

Heritage BC



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G5

Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance
Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G5

February 17, 2021

Re: Federal Pre-Budget Consultations 2021 – Stimulus Funding for Canada’s Heritage Places

Dear Ministers,

We are writing on behalf of Heritage BC, a charitable not-for-profit organization supporting heritage conservation across British Columbia through education, training and skills development, and capacity building in heritage planning.

Recommendations

We join the National Trust for Canada and colleagues across Canada in recommending the Government provide at least \$200 million to support the renewal, retrofitting and adaptive use of revenue-generating space, the creation of affordable housing and more; and would help not-for-profits and charities renew cultural infrastructure and social purpose real estate.

This recommended stimulus funding will unlock billions of dollars in construction and will capitalize on heritage projects across Canada. The funding will create new green jobs, contribute to reconciliation and climate change efforts, and contribute to community resiliency over the long term.

We also support funding for Indigenous heritage leadership to advance cultural heritage priorities that are of importance to Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Peoples in Canada.

Finally, we recommend the creation of a modern national museum policy that complies with UNDRIP and includes the involvement of small and medium-sized museums, heritage organizations, and Indigenous cultural centres.

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Precedents in BC

The Province of British Columbia recently established a \$15.52M funding for Unique Heritage Infrastructure as part of the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program, one of government's economic recovery programs that provides grants to support economic resilience, tourism, heritage and urban and rural economic development projects in communities impacted by COVID-19.

With this investment, the Province recognized the important contribution of heritage infrastructure. This funding will result in total spending of almost \$25M, an overall GDP contribution to BC of \$14.3M, and employment opportunities for 4,329 British Columbians. Heritage infrastructure has a demonstrated and powerful impact on B.C.'s economic outlook and its importance and influence cannot be denied.

Environmental Benefits

Shovel-ready projects exist across Canada in urban, rural, and Indigenous heritage places. These projects at existing buildings create 21% more jobs than new construction, with less "leakage" out of the Canadian economy for foreign goods. Adaptive use and retrofits of existing buildings are proven to reduce GHG emissions and demolition waste and capitalize on materials and energy already expended in the structures.

It takes a lot of energy to construct a building. For example, building a 50,000 square foot (4645 m²) commercial building requires the same amount of energy it takes to drive a car 20,000 miles (32,187 kilometres) a year for 730 years. Recent research shows that it takes 35 to 50 years for an energy efficient, new building to save the amount of energy lost in demolishing an existing building.

According to the Building Materials Reuse Association, demolishing a 2,000 square-foot house, for example, sends 60 tons of material to the landfill, 85% of which could have been reused.

The evidence is ample and compelling.

Economic Benefits

There are compelling precedents for these federal stimulus measures. In the United States, Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives has distinguished itself as one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization program. Since its launch in 1976, it has leveraged \$102.64 billion in private investment (5 times the value of the federal tax credits provided), created over 130,000 jobs each year (construction, manufacturing, services, retail trade, etc.), preserved 45,383 historic properties, and enabled 172,416 affordable housing units.

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Unfortunately, the comparable Canadian federal incentive program for commercial heritage properties, which produced exceptional economic benefits to Canadians (e.g., federal contributions of \$14.95 million leveraged \$143.4 million in construction costs) no longer exists.

Reconciliation

The heritage sector recognizes there is much to do to be part of a movement of Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. We recognize that places of significance to Indigenous Peoples are very much underrepresented and overlooked in current programs and funding sources in Canada – and further that conventional approaches to identifying, valuing, and protecting heritage places are not well-suited to Indigenous heritage places. There is a pressing need for funding for Indigenous heritage leadership to advocate for policies, funding and programs that support the full diversity of places that reflect Canada's peoples and cultures.

National Museum Policy

We take this opportunity to support the recommendations presented by the BC Museums Association: to allocate funding to create a modern national museum policy that complies with UNDRIP; to ensure that small and medium-sized museums, heritage organizations, and Indigenous cultural centres are actively involved in the creation of a new museum policy; and to increase federal funding and support available to Indigenous communities to repatriate their cultural patrimony.

Investment in heritage infrastructure has exceptional economic, green, and social benefits. These are proven and we urge Government of Canada to take advantage of these benefits with an investment of at least \$200 million to support the renewal, retrofitting and adaptive use of revenue-generating space, the creation of affordable housing and more; and would help not-for-profits and charities renew cultural infrastructure and social purpose real estate.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Britney Dack".

Britney Dack
Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Gravett".

Paul Gravett
Executive Director