

Election Primer 2020

Making the Case for Museums, Galleries, and
Cultural Centres in your Community

An Election Primer

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- Updated in September 2020.

About this Primer

Thank you to the BCMA Advocacy Committee for your support in creating this document. The Advocacy Committee is committed to supporting the advocacy work of the BCMA and its members and increasing awareness of the BC cultural sector.

As communities across the province begin to plan for an uncertain future and ultimate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, advocacy is more important than ever. The 2020 Provincial Election is a critical opportunity to tell the story of impact of our sector and to urge government to take action to ensure museums, galleries, and cultural centres can continue to support their communities. This primer is meant to provide our members with facts, tips, and strategies to make arts, culture and heritage a central issue now, and in future elections.

The BC Museums Association will be advocating for museums and related organizations during and after the election. We ask all BCMA members to become politically engaged and help us make sure that support for museums, art galleries and cultural centres is an election issue and an ongoing priority for elected officials in your communities. Increasing awareness about the value and impact of museums, culture and heritage among decision-makers like elected officials, as well as the general public, is critical to the growth and development of our sector. We need to be strong advocates for the economic, social and cultural impacts of our work – from generating economic returns and tourism revenue to building community participation and connections between generations, meeting the needs of First Nations and multicultural communities and giving children, youth and seniors access to arts and culture.

We understand that members are under-resourced and over-burdened, now more than ever, but advocacy on a local level is critical. We must ensure that every MLA, every senior government official, and every voter knows the impact museums, galleries, and cultural centres have in the lives of British Columbians. Now is the time to speak together with a unified voice.

Important Dates:

- BC provincial election: October 24, 2020
- BC municipal government elections: October 15, 2022
- Federal election: TBD

Political activities:

- **Protecting your charitable status:** Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has rules and guidelines that charitable organizations must follow. Be sure to read up on the rules and regulations that govern charities, non-profits and individuals under the “Political Activities” section of the [CRA website](#).
- **Changes to the Lobbyist Transparency Act and Implications for the Non-profit Sector:** Since the 2017 provincial election new regulations have been established to increase transparency with respect to who is lobbying the BC government. Pacific Legal Education & Outreach Society has a

[free webinar](#) recording that outlines these changes. We encourage members to review these changes before engaging in advocacy work, especially if you are engaging in advocacy as a paid staff-person, representing your organization.

About the BCMA

The BC Museums Association, founded in 1957, represents over 400 members across British Columbia, including museums, art galleries, archives, historic sites, Indigenous cultural centres, science centres, botanical gardens and related organizations located throughout BC. We are a provincially incorporated non-profit society and a registered charitable organization that works to create a bright future for BC's museum, gallery and heritage sector through networking, advocacy, innovation, and professional development. The BCMA represents a vibrant community of museum, heritage and cultural professionals and institutions who reach every corner of British Columbia and make an invaluable contribution to our province by providing welcoming, inclusive community spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds, serving as the keepers and presenters of our tangible and intangible cultural, natural and historic treasures.

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Facts Supporting Museums, Art Galleries and Cultural Centres as a Vital Sector

Two critical tools in advocacy are quantitative data (i.e. facts, figures, and statistics showing the impact of your organization or sector) and qualitative data (i.e. human stories of the impact of your organization or sector). When telling the story of your organization's impact, we recommend using both quantitative *and* qualitative data.

For example, you can say that “85% of Canadians believe that arts education assists in the emotional and intellectual development of children and consider it is a good reason to support the arts.” But if you can also follow that statistic up with a story from your museum about the impact your organization has had in the life of an individual child, your story will be richer and more memorable. Statistics are important, but stories stick in people's heads and hearts.

Here are some helpful statistics to quantify the impact of museums, galleries, and cultural centres.

The Impact of COVID-19 on BC's Cultural Sector:

The COVID-19 pandemic is seriously damaging the global cultural sector (in April 2020, 94.7% of all museums in the world were closed due to the pandemic) and BC's museums, art galleries, and cultural centres are not being spared. A recent joint survey from the BCMA and Heritage BC have found that nearly 33% of heritage organizations in British Columbia fear they “may never fully recover or completely return” to normal after COVID-19. A survey from the Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance found that 96% of cultural workers in the province are experiencing higher rates of stress and anxiety due to COVID-19.

Hundreds of cultural workers have been laid off since March and thousands will lose their jobs if significant actions are taken. If BC's cultural sector is going to survive, we will need the support of all levels of government.

Virtually every museum and heritage organization in BC has been negatively impacted by COVID-19 with 85% of respondents to a BCMA and Heritage BC survey responding that they have reduced programs and services offered to the public due to the pandemic.

Economic Impact:

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the culture sector was one of the fastest growing sectors in British Columbia's economy, generating a wealth of new revenue, contributing to workforce growth, and attracting and training highly skilled labourers. According to the most recent report by Statistics Canada (2015), culture GDP in BC is \$5.7 billion, making up 3% of the total provincial GDP, and 12% of culture GDP in Canada.

There are 88,000 culture jobs in BC, which is equal to 3.8% of all jobs in the province. Culture GDP in British Columbia is 6.33 times that of sport and culture creates 4.31 times more jobs than sport (Statistics Canada 2015). The GDP contributed by culture is greater than agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, utilities, and accommodation and food services industries.

Through creative innovation, the culture sector can diversify BC's predominantly resource-based economy.

A strong culture sector gives British Columbian communities a brand, or "attraction factor," for new workers, residents, and tourists, spurring and supporting a vibrant cultural tourism industry.

Culture contributes to urban and rural development and revitalization, enhancing communities and providing further opportunities for economic and social growth.

In 2010, taxes from Indigenous cultural tourism spending were approximately \$11.3 million (to all levels of government).

Educational Impact:

Museums, galleries, and cultural centres function as an essential "third space" (spaces that are neither work nor home) in communities and are hubs for communities to explore their history, heritage, and culture.

Since the COVID-19, museums and cultural organizations across BC have created more than 1,000 new online educational programs to respond to community need.

A [recent survey](#) found that 89% of Canadians trust science centres and museums for science-related information. In an era of fake news and online misinformation, museums play an essential role in helping communities understand important issues.

Across Canada school groups visiting heritage institutions reached over 127,280 (approximately 6.4 million visits by students); up 7% over 2015.

Across Canada Heritage institutions responded to over 1.1 million research requests in 2019.

Social and Cultural Impacts:

British Columbians are “avid cultural participants,” engaging in arts and culture activities more than other Canadians.

Canadians volunteered 107 million hours for arts and culture organizations in 2013. This is the equivalent to about 56,000 full-time, full-year jobs.

Cultural spaces create a symbolic sense of place. More than eight in ten Canadians feel that these spaces foster a sense of community pride and contribute to quality of life in their community.

Culture is a spark for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. As a powerful avenue for sharing the truth of our history, it creates a process for fostering understanding, respect and meaningful relationships moving forward.

Arts have been shown to empower youth, especially at-risk youth, to succeed in school, in work and in later life - 85% of Canadians believe that arts education assists in the emotional and intellectual development of children and consider it is a good reason to support the arts.

People who attend arts activities have been shown to be significantly healthier, have lower anxiety and be less subject to depression – this is especially important during COVID-19, as Canadians are reporting higher than normal levels of stress and anxiety.

What Museums Need: Points for BCMA Members & Politicians in their Communities

Increased investment in museums, art galleries and cultural centres will increase the economic and social impact of arts and culture in communities. Here are a few ways politicians and cultural champions can support our sector:

Stable operational funding is essential to the long-term health of the cultural sector. Advocate for more funding for core operations and programming.

Advocate for more funding for capital projects and/or facility improvements. Cultural organizations are at the vanguard of helping to create greener communities, capital/infrastructure funding can help to make organizations more resilient and more sustainable.

Increase public appreciation for, and connection with, museums, art galleries, cultural centres and historic sites in BC.

Provide stronger and stable support and investment to museums, art galleries, cultural centres from all levels of government.

Support the leading role of museums, art galleries, cultural centres and historic sites in strengthening BC's national and international profile.

Adopt a "percent for art" program that increases the presence of art in public spaces for all capital development projects.

Increased funding for artistic research and development in the arts and culture sector.

Provide funding to help museums, galleries, and cultural centres upgrade their facilities to better support public health during COVID-19.

What Can You Do?

