

Notes for Remarks by  
**Prof. Patricia Wood**  
at the public launch of  
**The City Institute at York University (CITY)**

Wednesday, May 31<sup>st</sup> 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

It is both fortunate and appropriate to launch the City Institute at York University while we host the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, whose theme this year is "The City".

We would not have been able to take advantage of this timing if it weren't for the hard work of many faculty members from across the university...the staff in Marketing & Communications, and in Media Relations...and the office of the Vice President Research & Innovation.

I would like to thank Vice President Stan Shapson and Associate Vice President David Dewitt, as well as the faculty and graduate students who served on The City Institute steering committee... Prof. Lisa Drummond, Linda Peake, Engin Isin, Julie-Anne Boudreau, Shelley Hornstein, Liette Gilbert, Michael McMahon, and Leela Viswanathan, and our grad assistants, Dave Mizener and Genevieve Vallerand.

If you peruse the research of the scholars gathered here this week, you will learn that the city is an engine of wealth, the headquarters of the global economy, towers of financial might, proof of humanity's conquest of nature.

The city is a wasteland, a war zone, a landscape of neglect and poverty.

The city is a refuge, a safe haven, an enclave of privilege, the height of civilization.

The city is exploited and underrepresented, politically powerless, a pawn.

The city is the new state, the producer of power, the exploiter of the hinterland.

The city is a dead zone, a sprawl of waste and poisons, a soulless mega-mall of banal consumerism.

The city is a patchwork quilt, a series of villages, a cultural bazaar, a cosmopolis.

The city is a dynamic laboratory of human behaviour, the site of road rage, graffiti, street racing, mass protest and public festival.

The city is a stage for art and "starchitecture," a platform for activists in the struggle for social justice, an arena for battles of identity politics.

The city is a sea, an island, a fortress, a blur of light, a beacon on a hill.

At York University, researchers study the city from all these angles, and more. The City Institute creates the opportunity for synergy and interdisciplinarity unrivalled anywhere. The CITY is the point from which we can see the shape and form of the new city, beyond limited definitions of downtown and suburb. The CITY is a space for new connections and partnerships, for new modes of expression and new ways of thinking. And the CITY is a space of possibility, a space in which to try to change the world.

Thank you for joining us.