



Election 2008: Canadian Arts and Culture

Dear Saskatchewan Political Candidates:

For years Canadian artists have been calling for arts and culture to take a central place in Canada's political debate. Election time is a moment to reinforce this message and to encourage voting for culture. Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA) is a province wide coalition of arts organizations. We are asking candidates from all parties to answer a few questions on critical arts and cultural issues. We hope you will respond by October 1st so that your response may be circulated.

Why are culture and the arts important to Canadians?

Conference Board of Canada in "Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy" (2008) offers substantive reasons:

- Arts and culture industries are widely recognized for their multi-faceted role in contributing to personal and community development, enhancing social cohesion, and improving quality of life.
- There has been growing understanding of the important economic contributions that culture industries make and of the central role culture plays in the creative economy. In 2007 the economic contribution of the sector was 7.4 per cent of GDP and over a million people were employed.
- New technology invites participation in creative activity on a mass scale. And opens the door to creative experience and creating new forms of economic value and business relationships.
- Creative communities are important drivers in Canada's economy. They project unique identities that act as magnets for skilled, creative people and for business investment. An important challenge for government is to ensure communities have the means necessary to support creativity and diversity, and to build a thriving culture sector.

Questions for Saskatchewan Candidates

1. ***How will you support sustainable and stable funding for arts and culture?*** Critical to this question is funding of central federal agencies such as the Canada Council, CBC, Canadian TV Fund, and others. Recent cuts to federal arts and culture programs amount to \$60.6 million crippling or stripping to bare bones New Media Funding, cultural diplomacy and international trade, museums funding, to name only a few.
2. As the Conference Board makes clear, the creative economy is of central importance to innovation, productivity, wealth creation and new jobs. The arts are an investment not a give away! ***How will you support and actively work for investment of federal funds in the creative economy as governments presently do for other sectors of the economy?***
3. Cultural diplomacy and international trade markets are important to sustaining and building Canada's international image and markets. ***How will you work to restore the principal foundations of diplomacy and trade programs now cut?***

4. Canada's artists are world class. But their economic circumstances are well below that of other workers. Their work conditions are unique, often self-employed, relying on seasonal work with incomes that fluctuate enormously year to year. Taxation and social policies need to be reformed to reflect the economic realities of artists' work. ***Would you support the sector's call for Canada Revenue Agency to adopt a fair tax policy for artists including income averaging? And would you provide access for self-employed to social benefits, including Employment Insurance?***
5. Arms length funding has long been a principle for funding in this sector. ***Do you support this principle as the guiding factor for arts funding, i.e. taking political involvement out of the process?***

You may have other comments to make on Canada's arts and culture policy and your party's program. We would be pleased to receive them. **We hope you will take a short time to answer SAA's questions by October 1st.** Questions you may have should be addressed to SAA's Executive Director – Marnie Gladwell at 306 780 9820 or by email to info@artsalliance.sk.ca.

Arts and culture are a sound investment in our economy, in our communities and in our quality of life.

Sincerely,
Kim Houghtaling
President

cc: SAA member organizations and National arts forums.