



Ref: 51845

November 15, 2024

Marianne Alto
Chair, CRD Arts Commission
Capital Regional District
Email: artsdevelopment@crd.bc.ca

Dear Marianne Alto:

Thank you for your letter of July 25, 2024, sent to the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, and Sport, referring to the BC Arts Council's regional areas policy. As the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Arts and Culture, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Minister and apologize for the delay.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport (Ministry) understands the importance of public sector funding for the sustainability and growth of arts organizations. We recognize that arts and culture are critical to the health and well-being of communities and the Ministry supports significant investments in arts and culture, including through the BC Arts Council. Policy and strategic direction for the BC Arts Council are set by the 15 appointed Council members in alignment with government priorities and mandate commitments.

In 2018, the BC Arts Council committed to a set of objectives in its strategic plan New Foundations: 2018-2022. New Foundations prioritized regional arts and community arts, with a commitment to focus on the diversity of both professional and community arts practices throughout the province and improve the accessibility and relevance of programs. It is available online at: https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/app/uploads/sites/508/2019/06/2018_22_StratPlan.pdf.

In April 2022, Council extended the timeframe of New Foundations and launched Extending Foundations: Action Plan 2022-2024 to further its implementation, with Regional Arts continuing as a priority and resulting in the inclusion of regional areas within Council's new Designated Priority Groups policy. The Designated Priority Groups policy is intended to address gaps in support and rebalance historic granting patterns to broaden impact and increase accessibility and equity. Extending Foundations is available online at: <http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/app/uploads/sites/508/2022/04/Extending-Foundations-Action-Plan-Final.pdf>.

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The term “regional areas” is defined in the BC Arts Council’s online glossary, for the purposes of BC Arts Council grants and funding priorities, as those outside of the capital region and Greater Vancouver. However, there are exceptions for smaller, more rural communities including Sooke, Metchosin, the Gulf Islands, and the Juan de Fuca electoral area, which are prioritized for funding under the policy.

The rationale for the inclusion of regional areas in the Designated Priority Groups, and the accompanying definitions, is a recognition that, across the province, a significant amount of available funding and programming goes to artists and cultural organizations in urban centres, with limited access to arts and culture funding for those outside those centres. Many communities do not have arts and culture funding opportunities offered through local government sources, or support through foundations, sponsorships, and other philanthropic resources. Due to comparatively limited funding options and lack of proximity to larger urban centres, regional areas are prioritized in BC Arts Council programs.

In keeping with the requirements of the *Arts Council Act* (https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96019_01), the BC Arts Council provides an open, accountable and neutrally administered process for managing funds for arts and culture. All grant applicants are assessed using criteria within publicly posted program guidelines. The Designated Priority Groups policy does not instruct assessors to score applications lower against the program criteria nor does it provide guaranteed funding to specific groups. Rather, the policy provides strategic measures in addition to the robust grant assessment process applied equally to all applicants.

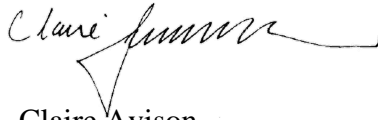
I am pleased to report that the BC Arts Council continues to invest in the capital region. For example, the Accelerate Pilot Program funded nine organizations in the capital region in its inaugural intake, supporting capacity building and operations over a two-year funding period. These organizations received a total of \$201,450 in each of the two fiscal years, equal to 8.1 percent of the \$2.5 M provided each year in the program.

The Ministry has received your suggestions and proposals regarding the BC Arts Council policies, and the Ministry staff supporting the BC Arts Council have taken them forward for review. The BC Arts Council will, however, not be undertaking any significant policy review until after it receives new mandate direction from the incoming government. At that time, staff and Council will then recommence the ongoing work of reviewing policies, incorporating the valuable feedback we receive from communities across the province.

Marianne Alto
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Thank you for your ongoing support and advocacy for a more vibrant and equitable arts sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Avison', with a stylized, flowing script.

Claire Avison
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Office of the Premier