

Written Presentation to:

Standing Committee on Human Services

**RE: Bill No. 40 – The Status of the Artist Amendment
Act 2006**

**Public Hearings – February 26-28, 2007
Room 8, Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan**

**Submitted by:
Jeremy Morgan, Executive Director
Saskatchewan Arts Board**

February 26, 2007



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Ms. Judy Junor, Chair, Standing Committee on Human Service and
Members of the Human Services Committee
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RE: Bill No. 40 – The Status of the Artist Amendment Act 2006

Dear Ms. Junor, and
Members of the Standing Committee on Human Services:

It is with pleasure that I forward these comments to the Human Services Committee of the Legislature on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. In light of the important work done by the Minister, his officials and the community, the Saskatchewan Arts Board wishes to applaud this work and congratulate the Minister, the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation and all those, including the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, and SaskCulture who have brought this issue to its current stage.

The Minister's intention to help close the gap between education levels of artists and their earnings is crucial to the ongoing development of the arts and the retention of a healthy, cultural work force in Saskatchewan. The ability of artists to earn a living wage is fundamental to keeping Saskatchewan artists living here in this growing, yet still relatively small, marketplace for culture and to the Province's quality of life.

Our mission² is to cultivate an environment in which the arts thrive for the benefit of everyone in Saskatchewan.

To paraphrase the Arts Board's Vision and Mission, a healthy cultural ecology is critical in building a vibrant and attractive society in our Province.

While the Arts Board has a major stake in the outcome of all this work (as our history and mandate would indicate), we do not represent directly the many artists and engagers that we fund, including the public galleries, not-for-profit theatres, publishers, artist run centres, etc. (the list is contained in our 2006-2007 Annual Report, which is distributed to all committee members, and on our website). Having said this, the Arts Board has the credentials that stem from a unique history, function and perspective as to the needs, aspirations and achievement of the arts community in Saskatchewan. The Arts Board played a formative role in the earliest stages of the Status discussion which extends for well over two decades in Saskatchewan. As the first body of its type in North America, the Arts Board has been deeply concerned with the economic welfare of Saskatchewan artists since its founding in 1948 and, if anything, is paying greater attention to the issue than at any time in our history.

Given this position, our comments are brief, conceptual in nature and seek to provide advice to this very important hearing process rather than prescribe to solutions. Answers to the Minister's questions and any resultant initiatives will need to be resolved by review and debate at all levels and sanctioned by as many of those people as possible whose careers and livelihoods are at stake.

As we see it, the single biggest challenge is to craft a framework to resolve these issues which builds on our generally healthy and complex ecology, and strives to recognize and address the interests of all artists who may be affected. The world of work in the arts is a complex and interlocking one. To cite a few examples: artists hire and exhibit artists in artist-run-centres; some of the key engagers are not-for-profit organizations with volunteer boards and staff who have themselves careers as artists or cultural workers; and, relationships between commercial arts and entertainment businesses and artists have a long, interesting and sometimes difficult history.

To that end, the Arts Board would like to suggest some principles that can guide the resolution of these questions and advance their broader application.

Clarity and Simplicity. If artists are to make decisions on issues which affect their fundamental liberties and careers, these issues need to be couched in terms that favour clarity and simplicity and access to the process.

Economy and Effectiveness. There exists a substantial and relatively sophisticated infrastructure in Saskatchewan in which artist are engaged, as members, teachers, instructors and mentors, and as employees. On the surface, it would seem that this principle might be applied in the resolution of disputes to the use of the Labour Relations Board rather than the creation of a new structure.

Similarly, any initiative that may affect the national infrastructure should enhance its benefits for Saskatchewan artists and the investments that have already been made in it by our community.

One caveat we do have is that while the current arts service organizations (e.g. the Saskatchewan Writers Guild, CARFAC) might appear to be the logical groups for sector bargaining and representation, it must be remembered that these organizations are not currently organized for that purpose and that there are a number of artists potentially affected by this process do not belong to them.

To ensure that the organizations can meet the appropriate demands that such a role would place on them, it might be necessary to help them enhance their capacity to do so.

Accessibility. Artists often work alone or in relative isolation and with limited resources. Any proposed infrastructure, including organizations and services, needs to be easy to access and be based on the economic realities of the sector.

Balance. Proposed initiatives should balance artists' choices and self-determination with approaches that do not foster or create division in the community.

Strengthening the Broader Ecology. Proposed initiatives should reference and relate to the other instruments and structures at the provincial, regional and municipal level that can contribute to the goal of increasing artists' incomes such as: public funding; the development of the creative industries; economic development strategies; access to pension and benefits plans; and, regulatory and fiscal regimens such as land use, zoning and taxation.

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We trust that this will be of value to the Committee in its deliberations.

Unfortunately, we are not able to make a verbal presentation but are prepared to answer any questions you may have, regarding the matters before you and any potential role for the Saskatchewan Arts Board as we go forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeremy Morgan
Executive Director
Saskatchewan Arts Board