not clear to the PRA what purpose or effect the City's 'information notices' achieve other than to disclaim any responsibility for the situation on the part of the City."

He declined to comment on whether the PRA had plans for further legal action. "I think what I'll leave it on is that the PRA will consider after the result of this action whether there is any other remedy that can affectively assist the tenants," he said. "That's not an area where there's been any real discussion or determination. It's sort of one step at a time."

The first court date was scheduled for Oct. 7 at Osgoode Hall (130 Queen St. W.). For more information email info@parkdale.to or call 416-533-0044.

—Emina Gamulin