

KEY MESSAGES & FACT SHEET

Appeal for Renewal of the B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund

Background:

Arts and culture organizations and event producers in B.C. 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.

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.

Despite meeting with event industry stakeholders on Jan. 30, 2025, there have been no details about the future of the fund from Minister Chandra Herbert.

Sectoral challenges around ongoing cost increases and dropping revenues continue to plague the industry, and show no signs of improving in the short-term. Cancellations, postponements, and downsized versions of what were once thriving and impactful events in communities all across B.C. will be the result if action is not taken now.

Why We're Asking for Continued Funding Amid Other Government Priorities:

In light of the [Throne speech](#) on Feb. 18, 2025, now is absolutely the right time to preserve our culture and keep funds local. B.C.'s fairs, festivals, and events are vital to sustaining our province's cultural identity and economic well-being. At a time when tariffs and global economic pressures are impacting our economy, investing in local events ensures money stays within our communities—supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and fostering community pride. These events are not just celebrations; they are economic drivers and essential parts of B.C.'s social fabric. Preserving them is an investment in the resilience and vibrancy of our province.

The challenges:

The results of a recent event industry stakeholders survey demonstrate that without renewed government funding:

- 88.9 per cent of respondents said they will very likely downsize their events
- 55.5 per cent of respondents said it's somewhat likely, likely or very likely they will cancel or postpone their events
- 22.2 per cent of respondents said they will likely or very likely permanently cease operation of their event in the next two years

Respondents also said they employed as many as 250 contracted workers for one event, and supported hundreds of Canadian-owned businesses

Facts & Figures:

- British Columbia's arts, culture, and heritage sector adds \$8.6 billion (2021) to B.C.'s annual GDP. The sector is seven times larger than the sports sector (\$1.16 billion annually), and bigger than the forestry industry (\$5.9 billion annually) *Source: Government of B.C.*
- That total GDP was a 12.6 per cent increase from the previous year. *Source: Government of B.C.*
- The largest contributors to the increase were in the audio-visual and interactive media (+16.3 per cent) and visual and applied arts (+14.4 per cent) domains. *Source: Government of B.C.*
- Growth was also strong in culture governance, funding and professional domains, which increased by 11.3 per cent (+\$145.2 million). *Source: Government of B.C.*
- As a proportion of B.C.'s total GDP, culture accounted for 2.6 per cent in 2021. *Source: Government of B.C.*
- 154,800 British Columbians work in arts, culture, and heritage occupations, representing 5.4 per cent of the province's overall labour force, which is the highest proportion in the country (national average: 4.4 per cent). One in every 18 workers in the province has a cultural occupation. *Source: Hill Strategies 2023*
- Arts, culture, and heritage workers are entrepreneurs. While 15 per cent of Canadians are self-employed, 68 per cent of artists are self-employed. 33 per cent of all cultural workers are self-employed. *Source: Hill Strategies 2023*
- B.C.'s cultural economy is a national growth leader. Between 2010 and 2021, as the average province in Canada saw its arts, culture, and heritage GDP shrink by 12 percent, B.C.'s cultural economy bucked the trend and grew by 7 per cent. *Source: Hill Strategies 2023*
- From a recently conducted survey of the membership of the BC Music Festival Collective — representing 115 music festivals in BC— an estimated \$550 million is generated in economic impact to the local economy. This represents only a small slice as there are many more than 115 festivals in the province.
- Since 2019, there has been a 15.5 per cent increase in ticket sales (to 2024-25) and a 6.4 per cent increase in projected audiences from 2019 to 2025.
- Across Canada in 2023, the live music industry generated an astounding \$10.92 billion in GDP which is similar to the GDP of the automotive industry.

The B.C. cultural workforce:

- One in every five Canadian artists (20 per cent) resides in B.C.
- With 39,700 artists or 1.4 per cent of the total provincial labour force, B.C. has the highest proportion of artists in the labour force than any other Canadian jurisdiction.
- With 154,800 culture workers, or 5.4 per cent of the province's overall labour force, B.C. has the highest proportion of culture workers in Canada, well above the national average of 4.4 per cent.

Impact on Local Charities and Non-Profits:

Nearly all public events and festivals in BC support some level of funding for charities and not-for-profit societies, contributing **tens of millions of dollars annually**. Without a thriving events scene, this crucial funding disappears. Even if you don't personally attend or support events, the economic ripple effects from the arts and culture industry touch everyone—whether through community programs, local services, or charitable initiatives that rely on these contributions. Supporting events means supporting the broader community infrastructure that benefits all British Columbians.

Signatories to the open letter:

Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival
Bass Coast Electronic Music and Art Festival
BC Live Performance Network
Brewery & the Beast
Crankworx Whistler
Culinaire Victoria
Denim on the Diamond
FVDED In The Park
Honda Celebration of Light
Hopscotch Festival
Italian Day on The Drive
Just For Laughs Vancouver
Pacific National Exhibition (PNE)
Phillips Backyard Concert Series
PuSh International Performing Arts Festival
Rifflandia Festival
Song & Surf Music Festival
Sunfest Country Music Festival
The Cup
Vancouver Craft Beer & Music Festival
Vancouver International Children's Festival
Vancouver Writers Fest
Victoria International Wine Festival
Whisky Global

. . . and hundreds more in B.C.'s arts and culture community.