

December 17, 2025

File: 0400-20

The Honourable Anne Kang
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Via email: TACS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Kang:

RE: RECONSIDERATION OF BC ARTS COUNCIL'S REGIONAL AREAS POLICY

On behalf of the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, I write to advocate that the provincial government reconsider the BC Arts Council's Regional Areas policy. This policy is creating substantial barriers for the capital region's arts sector. While the name of this policy implies a general goal to treat regions more equally, the policy specifically excludes and deprioritizes applicants from the capital region and greater Vancouver from BC Arts Council funding. The BC Arts Council's website glossary states:

Regional Areas: For the purposes of BC Arts Council grants and funding priorities, regional areas are considered as those outside of the capital region and greater Vancouver.

On July 25, 2024, the CRD wrote to then-Minister Popham to request consideration of a modification to, or repeal of, the BC Arts Council's Regional Areas policy. While we appreciate the subsequent correspondence received from the Assistant Deputy Minister on November 15, 2024, the response did not address the impacts of the policy, nor did it outline potential options for moving forward. As a result, the concerns raised by the CRD remain unresolved.

After the provincial election, the issue was acknowledged and taken up by then-Minister Chandra Herbert and a meeting was arranged with Chair of the CRD Arts Commission, Marianne Alto, on April 1, 2025. This meeting was very constructive, and the minister noted the importance and outsized contribution of the capital region to the impact of arts in BC and he instructed staff to hold follow up meetings.

On June 25, 2025, CRD staff hosted a meeting with members of the BC Arts Council and ministry staff. The CRD presented evidence of much lower funding levels from BC Arts Council in the capital region compared to previous years and cited the sections of the eligibility criteria (in the Accelerate Program) that make applicants from the capital region ineligible, as well as the scoring matrix (in Arts Impact) that penalizes applicants from the capital region by 20 points making them uncompetitive.

The Regional Areas policy is a cross-cutting lens that applies to every BC Arts Council granting program, including grants to organizations and individuals. In every area of support, artists and arts organization from the capital region are being treated differently from those in other areas of BC.

The latest cultural satellite account shows 10,737 people employed in arts and cultural domains in the capital region, with the sector generating \$1.1 billion in regional GDP. Hill Strategies Research likewise confirms the CRD has one of the highest concentrations of artists and cultural workers in Canada, with more than 4,000 professional artists calling our region home. This sector provides a competitive advantage, not only for the capital region, but as a significant economic engine in BC.

The BC Arts Council states that its vision is to "... strive to ensure that artists and cultural organizations in British Columbia are well-supported, thriving and able to reach their full potential under principles of equity, diversity, accessibility, and reconciliation." That goal cannot be achieved by cutting back funding to vibrant clusters of artists and arts organizations, such as those found in the capital region.

Investments by the Province are essential for artists and arts organizations in the capital region to develop as a sector and deliver arts events to the public. At this moment in our history, it is more important than ever to invest in arts and culture, which strengthens our sense of distinct identity, and enhances our pride of place and social purpose.

The CRD Board respectfully requests that you reconsider the Regional Areas policy and place artists and arts organizations from the capital region on a level playing field with artists and art organizations from other regions of BC. so that these investments in arts and culture can be reinstated in an equitable way.

Sincerely,

Cliff McNeil-Smith

Cliff McNeil-Smith
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

cc: The Honourable David Eby, Premier and MLA Vancouver - Point Grey
The Honourable Diana Gibson, MLA Oak Bay - Gordon Head
The Honourable Nina Krieger, MLA Victoria - Swan Lake
The Honourable Grace Lore, MLA Victoria - Beacon Hill
The Honourable Ravi Parmar, MLA Langford - Highlands
The Honourable Lana Popham, MLA Saanich South
Darlene Rotchford, MLA Esquimalt – Colwood
Rob Botterell, MLA Saanich North and the Islands
Dana Lajeunesse, MLA Juan de Fuca - Malahat
CRD Board
British Columbia Arts Council
Ted Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD