



# British Columbia Museums Association

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August 7, 2009

The Honourable Rich Coleman, Minister,  
Ministry of Housing and Social Development  
PO Box 9058 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Coleman;

On behalf of Council and Members of The British Columbia Museums Association (BCMA), including the province's 535 museums, art galleries, archives, historic sites and heritage properties, and as the parent association since 1957, I am obliged and compelled to respectfully register our sector's extreme concern and protest over the current "freeze" on Direct Access funding.

Despite the economic rationale, the impact of such a sweeping tactic is not fully understood. This freeze by itself, (purportedly soon to be compounded by the pending cuts to operating funding by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts), will be devastating to our sector's capacity to operate, retain staff, contract professionals, deliver public programming, or in turn generate the complementing earned revenue to sustain itself, or for the Province, the well-documented 36% return on investment in arts and culture for BC's economy. The consequences are *that dire*.

In response to our sector's alarm, we have advised our province-wide membership, as multi-year or annual Direct Access funding clients, to articulate for you, as Minister responsible, and for Minister Krueger, the threat to their institutions and the severe repercussions these measures are certain to provoke. We have asked members to list their operating costs and wide-ranging, established public programs affected by this freeze; as well as how comparatively little, but critical, Direct Access funding is to their function. This will better represent the scope and gravity of funding freezes, or cuts, so that the repercussions are better understood and remedial action by the Ministry can be taken with justification, initially with the release of Direct Access funds.

Associations are just as critically affected. BCMA's revenue is limited to annual memberships, conference registrations, regional programming (funded by Direct Access); infrequent or specialized program delivery fees (BC150 programs); and an operating grant that provides 12% of the Association's annual budget-- without revenue streams of public admissions, visitor donations, municipal funding or local corporate support. A freeze on Direct Access funding means discontinuation of the following BCMA programs and all related professional contracts:

1. **Museums Roundup** nationally-revered quarterly journal (\$XX,XXX);
2. **Regional Workshop Series** of professional development opportunities delivered regionally through host member institutions (\$XX,XXX);
3. **Barrie Hardcastle & Joe Nagel Technology Bursaries** to assist annual recipients with accredited post-secondary training (\$X,XXX);
4. **Vancouver Public Library Interlibrary Loans Program** of heritage and visual arts titles purchased annually and available through BC's public libraries (\$X,XXX);

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**Survivor Osoyoos - ReThink, ReTool, ReWork**  
**BCMA's 2009 Provincial Workshop**

Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, Sonora Centre & Osoyoos Museum  
Osoyoos, BC - October 15-17, 2009

5. **Accommodation & Communications** for a portion of annual office rent, telephone & internet/email operating costs (\$XX,XXX).

The BCMA's May 2009 application represented the first of a three-year Direct Access funding program to ensure core program funding levels and to help stabilize annual planning and provincial programming, after several years of annual grants. Membership fees and conference revenue augment operating funds and cannot also mitigate a loss of Direct Access-funded programs.

The BCMA has a long history of program delivery partnerships with the Province and has supported, participated in, and consistently contributed to recent heritage strategy, BC Arts Council and cultural tourism development initiatives. And for the long term health and sustainability of our sector and its under-developed capacity to become a major contributor to the BC economy—as recognized in the February 2009 Budget Speech—the BCMA remains ready and willing to help facilitate our sector's transformation to that status.

However, the Province's history of time and again subjecting arts, culture and heritage to funding cuts and freezes is counter-intuitive to cultivating this potentially massive "new" industry; undermines confidence in government; dissuades critically needed new sector professionals and leaders from entering the field; and consequently mutes what and how BC communities have to say about themselves—a key attraction for the tourism industry. This repeated practice of freezes and cuts to arts and culture must stop and instead the Province adopt a constructive policy of strategic investment in this sector so that it can fulfill its potential, hand-in-hand with BC's tourism industry.

We must therefore respectfully request the Minister's public confirmation of, and timeline for the reinstatement of Direct Access funding at the earliest possible date, so that BC's museums, art galleries, archives, historic sites and heritage properties can resume their planning and programming for 2009-10.

As ever, the BC Museums Association remains ready to meet and to assist.

Yours truly,

Jim Harding  
Executive Director

cc: The Honourable Kevin Krueger, Minister, Tourism, Culture and the Arts  
The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier  
MLA – Carole James, Victoria-Beacon Hill, Official leader of the Opposition  
MLA - Spencer Herbert, Official Opposition Arts & Culture Critic  
MLA – Bruce Ralston, Surrey-Whalley, Official Opposition Finance Critic  
Institutional Members, BC Museums Association & Direct Access clients