

NBAB Commentary on New Brunswick Cultural Policy Status Report November 2002

The successful introduction of the cultural policy for New Brunswick earlier this year presents an opportunity to raise the quality, public appreciation and long-term sustainability of arts and heritage activities in the province. Periodic meetings of the cultural policy working group will be useful in keeping this process on track. Not least, they will help the Arts Board and the Culture and Sport Secretariat demonstrate to the Province how investment of new funds in arts and heritage yields positive results.

The following comments convey my views on the current status with respect to the cultural policy, its initiatives to date and future outlook.

New Funding Received in 2002-2003

The Board's FY02-03 budget was modified in June 2002 after learning that it would receive \$25,000 less than expected. That is, of the \$150,000 announced by the Premier in February, the Board received \$125,000. The remaining \$25,000 came in the form of funds already promised to the Atlantic Cultural Space conference.

This is what we did with the new funds. In 2002-03, the Board increased the number of grants available through its core funding programs:

- Creation-Documentation - increased by \$40,000 to \$268,000 per year
- Emerging Artists - increased by \$12,000 to 72,000 per year.
- Arts by Invitation - increased by \$8,000 to \$40,000 per year
- Artist-in-Residence - increased by \$10,000 to \$80,000 per year
- Presentation Program - increased by \$18,000 to \$86,000 per year
- Arts Scholarships/Professional Development - increased by \$20,000 to \$70,000 per year

In addition, \$5,000 was reserved as seed funding for research and development of new programs.

Total increase to program spending: \$103,000 (19% increase).

Finally, 21% of the new funds was directed to administration costs, the ratio established in the 2000-2003 NBAB Strategic Action Plan. This accounts for the remaining \$22,000 of the \$125,000 received.

NBAB Strategic Plan

The NBAB is currently developing a 2003-2006 Strategic Management Plan and initiatives plan. We are proceeding with this planning broadly within the context of our various submissions we made to the cultural policy process over the past two years. Most of the initiatives contemplated by the Arts Board for the first year are either achieved or underway. (Some of these initiatives, such as the Atlantic Cultural Space Conference and the Aboriginal Arts Pilot Program have been funded by the Arts Board through the reserve for special initiatives held in the Arts Development Trust Fund.) The emphasis of our current planning is on 2003-2004--the final year in the cultural policy window--and for the two-year period following it.

Cultural Policy – Initiatives Plan

For convenience, we will discuss our priorities for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 period under the four headings used in the cultural policy document:

1. Culture in the everyday life of New Brunswickers
 - a. Funding to professional arts organizations: the Arts Board continues to be concerned that the lack of an arm's length funding arrangement and an appropriate peer review mechanism has led to long-term stagnation in base funding to professional arts organizations.
 - b. Arts education and public awareness: the Arts Board must assess what role it can play in improving arts education at the K-12 and post-secondary levels. We know that the Board views this as a crucial priority to be addressed over the coming years with research, programs and funding. This implies change within the education system as well as in its interactions with the arts community. Key issues related to this heading are: audience development, cultural human resources development, aboriginal arts awareness, and library access to works of N.B. authors. These issues facing the arts parallel those faced in the heritage sector.
2. Professionals artists / Cultural professionals
 - a. Art in public places: The lack of a 1% for art program, or some similar initiative, systematically impoverishes our public buildings and public spaces in New Brunswick. In the cultural policy initiatives plan, it was left with the Arts Board to develop recommendations in this regard.

- b. Infrastructure: a study that maps New Brunswick's cultural infrastructure and a framework to guide the development of cultural facilities.
 - c. Status of the Artist legislation: the recent passing of Status of the Artist legislation in Saskatchewan requires study for its applicability to New Brunswick.
3. Collective Heritage
 - a. Policy for retention of artistic heritage (BG, NBM, GAUM, NBAB) including aural and digital artifacts. This was raised in the policy process but it remains to be worked through with the appropriate stakeholders.
4. Cultural industries
 - a. Established artists professional development program: the Arts Board's Programs and Juries committee will make recommendations regarding this program.

Performance indicators

We are concerned that baseline performance indicators be set in place so that:

- solid evidence is available to advocate further investments in the sector.
- the initiative plan may be refined through analysis of this data.

Some key indicators:

- Success in receiving funds through federal departments and agencies (compared to other provinces).
- Increase in provincial funding to artists and professional arts organizations.
- Ratio of such funding in relation to heritage and cultural industries.
- Increase in municipal arts funding and policy development:
 - funding to artists / cultural professionals
 - number of municipal cultural policies
 - number of municipal cultural officers
 - new facilities
 - renovations to existing facilities

- numbers of arts projects funded.
- Increase in average grant size.
- Increase in new media and interdisciplinary projects.
- Increased activity in rural areas.
- Audience statistics (by sector and by sub-region).
- book holdings of NB libraries (global and NB authors)
- Reduction in debt ratios of cultural organizations.
- Public approval by means of opinion surveys.
- Increases in cultural tourism.
- Increases in cultural exports.
- Expansion or additional cooperation agreements.
- Increase in international artist exchanges.

While this is not an exhaustive list, it provides some avenues for data collection in support of the policy.

Conclusion

For our part, the New Brunswick Arts Board should remain committed to maximizing the positive impact of the cultural policy. This entails communicating to our artists that their 'performance', in terms of quality, visibility and commitment, during this period of time is crucial to making further arguments in favour of increased funding. It also means encouraging the Secretariat to take the necessary measurements, in conjunction with the Arts Board and other partners, so that we have empirical data to support the case for further development.

In general, despite setbacks and slow progress in some areas, we are satisfied with the progress of the cultural policy to date. We believe that the arts community is demonstrating through its achievements the positive impact of this policy on New Brunswick society.