Knowing who your candidates are, what they stand for and their intentions for arts and culture is instrumental when deciding who to vote for. As your direct link to government, the winning candidate in your riding can fight for important issues and increase the importance of arts and culture in government decision-making.

Find out who is running for elected office in your community. Contact your local candidates and ask them if they support museums, art galleries and cultural centres. If elected what would they do to support museums, art galleries, cultural centres and historic sites? Attend all-candidates meetings and ask questions that relate directly to our sector and the parties' vision of the arts. Follow candidates in the news and on social media to keep in touch with what they are up to. Connect with candidates and make the case for arts and culture at any opportunity that arises. Let them know why they should care about our sector.

Make sure support for museums, art galleries and cultural centres is an election topic in your community.

Stay connected with your sector and make sure you take part in letter writing campaigns, sharing advocacy information on social media, and sharing news through your personal/organizational networks.

If you have strong connections with local media (newspapers, bloggers/influencers, television, radio), pitch stories about the important of cultural organizations and make sure they understand that cultural funding is an important election issue.

After the Election

Build relationships with local, provincial and federal elected officials and policymakers.

Advocate with your local representatives to increase funding to museums, galleries and heritage institutions.

Work with governments on policy and legislative changes to help strengthen the museums, heritage and cultural sector.

Increase awareness about value and impact of the museums, gallery, heritage and culture sector among decision-makers like elected officials by inviting officials and decision makers to key events (i.e. special anniversary celebrations, Family Day events, exhibit openings, etc.)

Work with governments and stakeholders to increase training and professional development opportunities for the sector.

Build coalitions with other organizations (e.g. BCMA members, arts, culture and heritage stakeholders) to advocate on shared issues.

Advocacy Resources

Visit the [Advocacy portal](#) on the BCMA BRAIN for the latest, up-to-date resources to expand your advocacy toolkit.

BCMA regularly publishes [advocacy news and updates](#) to help our members and stakeholders stay informed about new policies, statistics and opportunities to advocate for museums and culture. We also have regular advocacy updates in Roundup:

- The [Issue 273 of Roundup Magazine \(Fall 2018\)](#) included a [municipal election primer](#) (pages 32 – 35) with statistics and facts about the impact of B.C. museums.
- The [Issue 268 of Roundup Magazine \(Spring 2017\)](#) was devoted to advocacy, including articles on the BC election, how to make the case for culture, and a call to action for BC museums.

Making the case for your museum

First, watch BCMA’s webinar “[Making the case for your museum: Advocacy strategies that work!](#)” This hour-long webinar shares tools, tips and actions for building relationships with elected officials and increasing your organization’s effectiveness in advocacy.

Here are additional resources to assist with advocacy on the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Let us know if there are other resources you would like to share or request: BCMABrain@museumsassn.bc.ca.

- BCMA was pleased to provide a [summary of funding needs and recommendations for BC museums](#) as the Province developed its 2018 budget. Feel free to adapt this letter and continue to help us advocate for these important issues.
- [Quick facts about British Columbia’s museum sector](#) and the benefits of museums in B.C.
- [Why Culture Matters in British Columbia](#): A helpful overview from the BC Alliance for Arts and Culture about the benefits in general of arts, culture and heritage; and specifically on the benefits of increased public funding as related to the provincial government’s promise to double BC Arts Council funding.
- [Why the Arts Matter](#): ArtsVoteBC’s summary of the positive impacts of arts, culture and heritage on our society, education, economy, and health and well-being.

Research, reports and additional resources

- **NEW!** Economic Impact Report and Case Studies, BCMA and Heritage BC 2020
 - [Stories of Economic Impact and Resilience – Summary Report](#)
 - [Template for Organizations](#)
 - [Case Study 1 – Kimberley](#)

