



**Independent
Media Arts Alliance**
**Alliance des arts
médiatiques indépendants**

August 30, 2010

The Honourable Kevin Krueger
Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
Room 301
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Independent Media Arts Alliance, a national association of producers, distributors and exhibitors of Canadian media art. We are proud to have 11 member organizations in the Province of British Columbia, who represent over 1,500 independent film, video and digital media artists.

The work of our member organizations and their artists makes a significant impact on the vibrancy and quality of life in their province, from Victoria to Vancouver to Kelowna and Penticton. For decades, they have been working to give their communities access to tools, techniques and skills for creative expression through modern media, and to share the innovative work of British Columbia's dynamic and forward-looking artists with the public. Our member groups responsibly leverage public funding to make an important positive contribution to the cultural, social, and economic development of British Columbia's citizens.

For the past year the national arts community has been deeply concerned by the evolution of your government's policies of cultural funding. On behalf of our 80 member organizations and their 12,000 media artists across the country, we have written to you and to the Honourable Gordon Campbell several times to encourage you to reconsider your cutbacks to the British Columbia Arts Council.

When we received news of the "Spirit Festival" program, we were astonished that \$30 million had been found for vaguely defined arts and cultural events at the very time when long-standing, effective and highly assessed arts organizations have received reductions of as much as 80% in their funding through the British Columbia Arts Council. From the perspective of Canada's professional arts community, the shift in priorities represented by the BCAC cutbacks and the Spirit Festivals is distressing and misguided: it fails to recognize the contributions of British Columbia's citizens who are attempting to dedicate themselves full-time to their artistic work. Without a strong and sustained professional arts milieu, your province will inevitably lose the creative cultural capital it needs to advance.

These policies are doing real damage to British Columbia's reputation across the country, and are pushing away the creative talent that is needed to build your province's cultural and economic future.

In presenting our community's concerns about the Spirit Festival initiative, we would nevertheless like to acknowledge that the recently announced reorganization of its delivery has incorporated some positive features. We would like to, in good faith, commend you and your staff for seeing fit to implement modifications to the Spirit Festival program that will involve the British Columbia Arts Council in facilitating peer juries for the

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allocation of funds through the Association of British Columbia Arts Councils, and for including the \$10 million component of legacy funds for BCAC organizational clients within the Spirit Festival funding envelope.

Your decision to include peer juries is significant. The peer jury assessment process for arts grants has been established for decades in Canada as a fundamental condition for impartiality and accountability in the adjudication of arts funding. Peer juries remove political considerations from the assessment of artistic merit in the disbursement of public funds. The fact that a peer jury process will now be part of Spirit Festival funding disbursements is a good first step.

We'd like to encourage you to take the next step and make the British Columbia Arts Council an arm's length agency with sufficient resources and autonomy to support your province's creative talent effectively.

Sincerely,

Timothy Dallett
Interim National Director

Cc:
The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage