

3006-13

From: ()
 Sent: September 30, 2009 12:05 AM
 To: Pam Goldsmith-Jones
 Cc: MayorandCouncil
 Subject: Arts Funding

(5)

Dear Madame Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing to you as an independent filmmaker, professional actor, writer and resident of West Vancouver for over twenty years. I am writing to protest most strongly the proposal by the Provincial Government to slash funding for Arts and Culture. Even the Dalai Lama stressed several times during the recent Peace Summit the importance of the Arts to attaining peace!

The following was written by Vancouver writer Kate Armstrong. Please read it and do all you can to help restore ALL funding.

"There are several reasons why it makes no economic sense to cut the budget for arts and culture. Primary among them is that BC's arts and culture sector employs more than 78,000 people and contributes more than \$5 billion each year to the provincial economy.

Sometimes people say to me, "if an artist is good, people will buy their paintings and they won't need government handouts." But it's not about individual artists and their paintings. We can learn from the numbers: In 2008, the provincial government spent \$47.8 million and gained \$5 billion. That's not a handout; it's a gift. A gift from art to our shared economy. And you're part of it even if you "don't go to these things."

Art and culture are public amenities and need public investment. We aren't talking about a painting that you might or might not like, and if you like it you buy it. We are talking about an investment in our shared culture, in public spaces, in cultural production of all kinds—some of it immaterial, all of it supporting larger ecosystems that create and inform things like our shared identity, the nature of our dialogues, our approaches to life and experience.

These are larger and more complex fields of activity than a one-to-one relationship between an object and a purchaser.

10 points to address common misconceptions about the cultural industries:

- 1. Artists are not spending their time at champagne soirées** at the taxpayer's expense. Artists are among the most underpaid professions in our society.
- 2. Culture is an industry**, not something that just "happens." You're thinking of people who make pictures of owls using bottle caps.
- 3. Art is not about artists—it is about communities and culture.** This discussion is not only art, it is

music, dance, film, heritage, publishing, video, media, sound, design, theatre, creative youth programs, social outreach, community festivals, animation, fashion.

4. Culture is not a hobby. Running the Children's Festival or arranging an international visual art exhibition is not something we can do in our spare time.

5. Just because you usually experience the effects of our work in your spare time **doesn't mean we produce it in our spare time.**

6. Artists are not "fancy." Art is a hugely important part of our shared culture. Were the cave paintings fancy? Do you like written language? Have you ever seen a movie or worn a nice shirt or walked through a public space?

7. Even if you don't like the art, understand what the art is, or know what is involved in making it, that **doesn't mean it has no value, or that it isn't part of an economy, or that the person who produces the art should do it for free.** Most people's jobs are a mystery to people outside their industry, and no one questions the validity of those jobs or suggests that their children could do them better. Do we raise those questions about people who work in helium detection, vine training, or indoor advertising management?

8. The provincial grants we're discussing do not entirely pay for the operations of these cultural associations, so extract the word "parasite" from your economic counter-argument. These grants represent a small but crucially important portion of total support and income for a range of organizations. The amount of money being cut from the provincial budget that will be so crippling to the arts community represents only 1/20th of 1 percent of the total provincial budget. To put it in perspective, the contingency fund for the 2010 Olympics is more than twice this amount.

9. People in these industries work hard, hold jobs and have families. Artists support themselves through their art and their work.

10. Was there a reason you chose to live in a city and not in a closet? Do you want to be from somewhere?"

Sincerely,

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