

# **Government of Alberta** ■ Culture and Community Spirit

## **Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector**

**December 2009 – February 2010**

### **Final Report**



# Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector

## *Executive Summary*

Between December 16, 2009, and February 26, 2010, the Honourable Lindsay Blackett, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit engaged in a dialogue with the arts sector in Alberta. Six regional dialogue meetings were conducted in Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton. An online dialogue was hosted on the Culture and Community Spirit website to enable access to individuals who wished to have input but were not able to participate in the regional dialogues. The purpose of the dialogue was to identify challenges and opportunities for government and the sector to work better together to help support healthy and vibrant communities.

A total of 120 people from the arts sector attended the regional dialogues and over 150 participated in the online dialogue. Several key themes emerged and were repeated throughout the Minister's Dialogue:

- **General Perceptions on the State of the Arts:** The talent of artists and depth of the talent pool in Alberta are world class. Albertans need to recognize the economic impact and potential of the creative industries. The arts are essential to attracting and retaining the skilled and knowledgeable people needed for the continued economic sustainability and quality of life of our province.
- **Promoting the Value of the Arts Sector:** The sector, in partnership with the Government of Alberta, can identify and communicate information about the value of the arts to Albertans, focusing on both economic impact and quality-of-life benefits.
- **Funding Challenges:** Access to predictable public and private funding sufficient to support sector sustainability was identified as a challenge. Stakeholders expressed difficulty in soliciting funding from non-public sources such as the corporate community during the current economic conditions.
- **Facilities Needs:** Arts organizations are challenged by high usage costs for, and limited access to, performance, practice and administrative facility space.
- **A Province-Wide Arts 'Voice':** Participants see a need for the development of both a province-wide arts advocacy group and a central communication model for arts promotion and networking for arts and culture organizations.
- **Human Resources:** Ability to attract and retain workers, volunteers and local artists is an ongoing concern. Limited access to professional development opportunities for administrative staff and local artists was raised.
- **Reaching Young Albertans:** The importance of the arts in the school curriculum was discussed, in terms of developing creative and analytical thinkers as well as developing appreciation of the role of the arts in society. Difficulty exists in attracting youth interest and participation in the arts, particularly as volunteers.

Participants expressed appreciation for the Minister's demonstrated commitment to supporting and promoting the arts. Participants in both the regional dialogues and the online dialogue identified that Alberta's arts sector is characterized by passionate, committed and talented individuals that meet sector challenges with innovation, collaboration and resourcefulness.

# Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Regional Dialogue Summary

## Participant Comments: Fort McMurray – December 16, 2009

### Capacity Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Enhanced costs due to geographic location– i.e. transportation, supply costs
- Costs for and limited access to facility space
- Desire for more and longer term access to facility space; i.e., a cooperative arts facility
- Access to arts programming - geographic and communication challenges
- Access to professional development opportunities for local artists

### Human Resources Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Relatively transient population leads to a difficulty in staff, volunteer and client retention
- Difficulty in retaining local artists

### Community Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Area lacks a central board/organization to communicate about arts and culture in the community
- Faces a challenge in a northern climate in terms of attracting attendance to events

## Participant Comments: Grande Prairie – December 17, 2009

### Capacity Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Enhanced costs due to geographic location– i.e. transportation, supply costs
- Access to professional development opportunities for local artists
- Communicating importance of arts programming to community interests

### Funding Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Difficulty finding sustainable funding
- Administrative burden of grant applications
- Notification delays in status of grant applications
- Competition for arts funding dollars

### Human Resources Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Relatively transient population leads to a difficulty in staff, volunteer and client retention
- Staff burnout
- Difficulty in retaining local artists

## Participant Comments: Lethbridge – January 7, 2010

### Communication/Collaboration within the Sector

- Believe sector communication/collaboration could be strengthened across province
- Development of central contact listing for e-newsletter for information sharing

### Capacity Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Sustainability of arts organizations is a key concern
- Need to plan for funding the ongoing core operations of arts facilities

# Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Regional Dialogue Summary

## Human Resource Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Difficulty attracting and retaining both volunteers and employees
- Need to examine attracting Alberta youth to sector organizations – for example, creating intern opportunities

## Funding Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Difficulty developing funding relationships with for-profit corporations
- Need to more actively engage corporate sector

## Promoting Value of the Sector

- Necessity in communicating value of the arts to for-profit donors and Alberta as a whole
- Focus on both economic and quality-of-life benefits, including value of not-for-profit investment return to Albertans

## Reaching Young Albertans

- Interest in advocating for expanding arts education in Alberta schools
- Expanding use of technology by arts groups may attract Alberta youth
- Develop programming/opportunities specific to youth

## Participant Comments: Calgary – January 8, 2010

### Communication/Collaboration within the Sector

- Geographic silos resulting in lack of communication amongst provincial arts groups
- Need for province-wide arts advocate
- Development of central contact listing for e-newsletter for information sharing
- Communicating benefit of arts programming to community interests

### Promoting Value of the Sector

- Necessity in communicating value of the arts to for-profit donors and Alberta as a whole
- Focus on both economic and quality-of-life benefits, including value of not-for-profit investment return to Albertans
- Digital media can be leveraged as a tool to share the arts with Albertans - Cultural Policy pillar of accessibility.

### Funding Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Difficulty developing funding relationships with for-profit corporations
- Role for government to act as a facilitator in developing those relationships

### Reaching Young Albertans

- Advocating for expanding arts education in Alberta schools
- Concern regarding sustainability in developing talent by arts organizations
- Identified need for funding/access to arts camps

# Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Regional Dialogue Summary

## Participant Comments: Red Deer – February 1, 2010

### Capacity Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Concern over facility size in Red Deer – a new facility is required to make local arts programming more sustainable
- Efforts complicated by competition with other capital campaigns to raise development funds
- Competition amongst arts festivals for patrons leads to diminished attendance – need for increased cooperation to ensure maximum benefit for the community
- Belief that delivery of programming at the grassroots level has diminished in part due to a lack of affordable conference space

### Communication within the Sector

- Recognition for the need of a singular voice for advocating the arts in Alberta
- Need for enhanced communication across the sector – sharing of information, best practices

### Funding Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Require additional access to core operational funding – particularly in relation to the cost of limited performance venues
- Cultural heritage groups generally lack core funding

### Reaching Young Albertans

- Recognize need to promote the arts in the K-12 curriculum; emphasize the role the arts plays in creating creative and analytical thinkers
- Emphasis on catering to youth through programming and making creative spaces available for use to Alberta youth
- Desire to ensure youth participate in the arts through a variety of means (volunteerism, youth/family programming)

## Participant Comments: Edmonton – February 3, 2010

### Capacity Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Concern over diminishing attendance at some arts events
- Call for special funding for arts administrators
- Recognize need to share performance spaces

### Communication within the Sector

- Need for a singular provincial voice for advocating the arts

### Funding Challenges of Sector Organizations

- Difficulty accessing start-up funds (small loans)
- Recognize need to develop collective buying power of insurance, etc.
- Administrative burden of grant applications

## **Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Regional Dialogue Summary**

### **Promoting Value of the Sector**

- Necessity in communicating value of the arts to for-profit donors and Alberta as a whole, both economic and quality-of-life benefits
- Need to communicate research demonstrating economic impact of the arts
- Recognize the integral role technology can play in sharing art of all forms with Albertans

### **Reaching Young Albertans**

- Recognize need to strongly position the arts in the K-12 curriculum to foster creativity and excellence as well as appreciation for value of the arts in quality of life
- Emphasis on attracting youth through programming and making creative spaces available for use to Alberta youth



# Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector

## Online Dialogue Summary

### **Online Dialogue Question 3: What practices have been effective in managing your organization's operations to meet your mandate?**

- Respondents said the most effective reflected sound organizational management practices including fiscally responsible planning; strategic planning; program and policy review; human resource management and volunteer recruitment; and the adoption of promotional strategies embracing social media and new technology.
- Partnerships between sector organizations on facilities, programming and resources.
- Alternative fundraising including individual donor campaigns and corporate sponsorship.

### **Online Dialogue Question 4: What successes and challenges have you had in working with other organizations to meet your mandate?**

- The collaborative success identified by respondents was resource sharing including: financial, promotional/marketing, facilities, volunteer pools and best practices.
- A primary challenge in implementing collaboration among groups in the arts sector was the perspective that organizations were in competition for audiences and facility space.
- Some respondents said it can be difficult to find the "right" partner, particularly across artistic disciplines. A knowledge gap was cited, as some organizations lack sufficient experience or training in organizational partnership.

