

SASKATCHEWAN ARTS ALLIANCE

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

OF THE

SASKATCHEWAN ARTS STRATEGY TASK FORCE

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance would like to thank the Minister of the Family for this opportunity to respond to the report of the Saskatchewan Arts Strategy Task Force. We commend the Minister for his willingness to seek input from the arts community and the public at large in order to develop a province-wide vision and consensus on the arts in Saskatchewan. We would also like to thank the members of the Task Force for the time and energy they have given to this project. The Arts Alliance endorses the intent of the recommendations presented and the vision of an ideal environment as outlined in the report.

The report itself, the number of briefs presented, and the level of participation from all sectors of the arts community are a clear demonstration of the impact the arts have in Saskatchewan. The situation in the professional arts community in Saskatchewan is very serious. Individual artists are leaving the province at an unprecedented rate. Arts organizations are fighting for their survival. The Arts Strategy Task Force report gives us a good and thorough overview of the existing problems in the arts and a solid vision for addressing them. This report cannot be treated as have similar reports in the past several decades. Inaction on this multitude of past studies has engendered an attitude of cynicism in the professional sector. We recognize that implementation of this report is a long-term process, every step of which must be taken with great care in consultation with all the affected parties. But, precisely because of this long process, we urge the Minister and the Government of Saskatchewan to initiate immediately the steps necessary for the report's implementation.

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance strongly endorses the definitions of "art" and "artist" in the Task Force report. Using the question "What is good for art and the artist as defined in this report?" as a guide, we have also identified issues in the report which are a high priority for our members.

## IMPLEMENTATION

We ask that the Ministers responsible for the arts and the Government of Saskatchewan respond to the serious economic situation of the province's professional arts sector, as outlined in the report, with the same financial and political proactive will demonstrated toward the agricultural sector of our economy. We are sure that the Minister of the Family will agree with us and the report (page 4) that losses in our professional arts community will result in unacceptable negative economic consequences to the general public of Saskatchewan. Implementing the recommendations of the report will prevent such losses, and ensure economic gain for the entire province.

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance supports the report's guidelines on implementation (page 49) with several additional recommendations. With regard to guidelines 4,6, and 7, we endorse the timely establishment of an Advisory Committee on the report's implementation. The membership of this Committee should be drawn equally from the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations, and the staff of the Ministers' departments responsible for the arts, with some representation from the aboriginal arts community. The representatives of these organizations should be selected by their memberships. We further recommend that the Committee a) review all responses to the report received by the Minister and, b) as indicated in the guidelines, develop an action plan, including critical time lines, for implementation of the Task Force recommendations. The ongoing responsibility of the Committee should be to assist the Minister of the Family in the expedient execution, review, and measurement of the process of implementation.

## STATUS OF THE ARTIST

Integral to the vision of an ideal environment is the recognition that artists serve a unique function in our society. Creating art, communicating with and challenging society are activities that are undertaken at a professional level. The report itself highlights the many benefits, both social and economic (pages 3,13), that result from artistic activity. Yet those who create the art are some of the most impoverished and disregarded in our society. The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance strongly endorses the report's Recommendation 1 (page 14): "That the Government of Saskatchewan support the adoption of the Canadian Artists' Code, and using it as a basis, enact comprehensive legislation on the status of the artist as it relates to areas under provincial jurisdiction."

## FUNDING

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance supports the recommendations for increased funding to the arts. Many of the problems defined in the report, and the solutions outlined, could be addressed simply through the infusion of significant additional funds. The professional sector in particular has been seriously underfunded for many years. We ask the Minister and his Government to immediately implement the report's Recommendation 55 (page 34): "That the budget of the Saskatchewan Arts Board be increased immediately by \$1 million to alleviate the crisis in the professional sector and that an additional \$1.5 million be allocated for the professional arts in 1991." The transition to a new structure must be assisted by additional support to our professional artists so that they can be sustained and will remain in Saskatchewan through this precarious time.

The Arts Alliance supports Recommendation 50 (page 33): "That by the year 2000, the arts be funded... at a minimum level of 1% of total Government of Saskatchewan expenditures." We do not see the need for all of this money to be tax-based, providing the source of funds does not reduce government's legislative responsibility to the arts. While the arm's-length principle of funding to the arts must always remain, there must be no doubt about the responsibility and commitment of the government to this large and vital sector of our social and economic fabric.

