

# ProArt Alliance

The Professional Arts Alliance  
of Greater Victoria

BRIEF to the: Legislative Assembly of British Columbia  
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Presented for the ProArt Alliance by

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**Working on behalf  
of professional  
arts organizations**

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria  
Ballet Victoria  
Belfry Theatre  
Blue Bridge Repertory  
Theatre  
Cinevic  
Dance Victoria  
Intrepid Theatre  
Kaleidoscope  
MediaNet  
Open Space  
The Other Guys Theatre  
Pacific Opera Victoria  
Puente Theatre  
Story Theatre  
Theatre Inconnu  
Theatre SKAM  
Victoria Conservatory of  
Music  
Victoria Film Festival  
Victoria Jazz Society  
Victoria Symphony

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## **ProArt presentation to Standing Committee on Finance**

This Brief is presented on behalf of 20 ProArt member organizations located in the Greater Victoria region: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Ballet Victoria, Belfry Theatre, Blue Bridge Repertory Theatre, Cinevic, Dance Victoria, Intrepid Theatre, Kaleidoscope, MediaNet, Open Space, The Other Guys Theatre, Pacific Opera Victoria, Puente Theatre, Story Theatre, Theatre Inconnu, Theatre SKAM, Victoria Film Festival, Victoria Conservatory of Music, Victoria Jazz Society, and the Victoria Symphony.

ProArt represents the professional arts organizations in Victoria, believes strongly in the positive contribution that the arts make to our society, and that funding for the arts is one of the best investments that the Province of British Columbia can make.

### **The arts are central to human society**

What do we know of past civilizations but their culture? Consider the sculptures and plays of the Greeks of antiquity, the architecture of the Romans, the paintings of the Renaissance, the theatre of Elizabethan England, the jazz music of early 20th century, to name but a few examples, think about how we learn about human history from cultural creations; the plays, novels and operas tell us the stories of our heritage.

That historical record shows the arts are an essential part of human society. Our contemporary colleagues in Saskatchewan have stated that the key place of culture in society should be reflected in our government policies:

"The Saskatchewan Arts Board has suggested a provincial cultural policy should reflect that culture is at the centre of the life of this province and is not just an aspect of that life. Further, a framework should provide for the development of an arts and culture system outlining objectives; government's role; funds and funding; a fiscal planning model; stakeholder relationships, interrelationships, authority and autonomy; and an input and advice mechanism." <sup>1</sup>

### **Canadians support the arts**

Canadian citizens on the whole support the arts and believe government should support them.

A 2012 study by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. called Arts and Heritage in Canada, showed that of Canadians polled "87% think that arts and culture warrant the support of governments in Canada. Underscoring this belief was widespread support for all types of potential government support and involvement in arts and culture... Strong agreement was also expressed that governments in Canada should partner with others to ensure that there are enough arts and cultural facilities to serve the public (88%) and provide incentives to promote private sector support for arts and culture (85%)."

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<sup>1</sup> REFLECTIONS - A SUMMARY OF 30 YEARS OF CULTURAL POLICY DISCUSSIONS IN SASKATCHEWAN; Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, 2008

## **Culture is good for the economy**

Not only is culture essential, but it is good business, as studies show that the arts and culture stimulate economic activity, ultimately creating jobs.

A new study on the impact of the arts and culture in the Greater Victoria region is due out next week, so we don't have it with us today, but we anticipate that it will show about \$170 million in economic activity attributed to artists, arts organizations and cultural events. This overall impact is leveraged from approximately \$5.6 million in government grants in the region. People who attend arts presentations or events spend money in restaurants, hotels and cafes before and after the events, generating spin-off economic activity.

If Greater Victoria, with its population of about 300,000 people, generates \$170 million in economic activity from arts and culture, and as there is no province wide study, we could extrapolate for British Columbia, with its population of 4.4 million, that arts and culture economic activity for the province would be around \$2.49 billion.

## **Government is the best investor for the arts and culture**

Why should the government fund the arts and culture? As the Greater Victoria Arts and Culture Sector Economic Activity Study shows, the effects of arts and culture presentations and events are diffused throughout adjacent businesses and services. These enterprises themselves - as well as the arts organizations presenting the cultural events - generate taxes, in the form of income, provincial and federal sales taxes, and also property taxes.

Because of the diffused nature of the economic activity of arts and culture, ultimately it is government itself, on all three levels, that is best placed to benefit from the taxes generated. In that sense, it is government that is best positioned to be the investor in arts and cultural organizations, as government will recoup that investment in the form of taxes.

