

*Proposed principles of the  
Saskatchewan Artists Code*

- 1. The treatment of the artist by Society reflects its appreciation of the value of creativity, the right to self-expression, and the respect it holds for its cultural heritage and development.*
- 2. The contribution of the artist to Society is manifest in economic, labour market, social and industrial terms, true value being evidenced in the quality of life and the maturity of the nation.*
- 3. The fundamental role of the artist as the creative force behind all cultural industries warrants that artists enjoy an equitable share of the profits and decisions in the Sector.*
- 4. All people should have the broadest access to artists and their work through distribution, exhibition, and education. In particular, we believe Saskatchewan People must have full access to Saskatchewan arts and artists, including the work of indigenous artists, whose cultural and aesthetic traditions predate European contact and must be nurtured and encouraged.*

*- from Status of the Artist final report, 1993*

**Saskatchewan Arts Alliance**

#117 2505 – 11th Avenue  
Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 0K6  
Tel: (306) 780-9820 Fax: (306) 780-9821  
skartsalliance@sk.sympatico.ca

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance is supported by its membership and



Government of Canada  
Gouvernement du Canada



status  
of the  
artist

equity  
social benefits  
economic development  
rights

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Saskatchewan Arts Alliance

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## Equity for Artists

Perhaps you're a potter who has developed an allergic reaction to your glazes. Or a dancer with a sprained ankle. Maybe you're an actress and a single mother – forced in exasperation to seek another career because of the unavailability of flexible daycare. Or maybe you're a poet – acclaimed by the critics, respected by your peers, but just getting by and facing an old age in poverty.

Unlike most “workers” in our society, those with regular jobs, paycheques and benefits, the potter, dancer, actress and poet have no built-in occupational safety nets. These artists, and the many self-employed artists of all disciplines, may have their own private health and/or disability plans, or be on the plan of a spouse, but they have no worker compensation, no unemployment insurance, no pension. Even for those on contract, work is precarious and benefits are limited.

Like most all self-employed people, artists are on their own. But, unlike a doctor, a lawyer, or an accountant who chooses to be independent rather than work for someone else; unlike, in fact, any independent business person who chooses to be self employed, artists by and large don't have that choice.

Some are lucky enough to make a living from their art, and work at it full-time. Most don't. They cobble together a living with a little of this and some of that. A writer may teach a class, take on an editing job, do a bit of freelancing. A painter may strike it rich and spend a few weeks doing scenery for a film shoot. A musician may strike gold with a television jingle. An actor may land a juicy film contract between waiting on tables. Between these short-term gigs, they struggle to produce art and keep their skills fine tuned, all the time walking a high-wire bereft of the safety net most workers take for granted.

***It's this precarious state that the Status of the Artist initiative is designed to correct.***

## Bread and Butter – Economics and Rights

Artists are primarily interested in making art. But they're also concerned with putting bread on the table. The focus of the Status of the Artist initiative is just that: not art itself, but the bread-and-butter issues that surround the making of art. The centrepiece of the initiative is a proposed Artists Code to recognize fundamental rights for artists – a sort of “charter of rights” for artists.

Going hand-in-hand with the Code is a proposed Status of the Artist Advisory Commission to defend artists, represent on their behalf, and assist in the implementation of other Status of the Artist recommendations. Fundamentally, the Commission would be an ombudsman for artists and work to keep Status of the Artist issues on the government's front burner.

## What can you do?

It's been eight years since the Minister's Advisory Committee on the Status of the Artist made dozens of recommendations relating to the health, education, legal protection and economic livelihood of the province's artists.

There's been no action on most of the recommendations, but now the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance hopes to get the process moving again. We need your help – we need the help of all Saskatchewan artists, to write, call or email the Minister of Culture and your own MLA urging that action finally be taken. The Minister needs to know why this initiative is important to you. The Minister needs to hear your story.

*Please write your own letter or simply detach the short letter to the right, add your personal information, comments and mail in.*

Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation  
Room 345  
Legislative Building  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4S 0B3

Dear Minister:

I am urging you to implement the Status of the Artist Initiative, in particular to appoint the Advisory Commission proposed in the 1993 Minister's Advisory Report on Status of the Artist.

The time is now for artists and all cultural workers to achieve equity with other workers.

The Saskatchewan government can make this a reality.

Name

Address

Comments

*additional comments...*