



CANADIAN ARTISTS REPRESENTATION
LE FRONT DES ARTISTES CANADIENS

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BRIEF TO THE ARTS STRATEGY TASK FORCE

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Introduction

The arts in Saskatchewan are at an important crossroads. Artists and creators will either join the thousands of others who are leaving the province to seek better opportunities and a more welcoming climate for artistic growth, or there will begin to be improvement in the structures and attitudes that support professional arts activity. Galleries, symphonies, dance troupes, theatre groups, publishers and other cultural institutions will continue to downgrade their programs to the point of ineffectiveness, or they will receive renewed public and financial support to be the conduits of artistic creation. Young people in Saskatchewan will have an impression that the artist is nothing more than a sponge of public money and that a career as an artist means poverty, ridicule and lack of recognition, or they will see that being a professional artist is a rewarding and society-building activity and an integral part of a healthy world.

At this critical juncture, the Arts Strategy Task Force has been established, with the potential for developing a blueprint for building the structures necessary for a thriving, healthy artistic community that will benefit the whole of society.

Canadian Artists Representation/Le Front des artistes Canadiens Saskatchewan (CARFAC Saskatchewan) is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization working towards improving the rights and working conditions for practising visual artists. Therefore, we are most interested in the work of the Arts Strategy Task Force, and welcome the opportunity to submit our ideas and recommendations. Saskatchewan's cultural history is littered with reports, studies, congresses, etc. -- some recommendations have been implemented, but there still is a lot to be done.

CARFAC Saskatchewan trusts that this Task Force will provide a visionary, proactive framework for a renewal of Saskatchewan's artistic community.

Some of the issues that we have identified are as follows:

- * an emphasis on the individual artist/creator,
- * a need for a strong support system for both artists and arts institutions,
- * the importance of the visual arts in the educational curriculum,
- * the maintenance and enhancement of the arms length principle in the funding of the arts,
- * the provision of adequate educational opportunities for visual artists within the province,
- * the need for municipal bylaws and policies that recognize the unique working situation of the working artist,
- * a 2% allocation for art in government funded construction and major renovation projects, and, finally,
- * the need for a provincial arts strategy and long-term plan.

The artist/creator

The individual artist is the cornerstone on which all artistic activity is built. All too often this key point is forgotten or ignored; however, without the visual artist, there would be no work for galleries to exhibit; without the writer, no books to publish; without the playwright, no plays to produce; without the composer, no music to perform. Any policy affecting the arts made at every level of government must first of all recognize the importance of the individual artist, and the validity of artistic activity as a vocation and profession.

Unfortunately, artistic activity is often thought to be something certain individuals do in their spare time, when they come home from their "real job". Society finds it far too easy to ignore the fact that artists work long hours, often seven days a week, or creatively fit precious studio time around the demands of other part and full time jobs, in order to complete projects, to meet deadlines, to satisfy creative goals.

As the Applebaum-Hebert Committee stated in 1983, "the largest subsidy to the cultural life of Canada comes not from governments, corporations or other patrons, but from the artists themselves, through their unpaid or underpaid labour."

It is imperative that any policy, program or planning activity first of all recognize the importance of the individual artist. If this were done on a consistent basis, the status of the artist would be enhanced.

Recommendation: that a provincial arts policy must be based on the recognition of the importance of the individual artist, and must emphasize the arts as a vital component of an open, healthy society.

The artist's support system

Artists need to be able to live in a society that recognizes the importance of the individual artist, and that provides adequate support systems for artistic and economic security.

These systems include the following:

- * an arms length funding body providing individual financial assistance

- * provincial and municipal legislation which encourages artistic activity and recognizes the situation of the self-employed individual artist

- * well supported arts institutions with sufficient operational funding to permit long-term planning

In Saskatchewan, artists have benefitted from the existence of the Saskatchewan Arts Board and its program of individual assistance and operational support for arts organizations. However, each year many projects deemed worthy by the jury system cannot be supported due to insufficient funds. The Arts Board's budget therefore should be increased to the point that all worthy projects can be funded.

Recommendation: that the Saskatchewan Arts Board continue as the primary agency in both granting and consultation on cultural policy, and that funding to the Arts Board be made available to carry out the program outline in the Board's Three Year Plan.

One of the ways of improving the present situation for the professional artist is through legislation. Such legislation would require the Government of Saskatchewan to recognize the contribution made by individual artists to the community, and then entrench in law the rights of artists that, when enforced, would lead to greater economic security. Labour relations, bargaining rights, collective agreements, the right to negotiate, the right to represent and promote, and exclusivity over produced work are all under provincial control.

The Province of Quebec has led the way with the the passage of two acts which define the professional artist, deal with the contractual relationship between artists and those who promote their work and provide for the formation of artists' associations to represent artists, defend their interests and negotiate and ratify agreements.

Together, these acts mean that artists in Quebec now have a solid, legal framework that will promote the development of their artistic careers and improve their social and economic status.

Recommendation: that provincial and municipal governments recognize the working situation of the individual artist when developing legislation and/or policy;

that the Government of Saskatchewan enact Status of the Artist legislation as quickly as possible after consulting with such organizations as CARFAC Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Craft Council and the Saskatchewan Writers Guild -- organizations addressing the concerns of individual artists and creators.

Saskatchewan's artists cannot make art in a vacuum. A healthy, active artistic community must also have vibrant arts institutions. Visual artists depend on a network of public and commercial galleries, and active service organizations such as CARFAC Saskatchewan.

Recommendation: that Saskatchewan's professional arts institutions and organizations receive sufficient funding, and that the emphasis be on core funding, rather than a project by project approach.

The visual arts and the education curriculum

The province's education system has yet to successfully integrate the study and appreciation of the arts into the school curriculum. Therefore, we have a public that is generally arts-illiterate -- artistic activity is perceived to be on the fringe rather than at the core of human experience, and is frequently thought to be something one does in his/her spare time, or is something that anyone can do.

The revised elementary school curriculum has taken a few tentative steps, but much remains to be done. Arts education must be the responsibility of teachers specifically trained in that field; university art education programs must be developed in consultation with practising artists; students and teachers must be given the opportunity to experience first-hand the role of the practising artist.

A comprehensive artist-in-the-schools program should be developed whereby professional artists are placed in schools for both short and long-term residencies.

Recommendation: that the education system recognize the intrinsic importance of the arts;

that the study of the arts be better integrated into the school curriculum;

that art teachers and educators receive sufficient training;

that a comprehensive artist-in-the-schools program be developed and implemented as quickly as possible.

The arms length principle

It is imperative that decisions regarding arts programming and funding be made in an open environment, free from political interference. Decisions affecting the creation of art must be made on the basis of artistic merit.

The role of the independent jury must be recognized and upheld.

Appointments to the Saskatchewan Arts Board, municipal arts commissions, etc. must be made with formal input from the appropriate artistic community.

Recommendation: that a provincial arts policy be based on the arms length principle, and that structures be in place to insure its continued existence.

Educational opportunities

Funding must be made available to rationalize and enhance post secondary educational opportunities within Saskatchewan for persons interested in pursuing careers as professional artists. Funding must also be made available to arts service organizations like CARFAC Saskatchewan, to organize and operate artists' studio programs, workshops and symposiums to provide professional artists with on-going stimulating learning opportunities, dealing with both the practical and aesthetic.

Recommendation: that a provincial arts policy include a recognition of the need to improve educational opportunities for students considering a career as an artist, and for professional artists who wish to expand their knowledge and experience.

Municipal bylaws

Cities usually ignore the unique working situation of the professional visual artist, thus inappropriately applying business taxes to studio spaces or restricting artistic activity in residential areas due by rigidly applying zoning regulations. City administrations must be encouraged to address these situations by consulting with artists and organizations such as CARFAC, in order that city legislation recognize the contribution of the practising artist and that regulations are such that the artist can readily comply.

Recommendation: that a provincial arts policy include a recognition of the need for "artist-friendly" municipal legislation and policy.

Two percent allocation for art

The policy of incorporating a certain percentage of the total construction costs for visual art (in the form of sculpture, architectural decoration, paintings, drawings, fibre work, etc.) in government funded construction and major renovation projects is not a new one; however, it has been only sporadically applied in recent years. The benefits of such policy are well documented: enhanced working environments, buildings and other structures with character, provision of access to art for both staff and other users of the space and of course, increased economic opportunities for artists.

Recommendation: that a provincial arts policy include the provision for a 2 percent allocation for art in any government funded construction or major renovation project.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: THAT A PROVINCIAL ARTS POLICY BE ESTABLISHED THAT IS BASED ON THE RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST, AND THAT SUCH A POLICY CONTAIN PROVISIONS FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE CREATIVE AND ECONOMIC POSITION OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST, INCLUDING A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM WITH ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS, A REVISION OF THE EDUCATION CURRICULUM TO INCLUDE A MUCH NEEDED EMPHASIS ON THE ARTS, THE MAINTENANCE AND STRENGTHENING OF THE ARMS LENGTH PRINCIPLE, ADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS, A TWO PERCENT ALLOCATION FOR ART IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION PROJECTS.