

PAARC

Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres

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

Presented for PAARC by
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Member Organizations

221A
ACCESS GALLERY
ALTERNATOR CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY ART
ARNICA
ARTSPEAK
BALCONE
CINEWORKS
DECOY MAGAZINE
DYNAMO ARTS ASSOCIATION
GALLERY GACHET
GRUNT GALLERY
GROPP'S GALLERY COLLECTIVE
KOOTENAY SCHOOL OF WRITING
LIVE BIENNALE
LIVED SPACE

MALASPINA PRINTMAKERS SOCIETY
MEDIANET
MINISTRY OF CASUAL LIVING
MIXED USE
NEW FORMS FESTIVAL
ON MAIN
OPEN SPACE
OR GALLERY
OTHER SIGHTS' FOR ARTISTS PROJECTS
OXYGEN ART CENTRE
PROJECT SPACE
PROJECTILE PUBLISHING SOCIETY/FILLIP
REVIEW
UNIT/PITT PROJECTS
VIVO MEDIA ARTS CENTRE
WESTERN FRONT
XCHANGES ARTISTS' GALLERY & STUDIOS

This brief is presented to the Standing Committee on Finance by the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres (PAARC) on behalf of its 31 member organizations, which are located in Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna and Nelson.

PAARC represents artist-run centres in British Columbia. Artist-run centres are non-profit organizations working in visual and media arts, that produce and present non-commercial and experimental practices, and that work towards the benefit of practicing artists. Artist-run centres support artists at all stages of their careers, pay professional fees to exhibited artists, and employ cultural workers and administrators. Since the early 1970s, artist-run centres in Canada have formed regional, national and international networks. The majority of Canada's internationally recognized visual and media artists have emerged from the artist-run centre movement.

The arts are aligned with BC Government priorities

PAARC believes that increased funding to the arts is aligned with economic priorities that have been identified by the current government. In this regard, the recommendations included in this brief directly engage 2 of the priorities identified by the current government, which focus on the province's economic sustainability: the creation of sustainable jobs and investment in sectors that actively participate in the knowledge economy. PAARC understands that priorities of the current government include the economic prosperity of the province and the creation of a secure economic future for generations to come. We believe that investing in the arts is an essential part of this process.

Recently, the Liberal government has demonstrated its commitment to transmitting a passion for art and culture to the youth and supporting higher education training in the arts by implementing some of the initiatives included in the BC Creative Futures plan. These initiatives include: increased arts education funding, increased access to out of school cultural activities, increased scholarships and co-op education opportunities for University art students, and a substantial investment in the new Emily Carr University Great Northern Way campus.

We salute these initiatives as they testify to the government's commitment to making art and culture accessible to the next generation of British Columbians, and to ensuring quality higher education arts training. We urge the government to follow this logic and increase arts funding not only at an educational level, but all round. We believe that increased subsidies to arts and culture can only have economic, social, and educational benefits. Accordingly, we encourage the current government to increase individual subsidies to practicing artists, secure operational funding to arts organizations, and raise access to project-based funding for independent arts organizations.

British Columbia's cultural sector is thriving but underfunded

We urge the government to invest in arts and culture, and bring the province's per capita public funding to the arts, at a minimum, to the national average. In recent years, British Columbia has systematically ranked last of the provinces in average per capita

funding to the arts. 2009-10 statistics indicate that British Columbia's per capita governmental funding to the arts was more than \$100 under the national average.¹ Comparative statistics after 2010 are currently not available, but recent funding allocations do not seem to discredit this trend.

Despite lack of funding, the cultural sector in the province is amongst the most productive and well attended by audiences in the country. British Columbia is the Canadian province with the highest number of working artists, they comprise 1.8% of the province's labour force. The city of Vancouver is the Canadian metropolis with the highest percentage of artists, which comprise 2.3% of its labour force.² BC is also second in rank amongst the provinces with 3.65% of its labour force being comprised of cultural workers. Together, artists and cultural workers account for 5.45% of the province's labour force.³

British Columbians actively participate in art and culture activities. British Columbians visit public galleries more than any other Canadians; there has been a 13% increase in public gallery attendance in the province between 1992 and 2010.⁴ This statistic is exciting from the point of view of our organization, which represents a membership composed of non-profit and independent visual and media art galleries. However, combined provincial and federal funding to our member organizations does not reflect the fact that non-profit visual art galleries are better attended here than anywhere else in Canada. In fact, artist-run centres in BC receive on average \$11,238 less public sector revenue than the Canadian average.⁵

Apart from being contradictory, what the gap between the provincial funding to the arts and the high level of interest in art and culture in the province (demonstrated by the high percentage of artists and cultural workers and high levels of public attendance to cultural activities) demonstrates is that the province is rich in creativity. As a natural resource, creativity is not only renewable, it has the potential to grow exponentially. The same can be said of its effects not only on the lives of British Colombians, but also on the province's economy.

