



Ref: 90091

Cliff McNeil-Smith
Board Chair
Capital Regional District
Email: crdchair@crd.bc.ca

Dear Cliff McNeil-Smith:

Thank you for your letter of December 17, 2025, to the Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, regarding the Capital Regional District's request for reconsideration of the BC Arts Council's Regional Areas policy. As the Executive Director of the BC Arts Council Secretariat within the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport (Ministry) I am pleased to respond on behalf of Minister Kang.

The Ministry and the BC Arts Council recognize the significant contributions that the capital region artists, cultural workers, and organizations make to the British Columbia arts and culture ecology. We appreciate the detailed information your letter provided regarding the size, vitality, and economic impact of the arts and culture sector in the CRD, and we recognize the concerns you have raised about how BC Arts Council policies are experienced by applicants in your region.

As noted in earlier correspondence, including the November 15, 2024, response to the CRD Arts Commission, the BC Arts Council Designated Priority Groups policy and the associated definition of "regional areas" were developed to advance the priorities set out in *Extending Foundations: Action Plan 2022–2024*. These priorities responded to longstanding evidence of systemic barriers and historic funding imbalances, with the goal of broadening impact and increasing accessibility and equity across the province. Under this framework, "regional areas" are defined specifically for use in BC Arts Council grant programs and are intended to guide targeted supports—not to diminish the importance of major urban arts ecosystems such as the capital region.

Smaller and more rural communities within the capital region—such as Sooke, Metchosin, the Gulf Islands, and the Juan de Fuca electoral area—are included within the Regional Areas designation and receive prioritized support under the policy.

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Your letter highlights specific concerns related to the Accelerate Program and assessment criteria in other funding streams. The Accelerate Program is designed to reduce barriers to funding and support capacity for both equity-deserving and regional applicants through flexible, multi-year support. Applicants from the capital region meeting the required criteria are eligible to apply and, since it was launched, 15 organizations in the capital region have received funding through the program, with grants exceeding a total of \$800,000 by the end of this year.

Within the Designated Priority Groups policy, regional criteria are applied alongside other factors. The policy does not comprehensively or categorically deny eligibility or instruct assessors to reduce scores for applicants in the capital region or larger urban areas, nor does it guarantee funding for any group. Instead, it provides strategic considerations that complement the existing review process applied across all applications.

We also appreciate the concerns expressed about overall funding trends. While the BC Arts Council does not use per capita allocations in decision making, it is worth noting as a point of reference that the capital region continues to receive a proportion of BC Arts Council funding that exceeds its relative population. Based on 2024 provincial population estimates, the capital region represents approximately 8 percent of British Columbia's population; over the past five years the region has consistently received between 10 to 12 percent of BC Arts Council funding delivered annually (excluding temporary resilience supplements).

We acknowledge your request for reconsideration of the regional categories within the policy and your call for a level playing field for applicants in the capital region; I can assure you we have a shared goal in ensuring that investments in arts and culture are made in an equitable way. The Ministry and the BC Arts Council appreciate the thoughtful advocacy from the CRD Board and Arts Commission, as well as the collaborative approach undertaken in meetings throughout 2024 and 2025. As you may be aware, the Province is currently undertaking expenditure management and program review processes. Any modifications to BC Arts Council programs or policies—including regional category definitions within the policy—will be considered carefully within this broader context.

On behalf of the BC Arts Council, I want to thank you for bringing forward the perspectives of the capital region and for your ongoing leadership in supporting arts and culture in British Columbia. We remain committed to meaningful dialogue and to ensuring that arts and culture organizations across the province are well-supported and able to thrive. Please feel free to reach out should you have further questions or wish to continue these discussions. I am happy to meet with yourself or CRD Arts Commission staff to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Allison Bottomley
Executive Director
BC Arts Council Secretariat

Cliff McNeil-Smith

Page 3

pc: Honourable David Eby, KC
Premier

Honourable Anne Kang
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

Honourable Diana Gibson, MLA
Oak Bay–Gordon Head

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