***About this template:*** *The BC Museums Association encourages members to advocate directly to their elected officials and to look for opportunities to share opinion pieces and letters to the editor with local media. We have curated some impactful statistics and talking points into this draft opinion piece below.*

*Please feel free to borrow language from this template or even repurpose it entirely – no need to cite the BCMA. Each time a member advocates on behalf of the sector, we all magnify the transformative power of museums.*

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**Canadians Agree that Museums Matter: Let’s Fund Them Like They Do**

Data shows that Canadians trust museums significantly more than nearly every institution in our society, including the government, media, and universities. If Canadians overwhelmingly believe that museums are important [sources of information and knowledge](https://saskmuseums.org/blog/entry/reconsidering-museums-what-we-heard-with-museums-for-me), then why is funding their work and impact so often treated like an unnecessary luxury?

Museums, galleries, heritage sites, and the keepers of our communities’ culture, art, and history are in a bad place. Until a series of recent cultural investments that began in 2017, the Government of BC spent less per capita on arts, culture, and heritage than any other province in the country for nearly two decades. During that time of neglect, cultural institutions have decayed, collections spaces have filled to the brim, and critical, legally required work for reconciliation has been delayed. And while it’s true that BC is no longer last in cultural spending, recent increases are not even close to making up for twenty years of abandonment.

While many Canadians may still see museums solely as a place to store old things, reminisce about the past, and take students on field trips, museums are transforming in new and exciting ways. Museums are dynamic hubs of [social engagement](https://gwaiitrust.com/ipads-for-elders-closing-the-digital-divide-on-haida-gwaii/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=ipads-for-elders-closing-the-digital-divide-on-haida-gwaii) that respond to the unique and diverse needs of their communities. There are countless examples of how museums, galleries, and heritage sites positively impact communities across the country, so let’s recognize and celebrate this impact and provide museums with the resources they need to thrive.

**Museums Are a Smart Investment**

Investing in museums from a purely economic standpoint just makes sense.

Every dollar invested in the cultural sector earns *four dollars* in return. This creates jobs, builds infrastructure, attracts tourism, and makes our communities rich and more enjoyable places to live.

In 2020, the BCMA and Heritage BC commissioned a study into the [economic impact of museums and heritage sites](https://museum.bc.ca/brain/stories-of-economic-impact-resilience-in-the-cultural-sector/) on small communities and found numerous examples of cultural organizations that are economic engines in their region. The economic impact of BC’s cultural sector is six times larger than that of sports and creates more sector-specific jobs than in any other province. It generates $7.9 billion annually and nearly 70% of all tourists choose to visit a museum, gallery, or cultural organization during their trip.

BC’s cultural sector’s economic impact rivals or exceeds:

* Accommodation and food services ($8.0 billion);
* Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction ($8.2 billion);
* Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting ($5.8 billion) and;
* Utilities ($6.3 billion)

The cultural sector employs around 100,000 British Columbians (with museums alone accounting for nearly half of that employment) and has a proven return on investment. So let’s support cultural professionals with living wages, safe sustainable facilities, and access to emerging technologies to reach new audiences.

**Museums Do More With Less**

Despite recent inflation and stagnant funding, the economic impact of BC’s museums has grown by 27% during nearly two decades of underinvestment. This demonstrates that the cultural sector has and continues to find creative ways to do more with less.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced in-person cultural activities to close, museums, galleries, and cultural organizations across the province found creative digital solutions to engage with their communities. In the first six months of the pandemic, BC’s museums and arts organizations created thousands of hours of new online content and hundreds of digital museum and cultural initiatives. Organizations did this without access to specialized training or new digital funding. Cultural organizations, once again, found creative ways of doing more with less, but this is not sustainable.

Roughly one third of BC’s more than 400 museums, galleries, and cultural institutions receive ongoing funding from the provincial government. Of those, many receive funding similar to that of ten years ago. But without funding that is tied to inflation, many organizations are not able to provide staff a living wage (if they have staff at all since a significant number of museums in BC are entirely volunteer-run).

After nearly two decades of chronic underfunding, and two years of pandemic pivoting, record-breaking inflation in 2022 means that most cultural workers in BC will receive de facto pay cuts this year. Museum workers are just asked to do more with less, they are now being asked to do more while earning less.

**Museum Work is Dangerous**

Museums and cultural institutions recognize they can contribute to just and equitable communities. But programs focused on topics such as the genocide of Indigenous peoples, erasure of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and impacts of white supremacy have [triggered hate](https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/libraries-threats-all-age-drag-1.6501247) from a very loud, often violent, minority. This year there have been numerous examples of museum and cultural workers in BC receiving anonymous and even face-to-fact threats of violence simply for trying to make their communities a better place. Online dialogue especially has become toxic to an extent that cultural workers receive threatening emails and calls to their personal phones and even death threats on social media.

Museums, galleries, and heritage sites around the province are also at risk of failing infrastructure. In 2021, Heritage BC and the Province of BC [jointly offered $15.5 million in infrastructure funding to museums and heritage sites](https://heritagebc.ca/uhi-cerip-funding-announcement-february-22-2021/). Only 21% of the nearly $74 million in requests were ultimately granted. Since then, BC has experienced unprecedented weather events such as the heat dome, atmospheric river, and one of the coldest winters in recorded history. Additional funds will help protect museums and heritage spaces, hundreds of thousands of workers and volunteers, and millions of visitors from infrastructure failures and the impacts of climate change.

If we truly value the work and impact of museums, like so many Canadians say they do, we cannot ask museum workers and volunteers to be subject to threats of violence and forced to work in unsafe spaces. It is critical to recognize and support museums that are dedicated to creating change.

**Museums Make a Difference**

There is a reason that 9 out of 10 Canadians believe that museums matter; strong museums build vibrant communities and have a transformational impact on the lives of countless people across generations.

Museums are educational spaces for life-long learners from all backgrounds. They stimulate the economy and attract tourism. They help us grapple with big, difficult questions. They preserve the past, so we can see ourselves in the present, and work towards building a better future.

Financial support is critical if we are to restore and preserve the health of cultural organizations across BC. If you believe in the transformational power of museums, make your voice heard.

* *Organization Name Here*