It is also important to the membership of the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance that funding to arts organizations be committed on the basis of three-year planning projections. Professional organizations, in particular, must often make concrete decisions and plans before knowing what their level of government support will be for any given year. This has a tremendous negative impact on the ability of arts administrators to effectively manage their organizations. To be adequately funded in three-year cycles would significantly ease this burden.

## STRUCTURE

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance supports the concept of a unified structure for the funding, support, and development of professional, recreational, and educational arts. The Task Force report's "Arts Agency" would certainly require some sweeping changes to the current structure. It is our recommendation that the Advisory Committee, as previously outlined in our response, be directly involved in designing the new structure so that it is workable, yet true to the concepts developed by the Task Force.

The Arts Alliance would like to stress as particularly crucial several aspects of the proposed structure as outlined in the report. Of primary importance is the issue of funding being at arm's-length from the government. We feel that the proposed structure enhances the arm's length nature of support for the arts. A unified agency would be able to establish global priorities with regard to professional, recreational, and educational arts, taking into consideration the unique needs of all sectors of the arts community and the province of Saskatchewan. In conjunction with the unified agency, we see the consolidation of arts funds into "one pot" as a critical factor in a unified structure, and would support the melding together of tax-based and lottery support for the arts, including the Minister's Directed Fund.

The Arts Alliance would also like to endorse the importance of peer assessment within the structure of the Arts Agency. This principle is endorsed in the report not only in the recommendations for establishment of peer juries to adjudicate assistance to individual artists, but also in the recommendation for significant representation of arts professionals at all levels, from discipline boards through to the Arts Agency board. Peer assessment in all areas of decisionmaking is a departure from current practice, but it is one aspect of the proposed structure that we would strongly advocate. We also support the Task Force recommendation that clear conflict-of-interest guidelines be developed for the participation of all individuals involved in the assessment process. The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance endorses the recommendation of the Task Force that artistic merit be the guiding criteria at all levels of decision making.

The Arts Alliance sees the reorganization of the arts community by discipline (rather than by professional/non-professional status) and the inclusion and recognition of aboriginal artists as potentially unifying forces for the arts in Saskatchewan. By improving communication, this reorganization could engender a broader understanding of the needs of those who participate in professional, recreational, and educational levels of the arts, to the betterment of all.

## EDUCATION

The issue of education in the arts is a vital one. The most significant value of a comprehensively integrated arts component in our education system lies in the opportunity it provides: to prepare future generations, through first-hand experience, to understand and support the value of the arts in their lives. The Saskatchewan Department of Education has adopted and is now implementing a new Arts Core Curriculum which also promotes this viewpoint. We fully support the recommendation of the Task Force that adequate resources be provided for the full implementation of this new Arts Core Curriculum in our schools. This would entail provision of appropriate materials and resources in schools, adequate teacher training in the arts, and involvement of professional artists in the schools. The cost for these provisions must be borne by educational rather than arts funds.

The Arts Alliance recognizes that university programming provides more than a purely educational service. Universities ensure a healthy talent pool through both the teaching and student populations. Much art is created by those involved in the university environment. However, in order to appropriately serve the art and artist, training and education at the university level needs to be in-depth and comprehensive. We would therefore endorse the recommendations with regard to university education in artistic disciplines, noting in particular that the availability of quality resources is necessary for this to be successful.

The Arts Alliance views the issue of professional development for artists, arts administrators, and arts trustees in the province of Saskatchewan as an important priority. A year-round school of the arts may be the best vehicle for providing this kind of training, but we suggest that any delivery system for professional development in the arts be designed in consultation with professional members of the arts community.

## CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance endorses Recommendations 38, 39, and 40 (pages 28,29), including the adjoining comments, with regard to cultural industries. It is important that cultural industries continue to be viewed in their "arts" context as well as their "industrial" context. Many people involved in this field consider themselves first as artists. Incentives must be made available to those filmmakers, publishers, sound recorders, and craftspeople who wish to fulfill their primary motivation, which is to create art.

## TOURING

Many of the member organizations of the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance are involved in touring activities. These activities range from gallery outreach programs to literary readings to theatrical productions. Most organizations have developed extensive networks with their clientele in rural Saskatchewan which they are unwilling to forfeit. The administrative time utilized in booking tours is difficult to separate from the time spent in developing support resource materials, many of which are designed in accordance with the specific needs of the clientele. We do not think that it is of benefit to artists and their art to have one centralized booking agency as recommended in the Task Force report.

We do acknowledge that there would be significant benefit if the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils were to act as an information delivery system about touring programs that are available. We would also support a modification of Recommendation 35 (page 28) that the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils provide a greater level of Saskatchewan content in their existing performing arts touring program and that, in order to encourage this, OSAC be provided with incentives.

## PERMANENT COLLECTION

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance strongly supports the recommendations in regard to the Saskatchewan Arts Board Permanent Collection. There is a need in Saskatchewan for collection activity that focusses on Saskatchewan art, as is eloquently discussed in the Task Force report. We also support the recommendations concerning archival collection and preservation of Saskatchewan arts heritage.

## MUNICIPALITIES

The Arts Alliance believes that municipalities should be taking a proactive role in support of the arts. To this end, the recommendations of the Task Force are a step in the right direction. Municipalities should have arts policies to guide their arts planning and decision making. Policies should include the principles of arm's-length decisionmaking, professional representation at decisionmaking levels, and adequate levels of funding. We would further suggest that the Government of Saskatchewan provide municipal governments with incentives to develop arts policies which include these principles.

## PROVINCIAL ARTS POLICY

Finally, the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance strongly endorses Recommendation 100: "That the Government of Saskatchewan use the Saskatchewan Arts Strategy Task Force Report as the basis for the development of a provincial policy for the arts and that this policy continually be evaluated and revised." Much time, energy, and vision was spent on this report. As was stated at the beginning of this response, the Arts Strategy Task Force report gives us a good and thorough overview of the existing problems in the arts and a solid vision for addressing them. It can function very well as a starting point, a research document to be used in the development of a provincial arts policy. We encourage the Minister and his Government to begin the process of developing a provincial arts policy in consultation with the proposed Advisory Committee to spearhead the implementation of this report. We must begin to see the political will and commitment for a truly visionary future for the arts in Saskatchewan.

Summary  
Saskatchewan Arts Alliance  
Response to the  
Saskatchewan Arts Strategy Task Force Report

- Confirm funding crisis in professional arts sector.
- Request initiation of report's implementation.
- Endorse definitions of "art" and "artist."

**Implementation**

- Request report implementation be a positive political and financial response to funding crisis in the professional arts sector to prevent the otherwise inevitable negative economic impact to Saskatchewan.
- Endorse implementation guidelines, especially creation of Advisory Committee.
- Recommend Advisory Committee membership be drawn equally from and chosen by the membership of SAA, SAB, SCCO, and staff of the Departments, with additional representation from the aboriginal arts community.
- Recommend Advisory Committee mandate be to review report responses as well as develop implementation plan and assist in execution, review, and measurement of the implementation process.

**Status of the Artist**

- Endorse adoption of the Canadian Artists' Code and creation of related provincial legislation.

**Funding**

- Endorse increased funding recommendations, including level to be 1% of government expenditures by the year 2000.
- Recommend funding be both tax- and lottery-based to ensure government commitment.
- Endorse arm's-length funding principle.
- Endorse three-year planning projections for funding to ensure effective management of arts organizations.

**Structure**

- Endorse concept of unified structure.
- Recommend direct involvement of Advisory Committee.
- Reaffirm support for arm's-length funding and consolidation of multiple funding sources.
- Endorse peer assessment recommendations including development of conflict-of-interest guidelines and artistic merit criteria.
- Endorse reorganization of arts community by discipline.
- Endorse recognition of aboriginal artists.



### Education

- Endorse provision of adequate resources for new Arts Core Curriculum implementation.
- Endorse that the Department of Education, and not the arts community, be responsible for education costs.
- Endorse quality resources for in-depth university education in artistic disciplines.
- Recommend consultation with the arts community regarding development of a year-round school of the arts professional development program.

### Cultural Industries

- Endorse recommendations.
- Recommend providing cultural industries with incentives to encourage artistic production.

### Touring

- Disagree with OSAC as centralized booking agency.
- Recommend OSAC act as an information delivery system about available touring programs.
- Endorse greater level of Saskatchewan content in existing OSAC performing arts touring program through introduction of incentives.

### Permanent Collection

- Endorse recommendations concerning SAB Permanent Collection, archival collection, and provincial arts heritage preservation.

### Municipalities

- Endorse municipal recommendations, especially concerning development of arts policies.
- Recommend arts policies include principles of arm's-length decision-making, professional representation, and adequate funding.
- Recommend government provide incentives to municipalities to include these goals in arts policies.

### Provincial Arts Policy

- Endorse recommendation to use report as the basis for development of a provincial arts policy, including continuing evaluation and revision.
- Recommend government develop provincial arts policy with the Advisory Committee to spearhead implementation of the report.