### **Online Dialogue Question 5: Financial support aside, what could the provincial government do to help you address these major challenges?**

- Respondents indicated the Government of Alberta could assist the arts sector by helping to promote the value and importance of the arts to Albertans, both economically and to Alberta's quality of life. This may include highlighting specific Alberta artists and arts organizations.
- The government might facilitate sharing of provincial facility space with the non-profit sector and implement incentives for more affordable space for non-profit arts groups.
- Assistance in effective use of sector networking was cited for:
  - Sharing of best practices (arts symposium/conference); and
  - Opportunities to develop relationships with the corporate sector.

### **Online Dialogue Question 6: Who else could help?**

- Federal/municipal governments programming to support the arts.
- Tourism organizations in promoting arts within travel packages.
- News Media could work with the sector in communicating stories of the value of the arts to the community.
- Corporate Sector can assist financially and non-financially, with skills and in-kind support.

### **Online Dialogue Question 7: Other comments on the Arts Sector.**

- There is significant pride in the arts sector. Respondents noted their belief that Alberta's arts talent is unrivalled in the country.
- Respondents reiterated their belief that Albertans and the Government of Alberta need to understand the positive value of the arts sector to Alberta.
- The arts sector has been innovative, resilient and determined in coping with short and long-term challenges.



## Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Attendees

### Fort McMurray

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo - Culture and Arts Branch	Connor Buchanan
Keyano College - Keyano Theatre	Jon-Paul Walden
Events Wood Buffalo	Claude Giroux
Ft McMurray Wood Buffalo Arts and Crafts Guild	Margie Cunningham

### Grande Prairie

Centre for Creative Arts Society of Grande Prairie	Candace Hook
Grande Prairie Regional College	Laura St. Pierre
Grande Prairie Regional College	Geoff Whittal
Arts of the Peace - Visual Arts Association	Dale Syrota
The Prairie Art Gallery	Robert Steven
Artist	Peter von Tiesenhausen
City of Grande Prairie	Lois Harper
Grande Prairie Live Theatre/Reel Shorts Film Festival	Terry Scerback
Grande Prairie Live Theatre	Rick Hryciuk
Peace County Cultural Industries Coalition	Nicole McMullan

### Lethbridge

Alberta Foundation for the Arts Board Member	Dan Westwood
Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge	Barb Cunningham
Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge	Suzanne Lint
Galt Museum and Archives	Susan Burrows-Johnson
Historic Clay District	Barry Finkelman
Lethbridge Handicraft Guild	Celeste Pryde
Lethbridge Handicraft Guild.	Frances Schultz
Lethbridge Symphony Orchestra	Dawn Leite
Police Point Nature Centre	Corlaine Gardner
Premier's Council on Arts and culture	Barb Hembroff
Shaw International Centre for Contemporary Ceramics	Aaron Nelson
Southern Accord Chorus Society	Elaine Liebelt
Southern Alberta Art Gallery Association	Marilyn Smith

### Calgary

Afrikadey! Arts and Culture Society	Tunde Dawodu
Alberta Ballet	Darryl Lindenbach
Alberta Foundation for the Arts Board Member	Mike Bregazzi
Alberta Foundation for the Arts Board Member	Colin Jackson
Alberta Foundation for the Arts Board Member	Honor Humphreys
Alberta Historical Society	Debbie Goodine
Alberta Historical Society	Diana Ringstrom
Alberta Historical Society	Sheila Johnston
Alberta Magazine Publishers Association	Colleen Seto
Calgary Arts Development Authority	Mr. Terry Rock
Calgary International Children's Festival	Vince Rodych
Calgary International Children's Festival	David Anderson

## Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Attendees

Calgary Opera	Bob McPhee
Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra	Ann Lewis-Luppino
Calgary Reggae Festival Society	Leo Cripps
Calgary Reggae Festival Society	Cindy Nield
Cantos Music Foundation	Andrew Mosker
Chinook Country Historical Society	Henry Murzyn
Diverse Art Forms	Sumita Anand
EMMEDIA Gallery and Production Society	Peter Morgan
EMMEDIA Gallery and Production Society	Vicki Chau
EMMEDIA Gallery and Production Society	Eric Becker
Evergreen Theatre Society	Sean Fraser
Evergreen Theatre Society	Estelle Phillips
Evergreen Theatre Society	Jacqueline Russell
Festival Chorus	Leo van Gelder
Frontenac House Ltd	Rose Scollard
Frontenac House Ltd	David Scollard
Honens	Po Yeh
Mount Royal University - The Conservatory	Paul Dornian
The Blue Collar Dance Company	Tara Blue
The Calgary Foundation	Dan Thorburn
The Old Trout Puppet Workshop	Cimmeron Meyer
University of Calgary Press	Donna Livingstone
Visual Arts Consultant	Tony Luppino
Wordfest-Calgary International Writers Festival	Anne Green
Youth Singers of Calgary	Shirley Penner

### Red Deer

Arts a la Carte	Glynis Wilson Boulton
City of Red Deer	Pat Matheson
City of Red Deer - Recreation, Parks and Culture	Kristina Oberg
City of Red Deer Culture Services	Wendy Meeres
Downtown Business Association	Laura Turner
Match Box Theatre/Ignition Theatre	Matt Grue
Match Box Theatre/Ignition Theatre	Stephen Ridge
Premiers Council on Arts and Culture	Angela Keibel
Red Deer College - Performing Arts - Music Dept.	Steve Sherman
Red Deer College - Theatre Studies	Lynda Adams
Red Deer Community Band Society	Glen Pangle
Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery	Lorna Johnson
Red Deer Symphony Orchestra	Jacqueline Brooks
Society of Central Alberta Film Enthusiasts	Marg Gillis
Stettler Performing Arts Center	Dave Goodwin
Tree House Youth Theatre	Matt Gould

## Minister's Dialogue with the Arts Sector Attendees

### Edmonton

Alberta Foundation for the Arts Board Member	Gregor Allan
Alberta Magazine Publishers Association	Barbara Dacks
Alberta Music Industry Association	Kennedy Jensen
Association Franco Albertaine de L'UniTheatre	Diane Aubin LaBrie
Book Publishers Association of Alberta	Kieran Leblanc
Citadel Theatre	Penny Ritco
Citadel Theatre	Marianne Bouthillier
City of Fort Saskatchewan, Dow Centennial Centre	Diane Yanch
City of St. Albert - Cultural Services	Gail Barrington-Moss
City of St. Albert - Northern Alberta International Children's Festival	Nancy Abrahamson
Edmonton Arts Council	John Mahon
Edmonton Arts Council	Darren Haggan
Edmonton Arts Council	Allison Turner
Edmonton Folk Music Festival Society	Terry Wickham
Edmonton Jazz Society	Paul Wilde
Edmonton New Shadow Theatre Society	John Hudson
Fringe Theatre Adventures	Sam Jenkins
Fringe Theatre Society	Julian Mayne
Get Publishing Communications Society	Cheryl Mahaffy
Global Visions Film Festival	Ted Kerr
Government House Foundation (Arts Committee)	Linda De Bathe
Harcourt House	Bill Samoil
Latitude 53 Society of Artists	Todd Janes
Lorna Thomas Productions	Lorna Thomas
National Film Board	Kelly Fox
Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts	Wendy Hollo
Old Strathcona Business Association	Shirley Lowe
PACE - Professional Arts Coalition of Edmonton	Paul Freeman
Rapid Fire Theatre Society	Karen Brown Fournell
Regroupement Artistique Francophone de l'Alberta (RAFA)	Casey Edmunds
Richard Eaton Singers	Jochen Eggert
Theatre Alberta	Mary-Ellen Perley
Theatre Properos	Mark Henderson
Ukrainian Shumka Dancers	Gordon Gordey
University of Alberta Press	Linda Cameron
Virginia Park School	Tami Dowler-Coltman
Walterdale Playhouse	Eric Rice
Young Alberta Book Society	Stephanie Gregorwich
MLA, Edmonton-Millwoods	Carl Benito
Minister of Employment and Immigration	Honourable Thomas Lukaszuk