

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

B.C. Festivals and Events Face a Looming Crisis

Open Letter expresses key role for B.C. events as Canadians seek homegrown travel experiences



BRITISH COLUMBIA (February 19, 2025): Arts and culture event organizers in B.C. — led by BC Live Performance Network and 17 Black Entertainment — have signed an open letter to Premier David Eby and Spencer Chandra Herbert, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport, seeking the renewal of the B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund (BCFFE fund) to provide immediate and meaningful support to arts and cultural events throughout the province.

“With an increasing number of Canadians looking for homegrown travel experiences, it’s never been more important to encourage thriving, exciting fairs and festivals,” reads the letter signed by organizers of popular events including the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE), Italian Day on The Drive and Just For Laughs in Vancouver; Rifflandia Festival, Culinaire and the Phillips Backyard Concert Series in Victoria; Sunfest Country Music Festival in Lake Cowichan; and Denim on the Diamond in Kelowna.

Without the fund’s renewal, there are legitimate risks to arts and culture in B.C.: “The clock is ticking on this year’s events and festival season,” says the letter. “B.C. is beginning to lose long-standing and beloved events such as *The Vancouver Mural Festival* and *The Vancouver Island Music Festival*, to name just two.”

The BCFFE program launched in 2021 to provide one-time grants to support the safe return of events earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023 and 2024, the BCFFE again provided funding support for eligible events including sporting events, arts and culture events, community celebrations, agricultural

fairs, and rodeos. And in the Premier's 2025 mandate letter to the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport, he included priorities such as:

- Support communities in delivering community events such as fairs and festivals that bring people together.
- Continue to support tourism as a strong pillar of the BC economy by working with the sector to enhance economic growth and community vibrancy, sustainably promoting BC's unmatched geography and diverse experiences, and continuing to support rural and Indigenous tourism opportunities.

On Jan. 30, 2025, Minister Chandra Herbert met with event industry stakeholders to discuss the future of the BCFE fund, and the urgent need for a clear timeline and sustainable funding; however, there's been no further updates since that meeting. Now, with Canadians coast to coast adjusting their plans and cancelling trips to the U.S. in favour of travel within our own borders, the urgency is growing.

J. Cunningham, the producer of Otherworld — a Vancouver Island regional arts event — points out that investing now in B.C. events doesn't just help the events industry: "It's a winning move for B.C. tourism. A strong domestic events industry will keep Canadian money in Canada and promote B.C. as a replacement destination for a Canadian public ready to cancel their trip into the states. It will also increase revenue from American travellers who do not support the trade dispute and who increasingly view a holiday in B.C. as an attractive alternative," he says.

The open letter asks Premier Eby and Minister Chandra Herbert to take immediate action. "The arts and culture industry is in a fragile and vulnerable state, and its future is in your hands."

Read the Open Letter and list of signatories at bclive.ca/resources/advocacy.

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PHOTOS

High-resolution photos, video, the Open Letter and Fact Sheet may be downloaded by clicking on the images above or via [Google Drive](#).

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