

Heritage BC



Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Honourable Nathan Cullen
Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Delivered by email.

January 27, 2021

Dear Ministers Conroy and Cullen,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, our provincial membership and British Columbia's heritage sector, we extend our genuine congratulations on your appointments to the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

Heritage BC is a charitable not-for-profit organization supporting heritage conservation across British Columbia through education, training and skills development, and capacity building in heritage planning. We have had a long and mutually beneficial relationship with the Heritage Branch, within your Ministry, and this has resulted in several online cultural maps, illustrative economic studies, and an influential study of the state of community heritage in BC. Working together in this way has allowed each entity to better understand and address the issues within B.C. and to maximize our capacities.

In 2018, with the support of the Heritage Branch, we interviewed more than 500 people working and volunteering in the heritage sector. We learned that heritage is the "the tangible and intangible record of human imprint on the world" and it must include the stories of all people in B.C. With this, we recognize that it is our obligation to lead the sector in reconciliation, equity and diversity. Other priorities include climate change (it takes 35 to 50 years for an energy efficient, new building to save the amount of energy lost in demolishing an existing building) and community economic resiliency (total annual spending for heritage-related rehabilitation, promotion, and tourism exceeds \$101M, generating \$50M GDP contribution and 800 jobs).

Perhaps most importantly, Heritage BC is the government's advisor for the Heritage Legacy Fund, which was established as an endowment by the Province of BC. Currently, we distribute at least \$150,000 annually to heritage projects around the province.

We also supported the delivery of British Columbia | Canada 150: Celebrating B.C. Communities and their Contributions to Canada, an investment of \$7.6M into 220 legacy, culture and heritage projects in 150 communities. The investment created jobs, stimulated tourism and leveraged additional support by attracting private investment and in-kind contributions. The demand for such a program was fully demonstrated with 416 applications requesting \$24M in financial support – more than three times the available funding.

Heritage BC



Currently, we are supporting the Province in the delivery of the Unique Heritage Infrastructure (UHI) stream of the *Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program* (CERIP, 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). Heritage BC brought together 20 heritage professionals to peer review 159 proposals. This jury process is another example of our close working relationship with the Heritage Branch, which had a representative at every jury meeting.

For the portion of the UHI program managed by Heritage BC, the total request was \$73,624,653 and the juries awarded \$15.52M to 68 applicants. While the program offered the single largest funding envelope for heritage in BC, it was able to fund only 21% of the proposed activities (based on projected budgets). The disproportion of need to available funding was more pronounced with the UHI stream than with any other CERIP stream.

The situation is the same for the Heritage Legacy Fund, which was able to fund only 44% of proposed projects between 2016 and 2020. HLF awards equalled only 30% of the total request for funding with an average award of \$8,483 per project.

The significant divide between community needs and available funds has been well evidenced in the past few years through BC|Canada 150, UHI-CERIP, and the Heritage Legacy Fund. We have seen a remarkable demand to address deferred maintenance but, in every case, the majority of projects have not been awarded funds. With a consistent gap in funding, there can be no doubt that B.C. is facing a serious degradation of its historic assets. If allowed to continue, the risk of loss will be heightened, resulting in the permanent erasure of B.C.'s tangible history.

On a more positive note, the impacts of funding investments are extraordinary. We estimate Heritage Legacy Fund contributions between 2016 and 2020 have generated total spending of more than \$6M (direct, indirect and induced) and an overall contribution to BC's GDP of \$3.5M (based on residential construction multipliers provided by BC Stats).

Funding through UHI-CERIP is estimated to result in total spending of almost \$25M, an overall GDP contribution 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.

The Heritage Legacy Fund was originally established to conserve heritage, to further knowledge and to increase public awareness. To meet new priorities, the scope of the Fund continues to expand to take into consideration Indigenous partnerships, accessibility, and climate adaptation.

The value of the Fund has grown over the years, partly through our own contributions and most notably with contributions totalling \$600,000 made by the Province of B.C. in 2019 and 2020. Yet, there remains an outstanding contribution commitment by the Province to bring the total fund investment up to \$10M. Unlike one-time grant programs such as CERIP, this investment is held in perpetuity, generating regular revenue that flows to community programs each and every year.

Heritage BC



We wish to thank FLNRORD and the Heritage Branch for continued support and partnership. The benefits of this relationship are as plentiful as they are impactful. We look forward to our continued work with the Heritage Branch as we support the Province's priorities and the needs of B.C.'s communities.

In closing, we ask for an opportunity to meet virtually with you so that we may provide a fuller introduction about Heritage BC and the heritage sector.

Sincerely,

Britney Dack
Chair, Heritage BC

Paul Gravett
Executive Director

cc

Jennifer Goad, Executive Director, Mountain Resorts and Heritage

Richard Linzey, Director, Heritage Branch

Geneviève Casault, Manager, Heritage Programs and Services, Heritage Branch