

MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release

Arts Commons Board of Directors Extends President and CEO Alex Sarian's Contract for an Additional Five Years as the Arts Commons Transformation Project Takes Centre Stage

May 18, 2023 – Calgary - The Board of Directors of Arts Commons announced today that Alex Sarian, President and CEO of Arts Commons, has agreed to extend his contract for five more years. After joining the Arts Commons team in Spring of 2020, Alex Sarian has spurred the organization to greater heights including the \$530 million dollar Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) Project.

"Alex Sarian is an incomparable asset to Arts Commons and the Calgary community," says Arts Commons Board Chair David Smith. "He has championed new partnerships and connections within the city, better positioning Arts Commons to contribute to a vibrant Calgary that values an inclusive and modern perspective, and his work has been instrumental in advancing the Arts Commons Transformation Project."

Alex Sarian, President & CEO, joined Arts Commons in May 2020. Previously, as an executive at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City, he led the institution's grant-making, global consulting, community engagement, education and artistic programming for young audiences and families. Since he joined the Arts Commons team, he has repositioned Canada's third largest arts centre as a welcoming, safe, and innovative hub for Calgarians by leading initiatives such as ArtsXpeditions, which has brought over 150 free performances to all four quadrants of the city; Season of Gratitude, a campaign that provided complimentary tickets to essential workers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic; and the TD Incubator Program, which prioritizes artists from equity-seeking communities in a year-long mentorship and artist development program. His work has also included long-term institutional projects such as the creation of an Indigenous reconciliation strategy and an unprecedented investment in digital, accessibility, and the award-winning air filtration infrastructure at Arts Commons. A priority for Alex Sarian during his time at Arts Commons has been to strengthen relations between the resident companies in the building: Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary. In June 2022, the Boston Pops orchestration of *Ragtime: A Concert Performance* had its world-premiere on the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage at Arts Commons. This historic performance, initiated under the leadership of Alex Sarian, Marc Stevens, President and CEO of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, and Maya Choldin, Executive Director of Theatre Calgary, was the first co-production between the three organizations in the 38-year history of the arts centre and featured artistic direction by Theatre Calgary's Artistic Director, Stafford Arima.

"Alex has proven to be a visionary leader, who has brought a fresh approach to the relationships between Arts Commons and the resident companies," says Maya Choldin, Executive Director of Theatre Calgary. "This collaboration has strengthened Calgarians awareness of our vast arts and cultural community found not only in Arts Commons, but throughout the city."

Sarian is leading the evolution of one of Canada's largest arts centres through community engagement, building Arts Commons' relationship with its home city of Calgary, creating better accessibility and relevancy to the arts

MEDIA RELEASE



within the city and province. A key component of this work is the transformation of Arts Commons with more inclusive programming and a plan to expand and upgrade the physical spaces. In a direct demonstration of this commitment, the Arts Commons Transformation project has already secured \$270 million towards its overall goal of \$530 million (which includes \$50M in endowment funding). The ACT project will be a catalyst in downtown Calgary's growth and evolving identity and will break down barriers to cultural participation by providing a modern, open, and inclusive gathering space in a central location.

"Alex is a strategic thinker who understands how investments in the arts can be a catalyst for downtown revitalization. As we work to transform Arts Commons into an even more inviting and inspiring space, his steadfast leadership has been instrumental. Alex's decades of experience, knowledge of the sector and extraordinary passion have been a powerful addition to our arts and culture community," says Mayor Jyoti Gondek. *"I look forward to continuing to work alongside Alex and Arts Commons to elevate and expand our creative sector."*

"Thanks to the Arts Commons Transformation project, Calgary is now home to the largest cultural infrastructure project in Canada," says The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage. *"This once-in-a-generation project will transform how we tell new Canadian stories and create new Canadian experiences. The Arts Commons is fortunate to have Alex Sarian leading this key infrastructure project. Congratulations to everyone involved in making this possible."*

Due to the election taking place during the time of this release, UCP Candidate for Calgary-Foothills and former Minister of Culture Jason Luan was unable to include a comment.

Alex Sarian has worked with artists and arts organizations in 15 countries spanning five continents, and proudly represents Calgary and Arts Commons across Canada and internationally. He is a sought-after speaker on the social and economic impacts of the arts and was named one of Calgary's Top 40 Under 40 by Avenue magazine in 2022. Naturally, he's also a board member for the Calgary Downtown Association — championing his adopted city both at home and away.

To RSVP or for more information contact:
Alex Bonyun, Communications Manager
403-294-7429 abonyun@artscommons.ca