



June 27, 2019

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office  
Room 224, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4  
Canada

Dear Members of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services,

We thank you for this opportunity to participate in the Budget 2020 consultation.

Our memberships represent museums, archives, historic sites and organizations, visual arts institutions, Indigenous cultural centres, and related organizations. With our members, we help all communities preserve their legacies and tell their stories.

Museums, historic sites, archives, and storytellers have a unique role in preserving BC's cultural heritage and history. Our organizations and members play a lead educational role in reconciliation, recognition, and community building, and they contribute to the economic vitality, social well-being and civic pride of all communities in the Province of British Columbia.

Over the past year, we conducted an extensive survey to describe the state of the heritage sector. 500 individuals participated in 26 meetings in locations such as Maple Ridge, Kelowna, Kamloops, Surrey, Metchosis, Nanaimo, Fort St. John, Prince George, and Masset.

Participants consistently described heritage in inclusive and expansive terms that focused on social and humanistic qualities. Our members know that our collective heritage is about community -- about human interaction with each other and the surrounding environment, about appreciating distinctions between cultures and the diversity of human stories that are the fabric of modern British Columbia. As they advocate for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and recognition of all cultures, participants demonstrated that heritage affects all aspects of community life, from education and health to social cohesion and informed decision-making.

Despite the daily impact of their work in communities throughout the province, participants told us that the heritage sector is facing a great number of challenges and threats and that many not-for-profit organizations -- especially in rural areas -- are struggling to survive. The current level of funding is obstructing the stewardship of BC's history and heritage. Purposeful funding -- to stimulate collaborations, improve staffing and compensation levels, address shrinking budgets and increasing costs -- is urgently needed.

Museum managers frequently expressed frustration with the current funding structure as their projects or programs were often considered ineligible by the BC Arts Council. As such, museum managers feel they have no place in the current funding systems. Participants also told us available funding programs are inappropriately designed for the disciplines they aim to serve.



The maintenance and stability of archives was another common concern throughout the province, but the situation is particularly acute in rural communities. Resources and funding are scarce and, in many cases, the historic record of small communities is managed by volunteers without any supporting infrastructure.

The message is clear: **British Columbia’s history and heritage is under threat.**

The Standing Committee has previously noted (*Report on the Budget 2018*) “museums and cultural centres play a unique role in preserving BC’s cultural heritage and history. These institutions also have the opportunity to play an educational role in reconciliation initiatives and the Committee would like to see this continue through the provision of ongoing funding.”

We ask the current Standing Committee to put these recommendations into action and increase funding to museums and heritage sector in the next provincial budget for the benefit of all British Columbians. In so doing, we urge the government to:

- Increase infrastructure funding to help meet the capital improvement needs of cultural organizations across BC. This will allow museums, heritage and historic places to leverage other sources of funding, while safeguarding collections, archives, and heritage buildings, and expanding public access to our province’s rich history;
- Invest in capacity building, human resources, and operational stability of not-for-profit organizations, so that they may reach their full potential in serving their communities;
- Close the funding gaps that limit the abilities of organizations to provide programs and services that safeguard and share the heritage and history of our province;
- Ensure accessibility for all organizations and applicants by designing (or re-designing) funding programs, so that all organizations, regardless of size and capacity, have equal opportunity in applying for funding;
- Invest in the provincially-mandated service organizations (Heritage BC and BC Museums Association) to ensure we can meet the needs of our member organizations and the broader arts, culture and heritage sector.

Related to reconciliation and recognition, we ask the government to:

- Invest in funding programs that support Indigenous communities in preserving and interpreting their tangible and intangible heritage;
- Invest in funding programs that encourage mentorship by Indigenous people in managing intangible heritage and understanding our relationship to the land and environment.

The heritage sector has the potential to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, develop recognition with all cultures, and contribute to the economic vitality, social well-being and civic pride of BC’s communities. But these goals cannot be achieved with the current funding levels.



We are asking the provincial government to expand its funding mandate to meet these recommendations and to work with us to strengthen the social, economic and cultural fabric of our communities. We implore the provincial government to be a visible, active contributor to the heritage sector -- to support British Columbians as they conserve and preserve our history and heritage.

We thank you for your consideration.

Most sincerely,

BC Heritage Fairs Society  
British Columbia Historical Federation  
British Columbia Museums Association  
Heritage BC