



## ENJOYING LIFE FOR EVERYONE

A big part of what makes our community culturally and economically vibrant is the diversity of the people who call BC home and the access to art that people have here. Supporting inclusion and accessibility is key for the safety and health of our province. We are proud of the work we do day-in-and-day out to bring awareness, propel great initiatives forward, and provide funding that makes sure that BC is a place for everyone to enjoy.

Whether through arts funding, tourism support, or celebrating diversity, there are several initiatives that our government has been working on through these last weeks that increase the quality of life for everyone in BC. It's a long list, but I hope that you will join us in celebrating and supporting inclusion and supporting those events and programs that add so much to our lives.

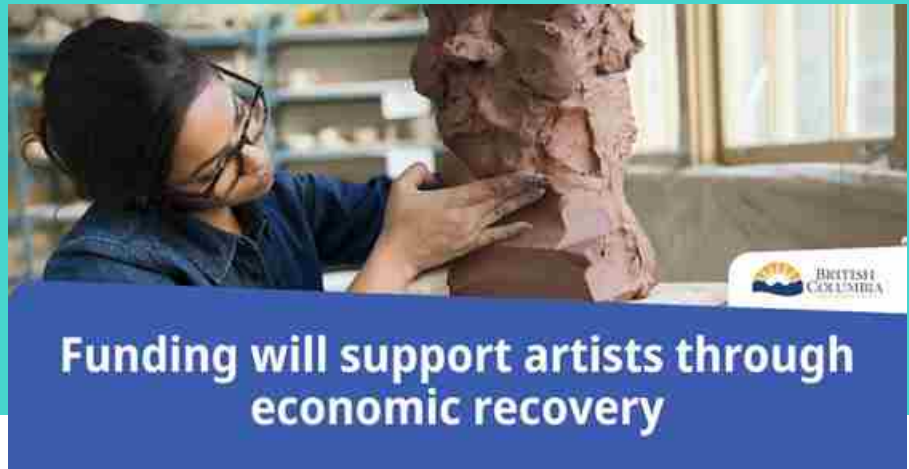


### Historic investment promotes stability, jobs for B.C.'s creative sector

The Province is providing a historic contribution of \$42 million to support people and businesses working in motion picture, music, publishing and interactive digital media industries in British Columbia. The creative arts produce jobs, culture, joy and entertainment to our communities and the world. The government of BC is proud to support these industries get back on their feet after the instability of the pandemic.

## The new funding includes:

- \$22.5 million over three years for Amplify BC to build the province's music talent and help launch careers;
- \$15.9 million over three years to support B.C.'s domestic motion picture productions, workforce and creators, which includes \$900,000 for programs that focus on developing workers' skills, recruiting more workers from under-represented groups, and supporting practices that are environmentally friendly;
- \$3 million over three years for a new program to support innovation and growth for independent B.C.-owned interactive digital media companies; and
- \$600,000 over three years for the publishing industry, as announced on April 17, 2023, to address immediate supply-chain challenges and provide additional support for a sustainable future.



## To our festivals and fairs!

Congratulations to everyone who works hard to put on the amazing festivals and events in Courtenay-Comox. It takes both a lot of human power and funds bring these dynamic events to our community.

This year a number of local organizations received support from the Fairs, Festivals and Event Fund including: the Comox Valley International Film Festival; Comox Nautical Days Festival; Filberg Festival 2023; Comox Dragon Boat Festival; Downtown Comox Summer Fest; Comox Valley Snow to Surf Relay Event; 2023 Courtenay Canada Day Celebrations; Shoreline Orthodontics Tri-K Triathlo; Vancouver Island MusicFest; and Courtenay BCCF Chorifest 2023. We are so happy for your commitment to culture, arts, and recreation in our community.



## In celebration of the resilience of our tourism sector

As we celebrated Tourism Week in British Columbia, we recognize this industry, and the people who work in it. Throughout the last three year of interrupted travel, our government has been working closely with people in the tourism industry to understand the challenges, hear their suggestions on recovery and provide support. It was my pleasure to speak in the Legislature to wrap up tourism week, acknowledging the amazing volunteers in the Comox Valley that contribute to the vibrancy of our community. [To watch it, click here.](#)

This year we are excited, especially here on Vancouver Island, to see a full return of tourist activities. The cruise ship season is underway, and B.C. is poised to welcome a record number of ships and passengers, with approximately 700 cruises and 2.23 million estimated visitors. Air travel is also increasing, with more than 19 million domestic and international passengers passing through Vancouver International Airport in 2022 – two million more people than expected.

