



April 22, 2011

Mr. Brian Mason,
MLA, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood,
6519 -112 Avenue,
Edmonton, Alberta
T5W 0P1

VIA FAX: (780) 414-0684

Dear Mr. Mason,

RE: Invitation to Respond to Questions on Education

As you may be aware, Education Minister Dave Hancock has launched a number of major initiatives to help prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century. This includes [*Inspiring Education - a Dialogue with Albertans*](#), and [*Setting the Direction for the Future of Special Education in Alberta*](#). The future of our province depends on a well-educated population capable of competing with the world.

According to the *Inspiring Education* document, "...governments, business leaders, researchers and communities in Alberta, Canada, and around the world, investigating the requirements of 21st century learners, have identified the need for competencies to be more central in the education of young people if they are to be active participants in an increasingly knowledge-based and globalized society." This includes the development of critical thinking, creativity, and innovation skills.

Sufficient data exists to overwhelmingly support the belief that study and participation in the fine arts is a key component in improving learning throughout all academic areas. Evidence of its effectiveness in reducing student dropout, raising student attendance, developing better team players, fostering a love for learning, improving greater student dignity, enhancing student creativity, and producing a more prepared citizen for the workplace for tomorrow can be found documented in studies held in many varied settings.

As the leader of the *NDP Party* of Alberta, our Save Our Fine Arts (SOFA) executive committee invites you to respond to the following questions in writing or by video:

1. What is your vision for fine arts education in Alberta?
2. How do you see fine arts fitting within the education system?
 - for students in kindergarten to grade 12
 - for students at the university or college level
3. Do you support the *Inspiring Action Initiative* that was introduced by Minister Hancock?
Please explain why / why not.

4. Do you believe the *Alberta Government* is currently providing the appropriate amount of funding for public education in kindergarten to grade 12? Please explain.
5. How do you propose to provide the funding required for the *Inspiring Action Initiative*, which is estimated to have a cost of at least \$1 Billion?
6. If you were elected as the Premier of Alberta in the next provincial election, what would be your timeline to complete the *Inspiring Action Initiative*?
7. What is your commitment to increasing the importance of fine arts in education and society in general?

For your information, we are extending the same opportunity to all leadership candidates for the *PC Party*, *Liberal Party*, and *Alberta Party*. In addition, we are also asking the leader of the *Wild Rose Alliance Party* to respond.

It would be appreciated if we could receive your response via email to saveourfinearts@gmail.com by Friday, May 6th. If you chose to respond by video, please upload it to a public website like You Tube and email us the link.

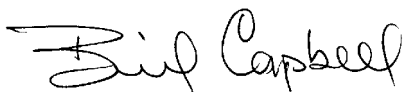
It is our intention to post all responses, or lack thereof on our www.saveourfinearts.ca website for our members and the general public to read.

For more information on SOFA, please refer to the attached document or visit our website at www.saveourfinearts.ca


If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at saveourfinearts@gmail.com. You can also reach us at 403-470-5957.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours truly,
SAVE OUR FINE ARTS



Bill Campbell
Co-chair



Lyle Bennett
Co-chair

CC: Save Our Fine Arts Committee
Attachment.



Save Our Fine Arts (SOFA)

- Save Our Fine Arts is a fine arts education advocacy group that was established in response to the release of the Alberta Education curriculum framework draft document "K-12 Arts Education Framework" in September, 2009. The SOFA committee was formed with the goal of increasing awareness about the draft framework and its potential negative impact on Fine Arts Education as well as promoting public feedback to Alberta Education and elected officials. Our organization is made up of over 7000 committed parents, educators, students, artists, business leaders and other concerned individuals from every city and town across Alberta who believe strongly in the value of fine arts education for all K-12 students.
- The Government of Alberta will introduce significant revisions to the School Act following an unprecedented level of public engagement through the Inspiring Education strategy and the Inspiring Action discussion paper. In this discussion paper, the Minister of Education, Dave Hancock, states, "... we will need each and every Albertan to play a part in building a bright future for our children. This begins with education and we must do everything we can to ensure that each and every child has the opportunity to maximize their potential – to be able to grow up equipped to take care of themselves and their families and contribute to their communities. Alberta's future depends on a well-educated population capable of competing with the world."
- Research has shown that involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Arts learning also plays a significant role in improving motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork.
- SOFA believes that **"Now Is the time to become engaged"** in the dialogue surrounding the future of fine arts education and what it will look like in the new curriculum. SOFA's mission is to participate in the preservation, expansion and promotion of excellence in fine arts within our schools.
- SOFA'S objectives are to support and advocate for the implementation of a quality fine arts curriculum within our schools. This requires adequate facilities and timetabling as well as teachers qualified as specialists in visual arts, dance, drama and music who understand the incredible value that fine arts can have on the lives of students and the future vibrancy of Alberta.
- SOFA has been and will continue to work in a collaborative and supportive way with government and school officials as they move forward in designing and implementing the new curriculum. For further information about SOFA please visit our website at www.SaveOurFineArts.com. Our website receives on average 2,100 hits per day. You can also follow us on Twitter at @SOFAalberta or on Facebook at Save Our Fine Arts.

**A grounding in the arts will help our children to see; to bring a uniquely human perspective to science and technology.
In short, it will help them as they grow smarter to also grow wiser.**

~ Robert E. Allen, Chairman and CEO, AT&T Corporation