From the BC Government's Estimates for the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development for 2012-2013, we calculate a total of \$23,397,000. To see this help leverage economic activity of an estimated \$2.49 billion is remarkable. Of course there is federal and municipal funding for the arts as well. But their support has not lifted the arts and culture sector in BC out of the bottom of the list when it comes to per capita spending by all governments. In BC the average earning for an artist is \$21,100 compared to the average for the overall labour force of \$35,000!<sup>2</sup>

## **The arts need stable support**

We feel that the BC Government has a key role to play in improving support for the cultural sector in the province. In particular, the government can ensure stable funding for the arts - this is one of our recommendations - so that the BC Arts Council can offer multi-year funding to arts organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Hill Strategies, [http://hillstrategies.com/sites/default/files/Vancouver2012\\_KellyHill.pdf](http://hillstrategies.com/sites/default/files/Vancouver2012_KellyHill.pdf)

For example, the goals for Alberta's cultural policy state: " Goal A - Ensure Albertans, throughout the province, have access to a wide range of cultural experiences and opportunities. In support of Goal A, the government commits to: Ensure stable and predictable funding for the provincial government's cultural facilities and foundations." (Spirit of Alberta, Alberta's Cultural policy)

### **Arts makes our cities attractive for businesses**

Cities that have vibrant art and cultural activities attract high tech industries and knowledge workers. We see this in Victoria, with its growing tech sector, Tectoria. We agree with the BC Chamber of Commerce's statement:

"As many of our members tell us, the vitality of a robust arts community helps draw talented professionals, brings entrepreneurs to our region, supports existing business and encourages newcomers to choose our cities as a place to live and work."<sup>3</sup>

Nova Scotia agrees with that view: "Creative people: With advancing technology and global competition, today's workforce must be more creative than ever before. The pace at which jobs are changing has never been seen before. The self-confidence, curiosity, and fearlessness fostered by exposure to creative activities, are qualities tomorrow's worker – and ergo his/her employer – must have."<sup>4</sup>

### **Culture enriches the quality of life**

Arts and culture are essential elements of our communities, making them better places to live. The arts provide health benefits for those that attend or participate in the creation of culture.<sup>5</sup> The arts, in addition to benefiting our health and our economy, contribute to human understanding, social progress and cognitive development.

### **Arts and culture are essential investments**

For all of the reasons above, the arts are one of the best investments that can be made by the Province of British Columbia. Increasing the provincial investment in the arts will produce significant economic and social returns. The BC Arts Council remains for us the best institution for disseminating arts funding, and therefore is central to our recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> *A Strategy for Arts and Business (2013)* [http://www.bcchamber.org/advocacy/policy/provincial\\_gov/community/strategy\\_for\\_arts\\_and\\_business.html](http://www.bcchamber.org/advocacy/policy/provincial_gov/community/strategy_for_arts_and_business.html)

<sup>4</sup> Page 15, "Creative Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council, 2006

<sup>5</sup> Bygren, et.al. "Attendance at Cultural Events, Reading Books or Periodicals and Making Music or Singing in a Choir as Determinants of Survival: Swedish Interview Surveys of Living Conditions." *British Medical Journal*. December 21-28, 1996, pp. 1577-80.

## **ProArt Recommendations for 2014-15**

- 1) Increase the budget of BC Arts Council to \$32 million, with a plan to increase the Council's legislated appropriated investment to \$40 million, over the following two-year period.
- 2) We propose increasing Community Gaming Grants to organizations from \$134 million to \$156 million for 2014-15, with a goal of increasing Gaming grants steadily indexed to inflation in the short term, at a very base minimum, and ultimately looking for reasonable increases in the long term to foster growth in the sector.
- 3) To provide stable, predictable funding for the arts sector, the BC Arts Council and Community Gaming Grant program should offer multi-year funding with 3 year grants to arts and cultural organizations, through the government considering a three-year budgeting model for those agencies. The potentials for increased community engagement by artists and arts organizations is enhanced by stable funding that allows for planning.
- 4) The government should develop a capital infrastructure program to help arts organizations purchase and maintain presentation venues for art and culture.<sup>6</sup> Such a program could be used to match funding from federal programs, such as Heritage's Cultural Spaces Canada, which in itself could serve as a model for a provincial program.

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*"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." Albert Einstein*

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<sup>6</sup> 2007, "A Case For Investing in Arts, Culture and Heritage Infrastructure", Ministry of Tourism, Sport, and the Arts, Government of British Columbia