

Media Backgrounder

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to creating an environment in the province where artists can build and maintain viable careers in the cultural industries. This commitment is demonstrated in today's announcement of a \$4.5 million increase to the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

Music Industry Review background:

In May 2006, Regina Rosemont MLA Joanne Crofford was appointed by Premier Lorne Calvert to undertake a review of the music industry in Saskatchewan. The review builds on the momentum of the four major music events in 2007: the Juno Awards, the Western Canadian Music Awards, the Canadian Country Music Awards, and Waniskâ, a Saskatchewan Aboriginal music showcase.

The release of the Music Industry Review Final Report follows months of thorough consultation with musicians, industry professionals, music and cultural organizations, media outlets, investors, venue operators, festival organizers, equipment providers, the tourism sector and people from within government. During the review, Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation conducted two surveys, which provide valuable marketing insights about Saskatchewan music consumers, as well as important information about the way business in the music industry is conducted.

The key conclusions reached by the review are that, despite abundant talent, the music industry is under-resourced, under-focused, and under-connected. The solutions proposed in the Music Industry Review Final Report are intended to improve market access and drive commercial activity. The Government of Saskatchewan is contributing \$2 million toward solutions for the music industry, and the cultural industries (film and video, publishing, music and the visual arts).

Solutions for the music industry include: career and business development, increased support around technology, increased access to provincial, national and international markets, and increased capacity to provide services to linguistically and culturally diverse musicians and industry professionals.

Solutions targeted to all cultural industries include the establishment of an investment fund that will offer small loans and equity investments to individuals and businesses in the cultural industries. Also included is the provision of incremental support for sector development, including development of business and marketing skills and management training for each sector of the cultural industries.

Building on the government's strategic plan for Saskatchewan artists

In July 2006, closely following the launch of the Music Industry Review, the Final Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Status of the Artist (MACSA) was released. It proposed a strategic plan to increase the socio-economic status of professional artists in Saskatchewan. The Government of Saskatchewan continues to build on that plan.

Since the release of the MACSA Final Report, the Government of Saskatchewan has adopted art procurement policies that favour Saskatchewan artists, and that reserve a percentage of all capital expenditures for the purchase of art. Government has introduced legislation that would require contracts between all artists and engagers, and provide self-employed professional artists with access to collective bargaining rights. The proposed legislation remains before committee in the Saskatchewan Legislature.

In the 2007-08 budget, Government announced the provision of extended health benefits to 30,000 low income workers, including artists, and a \$750,000 (14 per cent) increase to base funding of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. This, the largest single year funding increase the Arts Board had received in many years, acknowledged the Arts Board's success in advancing the arts and artists in Saskatchewan.

The \$2.5 million increase will enhance the Saskatchewan Arts Board so that it can move forward on the Status of the Artist initiative and achieve the broad vision of ensuring cultural vibrancy and commercial viability for Saskatchewan artists. The Arts Board will work with the arts community to address the following priorities: touring, funding for communities, arts marketing, increased support for Aboriginal artists and independent artists, support for new media and to increase stability of arts organizations.