

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on July 23, 2025

2. Urgent Investment in Vancouver's Arts and Culture Infrastructure: Strengthening Vancouver's Cultural Sustainability and Economic Impact

Submitted by: Councillor Fry (on behalf of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee)

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver boasts a vibrant and diverse arts scene, encompassing a wide range of disciplines and cultural expressions, characterized by a strong connection to its natural surroundings, a thriving independent art scene, and a commitment to fostering creativity across various platforms;
2. Of all major Canadian cities, Vancouver has the highest population of artists and cultural workers¹;
3. The B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund (the BCFFE Fund) created to help community event organizations recover from ongoing challenges related to cost increases, reduced revenue and sponsorships, rising costs of equipment and services, and severe weather events² has been currently and indefinitely suspended – thus jeopardizing the existence of Vancouver's renowned and unique arts and culture scene;
4. Anticipated contributions to the arts and culture sector from FIFA, in consideration of their World Cup 2026 presence in Vancouver, have not been forthcoming; further, FIFA has upended anticipated attendance and participation in key arts and culture events in the city during that time, posing a further threat to arts and culture sustainability;
5. The City's Culture|Shift (2020–2029) strategy outlines five strategic directions — including increased investment, cultural equity, and creating new models for securing space — and explicitly calls for the creation of an Arts, Culture & Creative City Navigator and a cultural-space acquisition fund;
6. Vibrant Vancouver: Council's Strategic Priorities 2023–2026³ position culture as essential to building a "Vibrant and Diverse City", pledging to *ensure Vancouver is a dynamic and vibrant city, with a great range of exciting and engaging amenities*

¹ Hill Strategies: "Artist and Cultural Workers in Canadian Municipalities", 2014
<https://hillstrategies.com/resource/artists-and-cultural-workers-in-canadian-municipalities/>

² Government of British Columbia | B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/tourism-immigration/tourism-resources/tourism-funding-programs/fairs-festivals-events-fund>

³ City of Vancouver | Vibrant Vancouver
<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/strategic-priorities-2023-2026.pdf>

and events throughout the city, calling for the support of diverse communities, large-scale events, and neighbourhood revitalization, including in cultural districts such as Chinatown;

7. Vancouver's cultural sector generates over \$6 billion in GDP and 24,000+ jobs across Metro Vancouver (StatsCan Culture Satellite Account, 2022⁴), yet receives just 4% of the City's operating budget and has seen only modest grant increases below inflation;
8. The estimated replacement cost of the City's aging and disappearing cultural infrastructure exceeds \$900 million (City of Vancouver Cultural Spaces Inventory, 2023), yet current capital investments remain inadequate to meet the scale of loss and need.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT at the urgent recommendation of the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee, Vancouver City Council direct staff to consider and report back prior to 2026 budget considerations with means and methods to substantially and sustainably increase support for the arts and culture sector by exploring strategies including but not limited to:

- i. Increased Funding strategies, such as:
 - Increasing cultural operating grants — beginning with a suggested 10% uplift in 2026 — and working towards establishing a \$40,000 minimum for operating grants to stabilize small, equity-seeking organizations, aligning with Culture|Shift D1 G1 & D3 G1;
 - Exploring minimal taxes or surcharges (0.05%) on hotels, liquor, sales, empty buildings, etc. that could be dedicated to arts and culture funding;
 - Reviewing other municipal funding strategies for sustained investment, such as Los Angeles County's 1% for the Arts on public construction projects.
- ii. Infrastructure and Cultural Spaces supports, such as:
 - Exploring incentives to let empty spaces be turned into temporary arts and culture spaces, rather than sitting vacant. This could include revising temporary use permit processing, and other strategies working in tandem with other committees focused on similar permit streamlining;
 - Recommending the Province revise the Assessment Act to create a new classification for arts and culture spaces;

⁴ Government of Canada | Culture Satellite Account
<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/general-publications/culture-satellite-account.html>

- Piloting an Arts, Culture & Creative City Navigator desk within Development, Buildings & Licensing to streamline permitting, liquor, and special-event approvals for artists and cultural non-profits, and promote collective marketing to boost tourism and public awareness (Culture|Shift action A3);
- Exploring the creation of a Festivals Vancouver Fund, in collaboration with the existing/emerging Festivals Committee, and based on Ottawa Festival Network: an ongoing, self-sustaining fund to support Vancouver's myriad and vibrant grassroots arts and culture festivals, to provide increased visibility and sustainability and foster jobs and tourism. The fund could serve as a single, long-term support strategy, rather than constant emergency-response requests from multiple organizations from public funds.

iii. Data gathering to drive investment, such as:

- Commissioning an annual Cultural Infrastructure & Economic Impact Report — integrating GIS mapping of cultural spaces, replacement-cost modelling, tourism metrics, and GDP/job data — to inform budget deliberations and align with Council's "Good Government" priority. This could include compiling information and data from previously commissioned reports;
- Creating a Community-Led Cultural Land Trust seeded with \$20 million in the 2026 Capital Budget and matching City land, to secure at-risk spaces and leverage federal/provincial funds (aligns with Culture|Shift D4 G3);
- Introducing a 1% Cultural Space Contribution on new commercial and mixed-use floor area city-wide (mirrors CAC/DCL framework) with revenues dedicated to implementing the Making Space cultural-space targets;
- Adopting a ticket surcharge on events at large venues to feed a Grassroots Venue Resilience Fund for repairs, acoustics, and accessibility upgrades in spaces under 500 seats;
- Piloting an Arts, Culture & Creative City Navigator desk within Development, Buildings & Licensing by Q4 2025 to streamline permitting, liquor, and special-event approvals for artists and cultural non-profits, and promote collective marketing to boost tourism and public awareness (Culture|Shift action A3);
- Facilitating annual diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and accessibility self-audits from all City-funded cultural organizations and tie future grant increases to demonstrable progress (Culture|Shift D3 G1).

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