



**AN ARTS ADVOCACY  
TOOLKIT**

*September, 2010*

*for use by*

**Community Arts Champions**

*for outreach to British Columbia's MLAs*

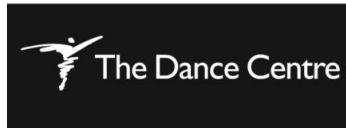
*"Could we ever know each other in the slightest without the arts?"*

Canadian poet Gabrielle Roy (1909 – 1983)  
as quoted on the Canadian \$20 bill

## WHO WE ARE



ALLIANCE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE



Creativity Counts is the advocacy campaign of the Alliance for Arts and Culture, developed in response to the severe cuts in British Columbia's provincial investment in the arts beginning in 2009.

The Creativity Counts advocacy toolkits have been developed by the Alliance for Arts and Culture in collaboration with:

- Artstarts in Schools
- Assembly of British Columbia Arts Councils
- Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia
- British Columbia Touring Council
- CARFAC British Columbia
- Craft Council of British Columbia
- The Dance Centre
- Federation of BC Writers
- Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance
- ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria

Financial support for this initiative provided by Alliance for Arts and Culture members:

- Arts Club Theatre Company
- Vancouver Art Gallery
- Vancouver Opera
- Vancouver Symphony Orchestra
- Ballet BC
- Bard On The Beach Shakespeare Festival

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## **OUR GOALS**

In response to the severe cuts to investment in the arts in British Columbia, the Alliance for Arts and Culture, in collaboration with other cultural organizations, professional associations and individual artists, has launched a province-wide advocacy campaign under the banner of “Creativity Counts”.

This campaign features a number of initiatives, including the creation of advocacy toolkits for use by groups and individual in support of the following goals:

- The soonest possible restoration of arts investment from all provincial government sources to the 2008/2009 levels.
- The ultimate increasing of stable, arms-length investment in the arts to at least the national average (a tripling of pre-cut levels would still be the lowest in Canada).
- The development, by the cultural sector, of a position paper to be presented to all political parties and stakeholders as a starting point for the creation of a comprehensive and sustainable arts funding policy for British Columbia.

This document, designed for use by “Community Champions” in reaching out to their local MLAs, is one of those toolkits.

We call on the government of BC to stabilize and increase investment in the arts and to improve the delivery of arts programs in the service of the public good.

The Olympic legacy should be celebrated, but in a way that makes economic and cultural sense. We have a wealth of talent and business expertise in the province. Let’s really live up to the fact that we are the most literate place in North America. Let’s honour the aboriginal peoples of this land and their artistic and cultural contributions. And let’s ensure that our symphonies, artists, writers, theatres and cultural industries in all communities will thrive and contribute, in the best of all possible ways, to the lives of all British Columbians.

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## **THE COMMUNITY ARTS CHAMPIONS’ OBJECTIVES**

- To meet with all 85 BC Members of the Legislative Assembly to present our case to them in the lead up to a “Day at the Legislature” in the spring of 2011.
- To develop relationships with our elected representatives and to learn about them and their own experiences with the arts and culture in their communities.

This non-partisan “Day at the Legislature” will be designed to inform MLA’s and government staff about the contribution of arts and culture to their ridings and the communities within them.

It will involve briefings of the two caucuses, as well as performances in the Legislature and an evening event. The goal is to celebrate the arts and culture of BC and to demonstrate value and return for the public interest in provincial funding for the sector.

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## **YOUR ROLE**

Your role is to be an ambassador for the arts community in your electoral riding. You will do the following:

- Be familiar with the arts organizations in your riding, and how they contribute to your community;
- Be familiar with “what’s at stake” province-wide for the arts and culture sector;
- Set up a meeting with your MLA, along with a small number of other interested people from your community, to discuss these issues;
- Identify people who would be appropriate to join you at the meeting. The ideal delegation would include:
  - Yourself
  - A very active person in the community (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, someone politically active in your MLA’s party);
  - An articulate artist or two who have benefited from public investment in the arts;
  - A diverse representation of economic and cultural backgrounds:
- Be prepared to produce a report on your meeting(s);
- Send your report to [communications@allianceforarts.com](mailto:communications@allianceforarts.com), so that we can keep track of all the meetings, and ensure that we know that every riding meeting has taken place.

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## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The current situation for arts and culture in British Columbia is very serious. Over the past two years, funds have been cut to professional and community arts organizations, and British Columbia spends the least per capita on operating grants of any province in the country.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services unanimously recommended restoring the funds to 2008-09 levels in the lead-up to last March's budget; this had some effect as an appropriation was provided for the BC Arts Council as recommended, however:

- In the budget, the BC Arts Council was cut 53 percent from 2008/09. (This is arms-length funding in that grants are awarded by a peer-review process);
- A \$10 million annual supplementary fund was created, of which \$3 million was earmarked for "Spirit Festivals", and, in late August, \$7 million was given to the BC Arts Council, in an attempt to restore most of its funding;
- BC Gaming Commission funds for the arts were cut 58 percent from 2008/09. These programs are also now being defined more narrowly. Most arts and culture organizations are now ineligible for gaming funds, especially emerging, community-based, and culturally diverse organizations;
- Total government investment in culture, (including the recently announced \$10 million annual supplementary fund) was reduced by 32.4 percent from the 2008/09 budget.
- Provincial government funding in BC from all sources, even before the 2010 cuts, made up an average of seven percent of the operating budgets of performing arts organizations. This is the lowest in Canada. The national average is 13 percent. In Quebec, provincial funding accounts for 26 percent of a performing arts organization's budget

### Operating Grants 2007-08 – before the most recent cuts:

<i>Province</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Per Capita</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Yukon	\$8,915,000	\$268.52	1
Nunavut	\$4,292,000	\$135.82	2
Northwest Territories	\$4,209,000	\$96.98	3
Prince Edward Island	\$6,161,000	\$44.16	4
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$21,976,000	\$43.40	5
Quebec	\$322,965,000	\$41.65	6
Saskatchewan	\$39,696,000	\$39.16	7
Manitoba	\$44,504,000	\$36.90	8
New Brunswick	\$24,174,000	\$32.36	9
Nova Scotia	\$26,127,000	\$27.90	10
Ontario	\$270,445,000	\$20.91	11
Alberta	\$74,814,000	\$20.81	12
British Columbia	\$42,406,000	\$9.67*	13
Totals	\$890,684,000	\$26.73	

Investment to Bring BC to the National Average: \$74,753,675.91

\*note that this is before the recent cuts. If you include the \$10m supplementary fund, you can assume that this number has been reduced by 32.4 percent, bringing it down to \$6.54 per capita.

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## THE ASK

We are asking the MLA's to support public funding for the arts, recognizing that arts and culture are essential to a healthy civil society. We call on the government of BC to stabilize arts funding and improve the delivery of arts programs in the service of the public good.

The Olympic legacy should be celebrated, but in a way that makes economic and cultural sense. We have such a wealth of talent and business expertise in the province, let's really live up to the fact that we are the most literate place in North America; let's honour the aboriginal peoples of this land and their artistic and cultural contributions; let's honour our cultural diversity; and let's make sure our symphonies, artists, writers, theatres and cultural industries in all communities will thrive and contribute, in the best of all possible ways, to the lives of all British Columbians.

Key parts of our ask:

- Support public funding for the not-for-profit arts and cultural sector.
- That MLAs affirm that public funding for the arts is critical to economic growth and the cultural health and well-being of their communities.
- Arts and Cultural organizations, including Heritage and community-based organizations and individual artists, must be fully supported with arms-length public investment through the BC Arts Council, that is stable and sufficient to support the Council's strategic plan.
- Include the arts and culture community in policy proposals that affect arts and culture and in developing a vision and plan for this diverse sector's future growth and development.
- Continue to allocate the Arts Legacy fund (\$7 Million) to the BCAC in the next two fiscal years to supplement the Council's base appropriation.
- Restore the amount of funding for arts and cultural organizations supported through Gaming revenues and honour the social contract with British Columbians regarding the expansion of gaming.

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## THE ARGUMENTS

- Not all arguments are going to work as effectively with all people. Most importantly, it is critical that, as a representative of the arts community, you make sure your overarching argument is about the benefit to society as a whole, not a plea from a "special interest group."
- It is important that when we are in meetings and public venues, we don't appear like "single-issue fanatics"
- Keep things simple - don't go too deep. People have very little time/ability to digest a lot of information
- First, we need to make sure that MLAs agree with the intrinsic value of arts and culture to society
- Social, Economic and Institutional frameworks follow.

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## TALKING POINTS

Find examples in your own community or experiences that illustrate the following talking points. Stories and anecdotes are much more memorable than mere facts and figures.

### *Intrinsic Value*

- Governments around the world invest money in this area because the arts represent cultural diversity, education, thoughtfulness, creativity, enrichment, dialogue, cross-cultural exchange and debate, all of which are intrinsic public goods for a civilized society.
- Arts and culture allows a society to express its spirit, allowing us to know one another better, reflecting ourselves to others and the world.

### *Instrumental Value (Economic & Social)*

- Tough economic times are exactly the times when we should be supporting our communities and investing wisely
- Public investment in the arts is the “R&D” of cultural spending. When operating properly, this allows artists and their organizations to begin their work and leverage additional private and public support, allowing the work to grow. Event tickets, books, art works and other products made available at accessible prices complete the picture as the audience engages.
- The arts and culture sector represents \$5 billion of BC’s GDP and over 80,000 jobs. It is a significant economic driver connected to the creative economy.
- Thriving arts and cultural centres draw creative workforces and tourists
- Public investment in the arts allows community-based arts organizations to leverage money from other sectors, and also leverages the social capital of thousands of volunteer hours of activity.
- According to the BC government’s own studies, every dollar invested by the province in arts and culture organizations returns between \$1.05 and \$1.36 directly into provincial treasury.
- Public investment in the arts results in healthier, happier, economically competitive, “livable” communities.
- The arts, like education health and social security, are universal goods that ought to be generally available in a civil society.
- Public investment in the arts supports cultural activities that reflect our diversity.
- Public investment in the arts also supports capacity building in First Nations communities and helps to reclaim and express identity.

### *Institutional Value*

- Public investment keeps cultural institutions, such as symphonies, operas and museums, open. These institutions provide a global face, projecting Canadian values to the world.

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## TALKING POINTS continued ...

### *British Columbia In Context*

- BC Provincial governments of every stripe have not made arts and culture a huge priority. This current government did, however, do some very positive things in the first parts of its mandate, including increasing funding and setting up the BC150 Cultural fund. This \$150 million endowment was supposed to provide more stable funding for arts and culture activities. Unfortunately, given the current world economic situation, the return on that investment has been much smaller than expected, and has not been as fruitful for arts and culture organizations. Combined with the additional cuts of the past few years, arts and cultural organizations are in their worst shape in memory in terms of government support.
- Provincial government funding in BC from all sources, even before the 2009/2010 cuts, made up an average of seven percent of the operating budgets of performing arts organizations. This is the lowest in Canada. The national average is 13 percent. In Quebec, provincial funding accounts for 26 percent of a performing arts organization's budget

### *Arts and Culture Do Matter to British Columbians*

- 3.5 million British Columbians attend arts and culture events, including 300,000 schoolchildren who attend non-profit performances and exhibitions annually.
- When the world turned its eyes to British Columbia at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games, our artists stood with our athletes to put Canada's heart on its sleeve. The Cultural Olympiad showed all British Columbians the priceless value of investment in our own talent.
- Our arts and culture sector has: **91,000 volunteers** who contribute **9,555,000 volunteer hours**, which is the equivalent of **4,950 full-time jobs valued at \$143 Million** in annual contribution. The primary reason we volunteer in the arts and culture sector is to contribute to our community.

### *The Cultural Sector Helps Small Business*

- When artists take the stage, they put British Columbians to work – be they ticket sellers, dry cleaners, caterers, printers, waiters and waitresses, lighting suppliers, ushers, stage hands, sound engineers, taxi drivers, parking attendants, delivery drivers, florists, hair dressers, or babysitters. This buzz of economic activity not only keeps British Columbians employed, *it generates sufficient tax revenue to cover taxpayer investment in the arts*, with more left over for schools and hospitals.
- Small business is the backbone of British Columbia's economy, and the arts sector is proud to support and partner with small businesses in communities across our province.
- Arts organizations *are* small business. Publishers, filmmakers, recording artists, new media firms, and other cultural industries ensure that Canadian and BC artists are known throughout the world.



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## **MEETINGS WITH MLA'S**

### **Purpose**

- Set up one-on-one meetings with your local MLA at their constituency office;
- Make personal contact with the staff;
- Conduct Questionnaire to send back to group;
- Identify if your MLA is a champion of arts and culture in the riding.

### **Background**

MLA's need to get elected, and generally appreciate any active support they can get. They are less inclined to be interested in what their vocal opponents think or say unless they can sway a lot of people against them.

They also have very little time to delve into great detail about anything. They want & require votes because getting votes is how they win.

Policies and issues, while important, are only one aspect driving votes. A big aspect driving votes is community acceptance and awareness. It is important that the MLA knows that you are plugged in to the community by virtue of your important work you do in the arts and culture sector.

### **Setting up the Meeting**

#### ***1. Do your research***

Learn as much as you can about your MLA. His or her background, career before politics, family life, business connections, hobbies, travel experiences and level and source of education. This will enable you to connect with them conversationally and show that you know they are a person beyond their role as your MLA.

#### ***2. Request the meeting***

MLAs are very busy. Make it clear you represent your arts/culture organization and that you are part of a larger movement across the province. Give the MLA a sense of how many people are employed in arts and culture in his/her riding. Review "Talking Points." This information may be helpful in getting the MLA's attention.

#### ***3. Establish ground rules***

Invite political staff, in addition to the MLA. Establish a relationship with political staff so you have help with follow-up after the meeting. If you end up meeting with political staff rather than the MLA, remember that political staff can have a great deal of influence and can take action on behalf of the MLA. The political staff will also be very busy, but should have more time for you. Be sure you tell them clearly what you want to discuss and who you will bring to the meeting. Offer a brief agenda in advance of the meeting. (Example included)

#### ***4. Confirm the meeting***

Phone the MLA's office a few days before to confirm the time, date and location of the meeting.

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## **MEETINGS WITH MLA's continued ...**

### **The Actual Meeting**

#### ***1. Remember to make a personal connection with the MLA***

Remember the MLA has feelings, strengths, weaknesses and stresses just like you. Everyone he or she meets will say that their issue is “very, very important” and requires immediate attention. Be direct, clear and firm when you present why arts funding is important for his/her constituents and all British Columbians. If there is a sense that the MLA wants to be helpful, remember to give him or her a supportive word, congratulations or appreciation for any efforts he or she makes on your behalf.

#### ***2. Keep to an agenda***

Remember to keep to the objective of your meeting. You should thank the MLA and any political staff for taking the time to meet with you. State the reason for the meeting, and outline briefly the agenda for your discussion.

#### ***3. It's a conversation***

Remember that this meeting is a conversation, not a lecture. It's an exchange of information and views. Be polite. It's important to express your ideas, but it's also important to be a good listener. Try to find out about the MLA's own experience or involvement in arts and culture. Be aware of any questions, and make note of any positive commitments.

#### ***4. You are the expert on arts and culture***

Remember that you know more about arts than your MLA does. However, if you can't answer a question, don't attempt to. If the MLA asks about something that you can't answer, tell him or her that you don't know the answer, but you'll be happy to find out and get the answer after the meeting.

#### ***5. Personalize the issue with a relevant local story***

A good story almost always wins out over a list of data, academic studies or scientific research. A local story personalizes the issue for the MLA, and brings the impact directly home to his or her constituency. The MLA is also more likely to remember and repeat a personal story than anything else.

#### ***6. You need evidence too***

While a relevant local story is important, good evidence is important too. Everyone wants to make good decisions based on evidence and fact. So be sure you provide one or two credible local facts, as well as one or two relevant provincial/national or international facts that can be easily remembered and repeated by your MLA. For example, “arts and culture funding in our riding affects X out of 10 people.” or “BC is funding arts and culture to the lowest level of any province in Canada.”

#### ***7. What to leave behind with the MLA and his/her staff***

A good one pager (attached) should suffice. Sharing media clippings on arts and culture funding (local if available) can be a very powerful way to illustrate that arts and culture funding is a key issue in your community.

#### ***8. End the meeting on time***

Close the meeting by reiterating what you are asking for. Remember to ask directly, “Will you support a restoration of arts and culture funding? Will you speak to your colleagues about this issue?”

Leave on time. Thank the MLA and any staff who may be attending the meeting.

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## **MEETINGS WITH MLA's continued ...**

### **After Your Meeting**

#### **1. What did you achieve?**

Any response that commits the MLA to supporting our issue or a commitment to write in support of arts and culture is a success.

#### **2. Formally thank your MLA**

However it is appropriate to acknowledge and thank the MLA for any support her or his party has given to arts and culture in the past, or promised for the future. Send a thank you note or letter immediately to the MLA as well as to their staff, and refer specifically to any commitment in your note or letter - "We look forward to receiving a copy of your letter to your colleague supporting a restoration of arts and culture funding."

#### **3. Produce a report**

Write a one or two page report that summarizes the meeting, talks about your sense of how much the MLA understands the issues, supports the arts, and especially any personal experience with the arts (ie. favourite music, whether or not he/she plays any instruments, likes to paint, collects art, or played in the school band.)

Please send your report to: [communications@allianceforarts.com](mailto:communications@allianceforarts.com)

#### **4. Follow up regularly**

Follow up regularly with your MLA and their staff to ensure commitments are addressed.

#### **5. Celebrate any success**

If the MLA follows through on his or her promise to support arts and culture funding, remember to say "thank you" publicly. A public thank you will be remembered the next time you ask for anything

#### **6. Review and assess**

Meet with the activists who attended the meeting and identify what worked, what didn't, and how the meeting might be better organized next time. Evaluate how successful you were in getting support.

#### **7. Develop a follow-up strategy**

No doubt important new relationships resulted from your meeting – perhaps a relationship was renewed. Discuss how to build on these relationships and the meeting in general. Assign tasks as part of the follow up. For example, who will ensure the copies of requested information are delivered?

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## **SAMPLE AGENDA FOR MLA MEETING**

*For a 30 minute meeting:*

- Introductions & objective of meeting (2 minutes)
- Personal story of how arts and culture organizations contribute to the local community (5 minutes)
- Research and/or data (5-10 minutes)
- *Provide key statistics on local arts and culture organizations, the benefits of public spending on arts and culture*
- Presenting the “ask” (2 minutes)
- *And why the MLA needs to act now*
- MLA to respond & ask questions (5-10 minutes)
- Thank you & next steps (2 minutes)

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## **SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

A guide for what you will want to discuss with your MLA. Make up your own questions, but try to include these kinds of items:

1. What is your personal interest or background in the arts? For example, did you play in band in school? What is your favourite music? Do you have an arts-related hobbies?
2. Do you know about (add names of arts groups) arts organizations in your riding, do you attend their performances?
3. What is your favourite book, play, music, etc.? What moved you?
4. Is there an arts experience that has transformed you?
5. How do you feel those organizations benefit our community?
6. Were you aware that BC spends the least amount per capita in Canada on the operating funds for arts organizations? How do you feel about that?
7. Do you believe that BC should increase public funding for the arts to be in synch with the rest of Canada?
8. Are you aware of the Canada-wide Culture Days initiative?
9. Are any members of your family or social circle involved in the arts or cultural activity?
10. What was the last cultural event that you participated here in your riding?

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## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Check out these websites for more information:

Alliance for Arts and Culture	<a href="http://www.allianceforarts.com/">http://www.allianceforarts.com/</a>
Pro-Art Alliance	<a href="http://www.proartalliance.ca/">http://www.proartalliance.ca/</a>
Assembly of BC Arts Councils	<a href="http://www.assemblybcartscouncils.ca/">http://www.assemblybcartscouncils.ca/</a>
BC Touring Council	<a href="http://www.bctouring.org/">http://www.bctouring.org/</a>
Stop BC Arts Cuts	<a href="http://www.stopbcartscuts.ca/">http://www.stopbcartscuts.ca/</a>
New Cultural Policy <i>(American website, but of interest to Canadians)</i>	<a href="http://www.newculturalpolicy.org">http://www.newculturalpolicy.org</a>
BC Arts Council	<a href="http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/">http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/</a>
Hill Strategies (arts research)	<a href="http://www.hillstrategies.com/">http://www.hillstrategies.com/</a>

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## DRAFT BRIEFING NOTE FOR MLA'S

*Tailor for your riding / a Word document version is available for this purpose. Inquire at [communications@allianceforarts.com](mailto:communications@allianceforarts.com)*

To: MLAs Name, &, riding  
From: Your Name  
Re: How public funding for the arts helps to contribute to our community  
Date: XXXX

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today.

Here are a few key points that we would like to make:

- The arts and culture sector represents \$5 billion of BC's GDP and over 80,000 jobs. It is a significant economic driver connected to the creative economy
- Public investment in the arts is the "R&D" of cultural spending. When operating properly, this allows artists and their organizations to begin their work and leverage additional private and public support, allowing the work to grow. Event tickets, books, art works and other products made available at accessible prices complete the picture as the audience engages.
- The following arts organizations operate in your riding, or in the immediate area:
  - XXXXXXXXXXXX
  - XXXXXXXXXXXX
  - XXXXXXXXXXXX
  - XXXXXXXXXXXX
- These organizations provide XXXXXXXX jobs, XXXXXXXX volunteer hours, and XXXXXXXX spin-off activities (describe)
- Public investment in the arts allows community-based arts organizations to leverage money from other sectors, and also leverages the social capital of thousands of volunteer hours of activity
- Provincial governments in British Columbia, of every stripe, have not made arts and culture a huge priority. This current government did, however, do some very positive things in the first parts of its mandate, including increasing funding, and setting up the BC150 Cultural fund, which is a \$150 million endowment that was supposed to provide more stable funding for arts and culture activities. Unfortunately, given the current world economic situation, the return on that investment has been much smaller than expected, and has not been as fruitful for arts and culture organizations, and with the additional cuts of the past few years, arts and cultural organizations are in their worst shape in memory in terms of government support.

- Provincial government funding in BC from all sources, even before the 2010 cuts, made up an average of seven percent of the operating budgets of performing arts organizations.

This is the lowest in Canada. The national average is 13 percent. In Quebec, provincial funding accounts for 26 percent of a performing arts organization's budget

See the following chart outlines the provincial comparisons.

**Operating Grants 2007-08 – before the most recent cuts**

	Amount	Per Capita	Rank
Yukon	\$8,915,000	\$268.52	1
Nunavut	\$4,292,000	\$135.82	2
Northwest Territories	\$4,209,000	\$96.98	3
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