

Local artists, venues unsure how to cope

SIDETRACK • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

"Maybe the Students' Union has to step up and drop the rental fee on [the Myer Horowitz]," Priestner continued. "Artists from everywhere would rather play a theatre than a bar. That room should be used a lot more."

Meanwhile, Steve Derpack, senior manager of programming at the Students' Union, knows first hand how difficult it is to run a music venue. While local artists may vie for cozier, quieter places like the Horowitz and Dinwoodie Lounge, they cost a lot of money to operate.

"It's all fine and dandy that the artists want to play intimate venues, but the Horowitz is intimate in comparison with the Winspear or Jubilee; it's not intimate like the Stanley Milner Library or Velvet Underground," Derpack said. "Artists need to figure out what level they're at in terms of what their expectations should be to get paid, and once they've proven themselves, buyers will acknowledge that."

Being a drummer for the band This Civil Twilight, Derpack hopes to see fellow artists getting shows in rooms like the Dinwoodie and Horowitz, but on the other hand, he knows it's not necessarily cost-effective to put them there. March and April are the busiest months, and right now, Derpack has booked the Powerplant every single Wednesday to Saturday in March and most of the dates in April are already full. As it stands, he's unsure what the Sidetrack's closure is going to mean for Students' Union venues.

"It's too early to tell," Derpack said. "But am I getting people coming to me because of the Sidetrack's closing? Absolutely. Are we accommodating that? As best we can."

According to SU Vice-President (Operations and Finance) Chris Cunningham, only time will tell what effects the Sidetrack's closure will have on the Powerplant specifically and what changes the Powerplant will undergo in order to fill the void.

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**CHRIS CUNNINGHAM,
VP (OPERATIONS AND FINANCE)**

"There's still kind of a review process going on regarding the Powerplant this year and its fiscal performance, so I hate to speculate what we would see in terms of increased patronage or shows," Cunningham said. "Naturally, the Sidetrack was one of the main live venue bars in town so if anything, it eliminates one of the competitions for the Powerplant. I suppose it would have a positive effect on the Powerplant, but it remains yet to be seen. I don't suspect that it will be a huge change, if any."

Taft's book no political polemic

Democracy Derailed

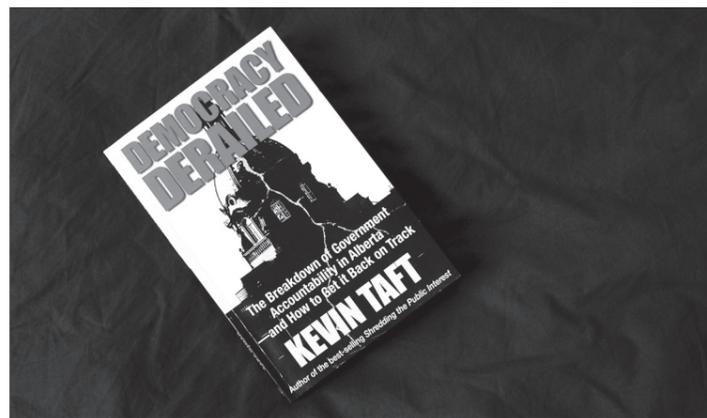
Written by Kevin Taft
Red Deer Press

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In a world where politicians have begun to write tomes devoted to publicizing their big ideas of saving the world from poverty, war, global warming, Hillary Clinton and other problem evils, *Democracy Derailed* is an interesting variation on the politician-penned book. Not only is it a smart book that doesn't pander for voter attention by pulling at their heartstrings, but it's also being written by the leader of the Liberal Party of Alberta, which will likely ensure that more copies will end up in bargain bins than on bookshelves. That's a shame, because despite having a few problems, *Democracy Derailed* is a book that should be required reading for anyone wanting to cast a vote in Alberta.

In a brisk 111 pages, Taft does an excellent job of avoiding issues or numbers so large that the problems defy understanding. Instead, he stays wedded to exposing the basic democratic deficiencies that exist in Alberta. The concerns he raises about access to information and the marginalization of opposition and others are all simple topics, but ones to which the vast majority of Albertans probably devote little thought. However, by using a handful of galling cases to iterate his points, Taft poignantly and powerfully gets across his message and concerns about the system.

For many Alberta political junkies, especially among the opposition



KRYSTINA SULATYCKI

C'MON RIDE THE TRAIN Kevin Taft talks about basic democratic problems.

parties, these concerns and examples are already well known. Still, the book does an excellent job of making these things easy for the layperson to understand. At the same time, Taft never talks down during the book, and his points and suggestions on how to fix the abuses never feel arrogant or like they should be obvious.

What helps *Democracy Derailed* be more than just an opposition member railing against the government is that Taft has filled it with outside sources and used them elegantly to reinforce his criticisms. By quoting people like John William, a staunchly conservative federal politician, and newspapers like the *Calgary Herald* and *Calgary Sun*—which aren't known to be overly sympathetic to the Liberals—the book can ably deflect any criticism that it's simply a partisan rant.

That's not to say that the book's perfect. For all the interesting information and cases it contains, *Democracy Derailed* does have a

major and rather annoying flaw that can be found throughout. Since it's a political book written by a politician in the first person, Taft does have a tendency to play up the goodness of the Liberal brand in comparison to Conservatives, all of whom he seems to treat as dishonest.

While this approach is called for when he's describing his party's work, when he goes out of his way to note that someone thought the centennial ceremony he hosted was "nicer" than the one hosted by Dave Hancock, a Conservative, it seems more of a petty attempt to score points than add to the content.

Democracy Derailed does manage to rise above the repetitive, niggling issues, which at the very least reminds us that the author isn't free of bias and likely has a motive beyond just attracting public attention to these democratic deficiencies. Despite its thin size, the content of *Democracy Derailed* is an enjoyable politician-written book.

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