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Everyone's a critic: Manitoba's culture scene gets reviewed

Minister says people's submissions will help determine funding priorities

CBC News Posted: Mar 23, 2017 3:57 PM CT | Last Updated: Mar 23, 2017 3:58 PM CT



Dancers Liang Xing and Amanda Green perform a scene from The Nutcracker. The province is looking at Manitobans' arts and culture preferences to shape future funding policy. (Royal Winnipeg Ballet)

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For the first time in almost 25 years, the provincial government is eyeing the role culture plays in our society and asking Manitobans for their take.

Sport, Culture and Heritage Minister Rochelle Squires announced Thursday the government has launched a promised return-on-investment review into Manitoba's arts scene.

■ PC government will establish 'return on investment' test of social and cultural projects

Over the next three months, the province will host community meetings and forums with cultural groups, arts organizations and arts-loving Manitobans to find out what shape Manitoba's cultural policy should take.

The former NDP government made a similar pledge in 2015, but was booted out of office before its Creative and Cultural Industries Review could come to fruition.

Squires said she is anxious to hear what Manitobans have to say about their priorities when it comes to culture, but wouldn't commit to increasing funding for the arts in Manitoba.

"It is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in Manitoba at 2.9 per cent of GDP and being responsible for about 22,000 jobs and that is very significant," Squires said. "That is a sector we definitely want to grow."

Squires stressed the fiscal pressure on the province is a top priority.



Sport, Culture and Heritage Minister Rochelle Squires says the Tories want to know 'what's working and what can be improved' in Manitoba's cultural sector. (CBC News)

In 2016, the Manitoba Arts Council received almost \$10 million from the province in operating and bridge grants.

"Culture is in everything we do, it is part of our identity," Squires said. "When we have something to brag about and we have people stay in Manitoba to put down their roots and raise their families and stay, work and play in Manitoba, that is how we know we have a dynamic cultural industry."

Squires said the results of the review will be made public this fall.

Submissions can be made **online**, in-person at the public meetings, by email to imaginecreative@gov.mb.ca or by mail to Manitoba Sport, Culture and Heritage.

■ Click here to read the province's discussion paper on arts and culture

The deadline for submissions is June 30, 2017.

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