

# Sold-out arts gala big boost for culture in region

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Arts and culture are the heart and blood of any community, York Region chairperson Bill Fisch says.

If that's the case, the region got a major transfusion last week at a gala event celebrating the region's artists.

The inaugural Chairman's Dinner for the Arts was a blockbuster sold-out event, raising well over a quarter of a million dollars to benefit arts and culture in the community Wednesday.

"It was a great night; it went on

until about 11:45 p.m. and almost everyone stayed until the end," he said of the benefit that featured a collection of performers including Justin Hines, Chris Dallo, Georgia Leung, John-Michael Scapin and Canadian rock legend Randy Bachman.

"The food was fantastic and the room looked fabulous thanks to almost 50 volunteers who helped with that."

The evening also included an introduction of foods from local cultures and a Chinese tea presentation. Local visual artists brought

60 to 80 pieces of their work for sale and display and a variety of corporate citizens provided their support. "They really came to the fore and embraced it," Mr. Fisch said.

The highlight of the evening was the entertainment itself, Mr. Fisch said. Randy Bachman took the stage for almost an hour, providing not just music but relating anecdotes about himself, his life and the stories behind his music.

The evening also featured performances from Georgina-based First Nations talent, Stouffville's Motus-O Dance Theatre and Opera York.

Money raised at the event will go towards the new York Region Arts Council to assist local arts councils and to set up a special endowment fund to help local up-and-coming artists get a foothold in the community and beyond.

"Our committees worked tirelessly with passion and enthusiasm to put on an evening unlike any other event in York Region and they succeeded," said Ian Proudfoot, York Region Media Group publisher and founder of York Region Celebration of the Arts. "We are fortunate in York Region to have the leadership

demonstrated by Chair Bill Fisch, the support, passion, energy and dreams of the artists who bring soul to our communities and the support of the sponsors and volunteers who realize the important role art and culture play in building great communities."

The 700 \$250 tickets sold out well in advance of the dinner at Le Parc Conference Centre in Thornhill, a fact that surprised and pleased the regional chairman.

To find out more about the York Region Arts Council, go to [www.yorkscene.com](http://www.yorkscene.com)



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