



June 22, 2020

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 would like to take this opportunity to commend the Province of BC for its leadership and program delivery over the past four months. While this period has exposed the frailty of many structures, in particular the vulnerabilities of the non-profit sector, we recognize the importance of a strong, supporting government.

In facing the many challenges, we must also recognize the critical role arts and culture has had in helping society cope with the lockdown and recovery. Arts and culture non-profits pivoted quickly to find new ways to sustain their communities.

We now understand that, when everything we know and hold dear is at risk, people turn to arts and culture for comfort and connection.

In the broader heritage sector, our memberships represent museums, archives, historic sites and organizations, science centres, visual arts institutions, Indigenous cultural centres, and related organizations throughout BC and in every riding. Helping communities to preserve their legacies and tell their stories, our members have a unique role in leading reconciliation, recognition, and community building, and contributing to the economic vitality, social well-being, and civic pride.

History, heritage and culture have the power to stir people's souls, guide human responses, and galvanize public opinion. Understanding and preserving our past are integral to our future. History, heritage and culture are about people and what is important to people, and they serve the important function to humanize conversations, placing people first.

Our collective heritage is about community – it is about the human interaction with each other and the surrounding environment and, going far beyond old buildings and artefacts, heritage is fundamental to the appreciation and understanding of all communities, including Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, black, LGBTQ, and immigrants.

Heritage is proven to have significant and compelling impact on community life. It is the tangible and intangible connections to our past and an economic driver for the future. Businesses benefit from conserved buildings and areas, and tourism is boosted with cultural activities and exhibitions. Heritage, in all its forms, contributes to economic sustainability, job growth, and environmental resiliency.



In past submissions to this Committee we wrote, “the 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 and jeopardizing the proven and measurable benefits.”

The experience over the past four months has underscored this point and has demonstrated the frailty of the sector. At the same time, while facing dire circumstances, we have witnessed the sector’s resiliency and its role in sustaining communities.

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 ask 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- Ensure accessibility for all organizations and applicants by designing (or re-designing) funding programs, so that all organizations, regardless of size, capacity and cultural makeup, have equal opportunity in applying for funding;
- Invest in the provincially-mandated service organizations to ensure they can meet the needs of our member organizations and the broader arts, culture and heritage sector.

As heritage is an important element of the arts and culture sector, we also support recommendations advanced the BC Alliance for Arts and Culture. We also ask the Province of BC:

- To remain committed to the doubling of the BC Arts Council budget and to invest in the strategies for a respectful, inclusive and equitable society through arts and culture programs;
- To recognize arts and culture in the \$1.5 billion Action Plan for Recovery by filling the gaps left by the federal government so that arts and culture organizations can survive the pandemic;
- To offer tax incentives for individual and corporate philanthropic support of arts and culture;
- To offer tax breaks for patrons to re-engage in cultural activities and products to encourage them to buy books, attend concerts, theatre, movies, museums or trips to national parks;
- To communicate to the public the important role the arts has played in maintaining people’s mental health during the pandemic.



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 urge 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 this opportunity to participate in the Budget 2020 consultation.

Most sincerely,

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



## Why Heritage Matters

- **Tourism Benefits:** 85% of Canadians surveyed believe their local museum and heritage centre contribute to the quality of life in their community. 80% of Canadians agree arts and heritage experiences help them feel part of their local community. Visiting “historical, archaeological and world heritage sites” ranks fourth among the top 10 activities and experiences of greatest interest to Canadian travellers; “art galleries or museums” ranks seventh. 11 million annual visitors to B.C. cultural heritage institutions receive 11 million visitors each year, generating \$213 million in revenue for BC museums.
- **Economic Benefits:** Of the nearly \$40M invested in heritage tourism, an equal amount is generated through indirect and induced spending (e.g. hotels, restaurants, support services). The original investment also generates \$34M to BC’s GDP and \$5.7M in tax revenue.
- **Environmental Benefits:** 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. Demolition projects produce 20-30 times more waste material per square meter than renovation or construction projects.
- **Impactful Benefits:** Culture boosts BC’s GDP by more than \$7 billion, the third highest of the provinces across the country. Culture’s contribution is 9 times greater than that of sports.
- **Social Benefits:** A 2018 survey found that 80% of Canadians rated museums as “highly trusted institutions.” In an age of social isolation and misinformation, the culture sector plays an important role in bridging social barriers and helping communities come together in celebration of values. Additionally, heritage organizations throughout BC are working very hard to reframe history in a modern context -- one that appeals to the "modern, digital consumer" and includes story threads that were previously unacknowledged. We are employing new technologies that require new tools and skillsets for success (webinars, digital magazines, web-based cultural mapping, etc.), and are rethinking old narratives. This work is necessary if we want history to remain accessible, inclusive and appealing to future generations.