- [Case Study 2 – Lytton](#)
- [Case Study 3 – Prince George](#)
- [Case Study 4 – Sidney](#)
- [Case Study 5 – Tumbler Ridge](#)
- The [Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage](#) released a major report on the [State of Canadian Museums](#) (September 2018). The [Government’s response](#) was issued in January 2019.
- Government of Canada [Survey of Heritage Institutions \(2017\)](#): A survey and analysis of financial and operating data from 1,820 heritage institutions and sites (museums, art galleries, historic sites, etc).
- [Hill Strategies](#): Arts and culture research reports on topics like Canadian public participation in arts, culture and heritage
- The American Museum Association Top Ten Rules for Advocacy Engagement can be found [here](#)
- The American Museum Association also has free advocacy webinars:
 - [Your Secret Advocacy Weapon: Your Board](#)
 - [Creating an Advocacy Plan](#)
 - [Social Media as Advocacy Tools](#)
 - [Getting Your Staff and Visitors Involved in Your Museum’s Cause](#)
- ICOM has laid out 6 Advocacy Steps that can be found [here](#)
- ICOM has also created a Culture and Local Development: Maximising the Impact [guide](#)
- The Small Museum Association has put together an Advocacy 101 [document](#) for small museums

Take action!

1. Be a voice for positive change! **Write a letter, make a phone call and invite decision-makers to visit your museum.** Go on! Share the good work that you are doing for your community!
 - **Commit** to email / call / or engage in social media with one representative every month.
 - Use this [sample invitation template](#) to invite a government official to your museum or event (Word template).
 - **Be sure to take a photo and share it** through social media #BCMuseums.
 - For more tips, [check out the joint letter](#) by the [Canadian Museums Association](#) and the BC Museums Association that provides tips and talking points for inviting MPs to visit.
 - Don’t know who to invite? See the **Who’s Who** section below.
2. Educate yourself about the benefits of museums using the resources above; then **share your knowledge** with elected officials to increase their awareness about the social, cultural and economic impacts of our sector.
 - Template: [Create an educational and economic impact statement](#) for your museum.
3. **Build lasting relationships with politicians in your community.** This is one of the most effective ways to take action, both to benefit your own community and organization, and to contribute to wider efforts provincially and nationally to ensure decision-makers understand the many ways museums contribute to communities.
4. [Celebrate BC Museums Week and International Museums Day!](#) These awareness events celebrate the importance of museums, art galleries, historic sites, cultural centres and other memory institutions as keepers of legacy, places of learning, and drivers for the economic and social well-being of our communities. Invite members of the public and elected officials to celebrate with you!
5. **Request a letter of support** from your museum’s community partners and other individuals. Use [this template](#) to encourage your supporters to advocate on your museum’s behalf.

6. Generally, support each other to the benefit of the sector as a whole. Here are [20 simple things you can do](#) (note: although this blog post is geared to general non-profits there are some great ideas that are applicable to our sector as well).
7. **Write your MLA about the importance of arts funding now!** Use this [template letter](#) to advocate for increased BC Arts Council funding in the provincial budget.
8. **Be polite!** If a cheque arrives in the mail, be sure to send a thank-you note.

Who's Who

Wondering who to invite to your next exhibition opening? Who to brief on a new project you're seeking support for? Who to write or call to advocate for increased investment and support for museums, culture and heritage? Here are links to directories of elected officials and staff and key decision-makers.

Municipal government

- Visit [CivicInfoBC](#) for contacts and information on B.C. municipalities and regional districts.

Provincial government

- [Find your MLA](#) (provincial government representatives)
- [BC Government Directory](#) (provincial government departments and contacts)
- Key Contacts:
 - Hon. Lisa Beare, Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture: [Contact the Minister](#), read her bio and mandate letter and learn more about Ministry plans and activities.

Federal government

- [Find your MP](#) (federal government representative)
- [Government of Canada Directory](#) (federal government departments and contacts)
- Key Contacts:
 - Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism: [Contact the Minister](#), read his bio and mandate letter and learn more about Canadian Heritage programs and services

Statistics for this primer were sourced in the following reports:

Susan Brinton, [From the Margins to the Mainstream: Moving BC's Creative Industries Forward](#), 2012.

[Creative City Network of Canada](#), 2005c and f.

[Statistics Canada](#), 2013 and 2015.

[Hill Strategies](#) 2012, 2014, 2016.

Rowland Lorimer, [Dreamcatcher: Towards a Creativity/Innovation Strategic Plan for British Columbia](#), 2013.

[National Aboriginal Tourism Project-Economic Impact of Aboriginal Tourism in Canada](#), 2015.

[EKOS Research Associates](#), 2012.

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#), 2015.

[National Endowment for the Arts](#), 2012.

[Canadian Arts Coalition](#), 2016.