Funding to art and culture is a fruitful investment

We urge you to consider that increased investments in arts and culture can only have beneficial repercussions on the overall economy of British Columbia. There are countless non-measurable benefits to increased arts and culture funding, with trickle down effects into the economy. These include: increased quality of life, strengthening BC's identity and communities, and increased recognition of BC artists and artistic production on national and international levels.

In a report on Canada's creative economy, the conference Board of Canada stated that the arts and culture are "cornerstones of the creative, knowledge-based economy."⁶ Numbers support this claim. Since 2002, cultural industries in Canada have had a 2.1% yearly growth rate.⁷ It is also interesting to point out that creating a job in the arts and culture sector is less costly than in any other sector of the economy with the average cost varying between \$20K and \$30K compared to \$100K to \$300K for jobs in medium and heavy industry sectors.⁸

PAARC's recommendations for the next provincial budget:

Following this analysis, PAARC's recommendations to the committee are the following:

First recommendation: To increase the BC Arts Council's core budget so as to increase funding opportunities to individual artists, secure funding to established arts organizations, and increase access to funding to emerging organizations and to organizations that are currently not receiving funding from the Council.

We see this recommendation aligned with the government's priority to create sustainable jobs in British Columbia given the following facts:

- The average earnings of working artists are 37% below the Canadian labour force average.⁹
- Less than half of the organizations in PAARC's membership received operational funds from the BC Arts Council in 2012-13.

Lack of adequate access to operational funding and the chronic instability of project-based funding prove difficult on the daily operations of non-profit arts organizations like artist-run centres. Organizations operate with less paid staff than required, and often have to shut down due to lack of financial resources. Increasing and stabilizing funding to arts organizations would not only ensure that current jobs in the cultural sector be maintained, it would also enable the creation of new jobs in the sector. Increased subsidies to individual artists, obtained through grants and increased working opportunities in the province, could alleviate the gap existing between the earnings of artists in British Columbia and the overall labour force.

Second Recommendation: That the government start planning increased funding measures to the cultural sector in response to the positive impacts of its investments in youth art education and higher education artistic training.

We believe that this measure would be consistent with the government's priority to invest in sectors of the knowledge-based economy. It would also constitute a logical step to take after increasing funding to arts education through the BC Creative Futures initiative.

In the news release announcing the implementation of the BC Creative Futures plan, the Ministry of Community, Sports and Cultural Development announced that "BC Creative Futures supports the provincial economy by helping to foster a creative workforce through more art opportunities for young British Columbians ... and by expanding capacity at Emily Carr University of Art + Design."¹⁰ Increasing youth access to arts and increasing the capacity of Emily Carr University will certainly yield stronger interest in the arts in the province. It will yield also an increased number of trained artists and cultural workers. However, without an increase of employment, production and exhibition opportunities in BC, newly trained artists and cultural workers will not be able to practice in the province. There is currently a disproportion between the level of education of professional artists and their monetary earnings. As an example, while

48% of artists in Vancouver have higher education degrees, their median yearly earnings are evaluated at \$12,900.¹¹

We urge the government to start planning ahead increased subsidies to the cultural sector in response to the expansion of the trained artistic and cultural workforce that the BC Creative Futures initiative will foster. Creating more opportunities for artists to produce and showcase work in the province will ensure that we will see the effects of increased artistic training be materialized in the BC creative economy.

¹ *Flat-Lined But Still Alive: Analysis of the Provincial and Territorial 2012-13 Budgets from the perspective of Arts, Culture and Heritage*, Analysis by Alison Beale, Commissioned by the Canadian Conference of the Arts & Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa, 2013.

² *Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities*, Hill Strategies, February 2010. Table 1, p. 7.

³ *British Columbia's cultural climate: Understanding the arts in BC's Economy and Society*, Hill strategies, Presentation commissioned by the Alliance for Arts and Culture Society, June 21, 2012.

⁴ "British Columbians' Arts, Culture and Heritage Activities in 2010," *Provincial Profiles of Arts, Culture and Heritage Activities in 2010, Statistical insights on the arts*, Hill Strategies, Vol. 10 No. 3, March 2012. Table 4, p. 12.

⁵ *The Distinct role of Artist-Run Centres in the Canadian Cultural Ecology*, MRD Burgess Consultants, Commissioned by the Canada Council for the Arts, 2011. Figure 18. p.44

⁶ *Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy*, Conference Board of Canada, 2009.

⁷ Conference Board of Canada cited in *Pre-budget Consultation Questions: Culture and creativity as economic engines*, Canadian Conference of the Arts, 2012. p. 1.

⁸ Canadian Conference of the Arts. *2012 Pre-budget Consultation Questions: Culture and creativity as economic engines*. 2012, 2.

⁹ *New report reveals 10 key facts about the working lives of artists in Canada*, Hills Strategies, February 4, 2008.

¹⁰ Please release from the Ministry of Community Sports and Cultural Development, January 31, 2013.

¹¹ *Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities*, Hill Strategies, February 2010. Table 1, p. 7.