WINNIPEG ARTS COUNCIL **17**
March 2008
STATEMENT RE: DRAFT BUDGET RECOMMENDS $400,000 CUT TO PUBLIC ART IN 2008

To the Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you very much for permitting this brief presentation on Winnipeg's Public Art Program and the impacts of the proposed 2008 Operating Budget. Heather Cram, the volunteer chair of the Public Art Committee will share in these comments. The images you see on the screen are just meant as an impression of the Public Art Program's activities.

Why does a city need public art?
This Administration has been very supportive of the Winnipeg Arts Council and the Public Art Program, and we are very grateful on behalf of the people of Winnipeg. Years of volunteer effort, including those of the Public Art Committee, have gone into establishing the programs and volunteers continue to give hours and hours of their time to making Winnipeg a better place to live. Quickly, I would like to introduce the volunteer Board Members of the Winnipeg Arts Council here today… To lose a year of projects and activities is of course a disappointment to Winnipeg's arts community, but more importantly means Winnipeg is less of the city it can be.

- Public art is a support system that improves the quality of life, distinguishes a city and celebrates its unique character. Our program enhances the urban environment through vibrant, diverse city-wide activity in public art. The City's own policy states as the purpose: *Public art reflects the identity of a city, gives voice to community and builds relationships between diverse groups. Public art gives meaning to place by interpreting the social, historical, cultural and natural environment.*
- In Winnipeg, public art offers shared symbols which build social cohesion, contribute to civic pride and help forge a positive identity for the city.
- Public art supports the creative industries, creating opportunities for artists, designers and fabricators. Further, public art acts as a catalyst for development and economic growth through raising confidence, attracting visitors and stimulating investment.
- Winnipeg's is a young program, but has developed quickly and strongly and has begun to unveil major

projects along with the community activities. Developing major public works is a demanding multi-year process. Each project must move through many rounds of discussion and approvals through several city departments. Any single project takes more than two years to complete. Only one staff person manages and delivers all aspects of the public art program. Costs of program administration amount to approximately 15% of the allocation. Administration costs for the whole Winnipeg Arts Council amounted to **less than 8% in 2007.** I can't imagine than any enterprise, public or private, has greater efficiency.

- Winnipeg's Public Art Program is looked upon as a model by other cities. The Manager of Public Art is invited to speak across the country, telling the story of Winnipeg's success. While the City's investment is less than other Canadian centres, the diversity, impact and resulting social benefits are acknowledged as exceptional.

What does such a drastic reduction mean to the program?

- Such a drastic cutback impedes the momentum of the program and will make recovery very difficult. The proposed reduction endangers the plan of major works and ongoing programs like **With Art**, which pairs artists with community groups resulting in shared creative activity that means families, children, senior, new immigrants can get involved in making art and bonding with their communities. The results of this nationally acknowledged and admired program are community-building social benefits that go far beyond the production of art. Young people have opportunities and experiences that reinforce positive life choices and reduce the need for costly municipally-funded redemptive services. With such programs, our activities enhance the City's priorities for public safety. We constantly receive calls from other cities asking how we do it, and noticed that just this past week another unnamed city in Canada has implemented our With Art program word for word.
- Currently artists are working with the Elwick Community, Spence Neighbourhood, the Manitoba Maternity Care Action Network and Manitoba Urban Native Housing. We are currently adding three additional community projects - the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Dorchester House and

the Eritrean Community. The 2008 Public Art Plan contained plans for two more **With Art** projects.

- Seven other public art projects are nearing completion and will be unveiled this summer; seven more are in the selection process phase and many more are in development.
- In addition to the four WITH ART projects to be unveiled this summer, four other artworks will open in the next few months: artist designed bike racks on Broadway which was a collaboration with the Downtown BIZ; a documentary film featuring the stories of citizens and City workers by Paula Kelly created through the City of Winnipeg Archives artist residency; a major sculpture by Gordon Reeve at Assiniboine Park; and a transit related public art work near the University of Winnipeg by recent U of M School of Art graduate David Perrett
- Projects that are beginning work currently are: an environmental artwork for the Bishop Grandin Greenway; the inaugural sculpture for the new sculpture garden at La Maison des artistes and an Artist in Residence project at the St. Boniface Museum in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of St. Boniface; an artist-designed lighting treatment for the Redwood Bridge .

Some of our ideas for the near future include: A Children's Garden, hopefully for Kildonan Park; public art as part of the redevelopment of Old Market Square in the 2008 plan; artist enhancements to a children's playground; collaborations with the private sector; an artwork in Osborne Village; and a public art component in the redevelopment of the Disraeli Freeway.

The 2008 allocation to public art is contained in the City's Capital Budget and had been approved before Christmas 2007. The allocation to Public Art represents **less than 1%** of the City's tax dollar contribution to the Capital Budget, of $61.5 million. To put that in context, the City's entire Capital budget with revenue from all sources is $421.5 million.

We understand that the City is facing financial difficulties and we would welcome consultation on how to find new ways to fund public art. Many cities, those with the most expansive programs, have made a contribution to public art funds conditional within the terms of

permissions to develop. But this will not solve the immediate problem of 2008.

As you are aware, Winnipeg has made a bid to be named Cultural Capital of Canada in 2010. The major factor measured by the assessment panel is the City's support to and involvement in arts and culture. Winnipeg has a very good chance of winning the bid because of its track record and its exceptional artistic achievements. We believe by working collaboratively with the City to find ways of keeping the Public Art Program in tact, we may be able to mitigate any possible negative repercussions.

Again, we want to thank the Committee for hearing this presentation, and would welcome any questions you might have.