

# EQUITY FOR SASKATCHEWAN ARTISTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT  
ON STATUS OF THE ARTIST, 1993

Prepared by the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance  
November 2001

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1993 the Saskatchewan Status of the Artist Report was produced for the Saskatchewan Government, specifically for the Minister in charge of culture. The Committee responsible was composed of Saskatchewan artists from various disciplines. Since 1993 the recommendations of the Report have largely remained untouched. In 2001 there is renewed interest. This executive summary is provided as a short review of the basic elements of the Report.

### **What is “Status of the Artist”?**

Artists are primarily interested in making art. But they're also concerned with putting bread on the table. The focus of the Status Report is just that: not art itself, but the bread and butter issues that surround the making of art, that allow art to happen.

Basically “status” is about equity, economic and social justice for artists. Giving artists the same protections and rights as other citizens, in other words the same “status”.

In practice it means access to social benefits, collective bargaining rights, health and safety, insurance, training, income protection – bread and butter issues for artists to make their lives more secure.

### **What Is The Problem To Be Solved?**

Artists are mainly self-employed, their work is insecure and mostly low income, they lack benefits, collective bargaining rights and labour standards, access to programs and security that other workers have, their work is often viewed as marginal, not a “real job”, yet society holds art as invaluable to its core conception of itself. And the cultural sector is a substantial one, in Saskatchewan alone there are 18,000 cultural workers and in the economy - direct and indirect impact on the GDP in 1995 was over \$650 million for the cultural sector in Saskatchewan. (Source – Statistics Canada)

The Status Report addresses these problems with a series of practical proposals.

### **A Short History**

For over 30 years “status of the artist” has been advocated nationally, internationally and provincially. Other countries have implemented a variety of programs to address status issues. In Canada, Quebec began with legislation in the 1980's and the federal government acted in 1992. Other provinces have examined the issue and artists' organizations have called for action in a number of forums.

The federal government has stated “it will be difficult to make improvements to the status of Canadian artists without the cooperation and participation of provincial governments.” In Saskatchewan, “status” action was called for by the Arts Strategy Task Force Report (1990). In 1992 the government formed the Status of the Artist Committee to examine the issue and make recommendations for provincial action resulting in the 1993 Report.

## II. PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Report includes some 115 recommendations. It is intended as a guide to Government on policy, legislative and program changes affecting artists and their organizations both in provincial matters and those covered by federal jurisdiction.

The Report recommendations cover basic rights, collective bargaining and industry standards, economic and social security, education and training, economic development, visibility, and minority rights.

### VISION:

The report sets out a vision for achieving “status” of the artist in Saskatchewan:

- *Saskatchewan artists in all disciplines will be able to earn a living from the making of their art*
- *Artists will be treated fairly, by government and society as a whole*
- *Economic and social benefits available to other workers will be available to Saskatchewan artists*
- *Resources for education and training will be widely available to Saskatchewan artists*
- *And that the creations of Saskatchewan artists will be available to the public to the maximum extent possible.*

### A. Basic Rights – An Artists Code:

The Report endorsed three principles established by the federal Canadian Artists code and added one more.

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.

The Report recommends these principles be included in new legislation and sets out a definition of “professional artist” for the proposed legislation.

## **B. Collective Bargaining And Industry Standards:**

Many, particularly artists who are self-employed, are excluded from normal protections in the labour market.

To be included in new legislation are provisions to provide artists organizations with recognition as collective bargaining units, for work and engagement standards including health and safety, contract protections and conditions of work. Other recommendations cover policy for establishing conditions of engagement for artists, application of health and safety programs to artists' work and coverage under workers' compensation.

## **C. Economic And Social Equity And Security:**

Most artists are poorly paid, their incomes at or below the poverty level. Artists do not enjoy the income protection that many other workers are afforded in our society. Artists typically experience short employment periods, fluctuating income, and self-employed "contracted" status, and often work in isolation and are woefully behind other workers in areas of "fringe benefits" such as pensions and insurance. As a result of these deficiencies, many artists can look forward to a working life and an old age marked by minimum living standards.

Report recommendations in this area cover benefit and pension proposals, employment insurance issues, income, housing/workplace, copyright, social assistance and benefits, dependent care, bankruptcy protection, artist engagement policies for government, and taxation.

## **D. Education And Training:**

Accessibility to training and education is an important issue for artists. Public training programs are primarily aimed for employer/employee circumstances.

Recommendations in education and training cover access issues, improvements/ expansions in training programs, promotion of apprenticeship and mentor training, engagement of artists in residencies, establishment of an arts school, business of art training, and technology issues.

## **E. Economic Development:**

Artists form an important element within the economy, arts and cultural industries are labour intensive, job creating. The most effective way of supporting individual artists is by developing the cultural sector of the economy.

Cultural industry support programs are proposed, marketing, research and incentives for artists, buy Saskatchewan policy, tax credits, grants and loan systems.

## **F. Visibility, Legitimizing Artists Work And Access To Art:**

Artists are not commonly viewed as workers. Government employees are unfamiliar with the form and situation of their work. The work of an artist may not be viewed as *real* work, but rather as peripheral activity or hobby. Government programs and agencies are not well equipped, therefore, to deal with artists' needs or claims. Public access to art is an issue. That the cultural sector constitutes a large part of the economy is not well understood.

The Report recommends that all residents of Saskatchewan should have the broadest possible access to the province's artists and their work and proposes Government has a special role as patron of the arts and a special responsibility to develop public policy for fostering appreciation of the arts. To this end the recommendations include proposals for commissioning of art, media coverage, information programs, international access programs and provincial promotion programs.

### **G. Minority Rights:**

Protection of minority rights and non-discrimination policies are proposed for the new legislation and active support programs for aboriginal, women and disabled artists.

## **III. IMPLEMENTATION**

The report proposes action be taken by three means – legislation, policy reform and program initiatives, and also by government example in according artists recognition.

The principal vehicle for assisting implementation is the proposed *Advisory Commission on Status of the Artist*, a government body set up to assist the Minister and Department responsible for culture to implement the recommendations of the report and to advise government and artists on status processes.

## **IV. DEVELOPMENTS TO 2001**

The Saskatchewan government is reviewing the situation and options for implementation of the Report. Some of the recommendations require review in light of developments in the intervening eight years, notably in the area of copyright where new legislation at the federal level has brought advances. At the provincial level there has been progress in support of cultural industries, in particular the implementation of a film tax credit program and the formation of Cultural Industries Development Council.

However many of the Report's recommendations remain valid today and the considerations for artists remain substantially the same as when the Report was written.

**Federal Government action:** At the federal level “status” legislation has established CAPPRT (Canadian Artists and Producers Professional Relations Tribunal). Where arts organizations and unions come under federal jurisdiction they are now recognized by the Tribunal for collective bargaining.

**Artists' Organizations:** Organizations of artists have continued to press for further federal and provincial initiatives, notably the Canadians Conference of the Arts. In Saskatchewan the leading organization for artists on this issue is the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance.