



July 26, 2023

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
Department of Finance Canada  
90 Elgin Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G5

British Columbia Museums Association (BCMA) Written Submission to the Department of Finance, Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2024 Budget

Dear Minister,

The British Columbia Museums Association (BCMA) is pleased to submit this letter for consideration during the 2024 pre-budget consultations. For more than sixty years, our organization has supported museums, galleries, and cultural institutions in British Columbia through networking, advocacy, and professional development. On behalf of our more than 450 members in 180+ communities large and small across British Columbia, we respectfully request the following considerations:

1. Modernize the Museums Assistance Program and increase its funding to \$50,000,000 by 2028.
2. Create a one-time investment of \$100,000,000 to fund sustainability upgrades, infrastructure improvements, and climate change mitigation measures for arts, culture, and heritage organizations.
3. Renew funding for the Canada Arts and Culture Recovery Program (CACRP) to support arts, culture, and heritage organizations during the prolonged recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Fund the implementation of UNDRIP in the cultural heritage sector and Moved to Action report recommendations.

**Modernize the Museums Assistance Program and Increase its Funding to \$50,000,000 by 2028**

Museum Assistance Program (MAP) funding has not been adjusted for inflation since its establishment in the 1970s. If MAP funding had kept pace with inflation, funding would be in excess of \$100 million annually. By increasing annual MAP funding to \$50,000,000 by 2028, the Government of Canada will change the trajectory of the museum sector, allowing organizations from coast to coast to invest in emerging technologies to reach new audiences, become greener and more sustainable, tell new, more diverse stories, and take action in supporting the return of Indigenous cultural belongings.

In addition to employing over 35,000 people, Canada's museum and heritage sector generates close to \$9 billion in direct and indirect economic benefits every year. Our sector has achieved this impact despite nearly 50 years of stagnant funding. A modern MAP could build capacity for digitization work, create new funding to support Indigenous communities, support long-overdue

equity work, and help to position Canada as a global cultural leader. By investing in MAP, and other critical Canadian Heritage programs like the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, the Government of Canada will be investing in transformational change, sustainable success, and the increased impact of museums for decades to come.

### **Create a one-time green infrastructure fund of \$100,000,000**

In 2021, British Columbia lost two museums in Lytton to a devastating wildfire. Four months later, unprecedented flooding in BC threatened dozens of institutions. In 2022, aerial fire suppressants nearly damaged irreplaceable Indigenous heritage sites. For 2023, the Province of BC is forecasting the worst fire season in recorded history. By the time you read this letter, there is a very real chance that more of our communities' arts, culture, and heritage have been destroyed. Every single museum, gallery, and heritage site in Canada is at risk of devastating loss due to the effects of climate change and if we hope to preserve our collective heritage for future generations, we must take action now.

In 2021 and 2022, the Province of BC offered heritage organizations and Indigenous communities green infrastructure funding and these programs were a resounding success. They created local jobs. They helped BC's cultural economy create a higher return than any other province in the country. They supported critical work that had been postponed for decades. They allowed our sector to prepare for an uncertain future by becoming more sustainable today. Sadly, both of these funds were wildly oversubscribed, showing the critical need for this funding.

We call upon the Government of Canada to offer a parallel federal program by creating a one-time green infrastructure fund of \$100,000,000. This will help the country meet its sustainability goals, stimulate local economies, and help to protect both our nation's arts, culture, and heritage and the global environment – two irreplaceable assets.

### **Renew funding for the Canada Arts and Culture Recovery Program**

Canada's arts, culture, and heritage sector is experiencing a slower-than-hoped recovery period from the COVID-19 pandemic with recent data from the Department of Canadian Heritage suggesting that only 1 in 10 Canadians have physically visited a museum since 2019. This slow recovery combined with a sharp increase in the cost of living means that many organizations continue to be at significant risk. Early on in the pandemic, provincial, national, and international studies agreed that nearly 1 in 8 cultural organizations were at risk of closure, but the Government of Canada's quick action to offer sectoral emergency recovery and resilience funding prevented this terrible outcome.

In 2023, the first year since the pandemic began that federal recovery funding was not available, we have seen two cultural organizations permanently close their doors in British Columbia: operators of Point Ellice House Museum and the Bateman Gallery. With our sector's recovery still teetering on a razor's edge, we call upon the Government of Canada to renew funding for

the Canada Arts and Culture Recovery Program. This funding program is an essential lifeline that supports the continued vibrancy of Canada's arts, culture, and heritage sector.

### **Support the implementation of UNDRIP in the cultural heritage sector and Moved to Action report recommendations**

Lastly, we support the Canadian Museums Association's (CMA) February 2023 request that the Government of Canada fund the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Moved to Action report recommendations. The Moved to Action report, released in late 2022, stemmed from the CMA's role in supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #67, to deliver a report and recommendations as part of a national review of museum policies and their relationship with UNDRIP.

Through consultation with Indigenous communities and the heritage sector, the CMA has created ten recommendations for action and change aimed at governments and the museum sector. Among these recommendations is the call for a revised national museum policy that would align with and support UNDRIP implementation and expanding the Museums Assistance Program to accommodate new, UNDRIP-related funding. By aligning the national museum policy and programs like MAP with UNDRIP, the Government of Canada has the opportunity to transform the country's cultural heritage sector and recognize the autonomy of Indigenous peoples to steward their own arts, culture, and heritage.

We request that the Government of Canada work with the CMA to assess what resources are necessary to implement UNDRIP in the nation's cultural sector and ensure that sufficient funding, time, and resources are in place for this critical work.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we believe that supporting museums and cultural institutions is critical to the recovery, health, and growth of our country. We hope that these recommendations will be considered as part of the upcoming federal budget and we look forward to working with the government to ensure that Canada's cultural heritage is protected and celebrated for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Ryan Hunt

Executive Director, BC Museums Association