



**Lone Wolf
Theatre Company**

Resources

More resources section will be added over time. Our archives will include links, PDF articles, photos, and more samples of Mr. Thorson's writing.

Lone Wolf Howl: HORSES RUN WILD WHILE ARTISTS STRUGGLE

(Originally published in [Cochrane Times](#): May 25, 2005)

Cochrane Times — Gambling is not an art. Yet if you're trying to live as an artist in Klein's debt-free Alberta, you need something akin to lady luck in order to survive.

Imagine this is you:

From an early age, you were encouraged to be creative, independent and, above all, to follow your dreams. Somehow -- despite the best efforts of your school, your church and the economic industry to have you follow their agendas -- you make it into your 30s intact and are not only following your dreams, but doing your damndest to live them.

In order to earn that living, however, you're volunteering countless hours at casinos and bingo halls, helping the very organizations you work for eke out their survival in the non-profit sector.

Twice a year, you are invited to apply for funding from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA).

It's guilt-free money because you know that your novel or play or concert is not competing with health care or education -- not a single tax dollar is spent on the arts in Alberta.

The money comes from the billion-dollar pool of lottery and gaming revenue; annual winnings from the provincial poker game or a good run at the track.

You learn to write an effective grant application, which is sent before a jury of your peers and you wait to find out if you're successful, which can take four to seven months sometimes.

(I just sat on one of these juries and the experience was humbling to say the least. First-year university students competing with 40-year veterans for the same tiny pool of money and chances are both of them will be working the next casino alongside you in a month's time.)

If you're one of the lucky ones, your project is accepted. This accounts for roughly 20 per cent of all applicants. If you're one of the 80 per cent who didn't receive funding, you get the consolation prize of being eligible to apply again that calendar year.

If you got a grant -- even at a fraction of what you requested (which is often the case) -- that's it, you can't apply again for a full year.

Whether you are a writer or a sculptor, a seasoned professional or an aspiring amateur, the Vision Players Guild or the Alberta Ballet, this is how you survive in the arts under the Klein advantage.

The system stinks, frankly, and no one can figure out how to change it. Despite study after study that has proven, qualitatively and quantitatively, that sound investment in the arts pays off in the kinds of dividends that would make even the most reckless stock broker pee his pants in euphoric glee, this province still considers the arts to be a risky gamble.

Which is odd considering that Alberta, under the leadership of Ralph and his cabinet of poker buddies, is suffering from a severe gambling addiction.

The latest budget came down in April, and again there was no increase to the AFA (despite a petition with over 18,000 names submitted to Community Development Minister Gary Mar).

It remained at the same \$19 million that it's been at for years (despite inflation, higher costs of art production, increased groups and artists vying for support, etc.). Such blatant neglect is not only inexplicable, it's injurious.

Insult is further added to this 20-year-old injury when one reads that the horse-racing industry in Alberta (under the same Community Development department as the AFA) received more than double the amount of money that goes to visual arts, literary arts, theatre, music and dance combined.

Yes, dear reader, King Ralph has just blown \$45 million at the track. Can someone please sit him down and explain that gambling is not an art and that the arts are not a gamble? Maybe the entire caucus can volunteer at the next fundraising casino for AADAC and we can all talk about it there on our 15-minute smoke break. (www.lonewolftheatre.com)

HIGHLIGHTS

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Back to [Resources Page](#)

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