



May 5, 2011

Dear Messrs. Campbell and Bennett,

Thank you for your April 22 letter sharing information about SOFA as well as asking about my vision for fine arts education in Alberta. I have always been a strong advocate for the arts beginning in my first Cabinet portfolio of Community Development, where I sought to preserve arts funding during a time of significant cutbacks to government programs. As a former Minister of Education, I learned of the fundamental importance of high standards for students, keeping them in school and ensuring they have the skills they need when they graduate to be personally happy and publicly useful. As an Albertan, I thank you for your commitment to the fine arts. As a father of three children at various stages in the education system, and as a husband to a teacher, I am proud to have you as allies in education.

Fine arts education produces the instrumental benefits you describe, and many more. I also believe that by being literate in the arts students become citizens whose lives are enriched by the intrinsic value of art. Education needs to have the ability and resources to foster, and encourage, the artfulness inherent in all people. This is important for the happiness of the individual, for the cohesion of the community and for the success of the economy. It is a fact that children who are exposed to culture during their school years tend to be more responsible citizens in later years in addition to achieving higher levels of education and employment in later life. The opportunity to engage in cultural activities should be an intrinsic part of the education system.

While Alberta is blessed with immense natural resources, it is human energy which provides sustainable prosperity. To thrive we must be people of imagination with the courage to innovate and with creativity as an essential mindset. If elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, I will promote an integrated approach to public policy – an approach that links education policy, arts policy, and economic policy to realize long term prosperity for the province. Developing policy without making these linkages reduces the effectiveness of government. I believe it is important that government both listens to and stimulates the opinions and ideas of our citizens. I have had the opportunity to review the

"Inspiring Action" discussion paper and am pleased to see ideas on how we, as a Province, may foster arts and innovation.

I will continue to listen to the views of organizations such as yours as I develop policy positions on key issues and would be pleased to share my policy position on education once it is finalized. Should you have further ideas about how government can integrate fine arts education in holistic government policy, I would welcome them. This leadership campaign, then the general election, are opportunities engage Albertans on how to encourage the spirit of innovation while respecting the fiscal capacity of the province.

My task for the next few months is to connect with the members of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta and to encourage more people to join this party in support of my efforts to become to leader. If I am elected leader and receive a mandate to become the next Premier, you can expect to see a leader who recognizes the value and importance of fine arts in our education policy. I am working to earn the trust of Albertans and would appreciate your support in this effort.

Yours truly,  
Gary Mar