Our government has committed more than half a billion dollars in support to the tourism sector through a wide variety of programs:

- More than \$250 million to support tourism business recovery
- \$53 million in community-based tourism infrastructure for recovery, to create jobs and spur economic development.
- More than \$11 million for Indigenous Tourism BC, one of the fastest growing sectors of the industry.
- \$36.8 million to over 80 major anchor attractions and tour bus operators.
- Nearly \$60 million to support fairs, festivals, and events
- Up to \$15 million for fixed costs to help large accommodation providers, and tenure and park permit holders.
- \$20 million to Science World for priority infrastructure repairs and improvements.
- An additional \$30 million for that will provide one-time grants to support development and rejuvenation of tourism infrastructure, assets and experiences and support the sector's sustained recovery post-pandemic.

## Libraries keep people connected/learning

As a former chair of VIRL, I was excited to join Minister Kang in Cumberland, as she announced our government's historical investment in our libraries.

Last month in Cumberland, Minister Kang was in the Comox Valley to announce this government's historic investment in our libraries. \$45 million will enhance internet service, help deliver newcomer programs and services for seniors. Libraries help people stay connected and pursue lifelong learning.



All 71 B.C. public libraries and organizations that help libraries deliver their services will receive one-time grants totalling \$45 million in addition to their annual operating funding. This will give libraries flexibility to address local priorities, including longer hours, bigger digital collections and better access to literacy and lifelong learning opportunities.



## Accessible parks

The beauty of British Columbia is for everyone. That is why in Budget 2023 we have provided \$3.6 million over the next three years to continue upgrading facilities, such as washrooms, parking lots and trails, to an accessible standard in parks near urban centres.

This budget will:

- ensure front-country campgrounds and day-use areas have accessible, inclusive features;
- where practical, build new front-country campgrounds to a universal design standard, and make the maximum possible number of campsites accessible

- shift to gender-neutral, universal facilities wherever feasible;
- share diverse cultural connections through increased storytelling and interpretation;
- support partnerships and programs for adaptive recreation equipment;
- foster a culture of inclusion among BC Parks staff, park operators and volunteers

Locally we saw a new universally accessible playground with a recycled rubber surface and wheelchair accessible ramp built at Miracle Beach Provincial Park. For information about accessible features in parks, visit: <https://bcparks.ca/accessibility/>



**A more equitable, inclusive BC for everyone**

## International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

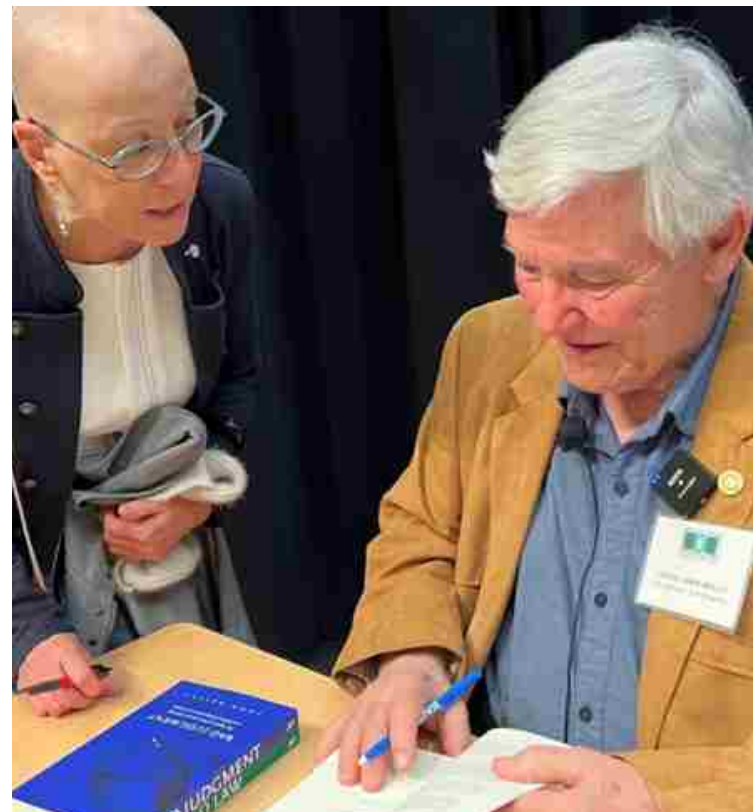
March 21st was International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed here in BC, throughout Canada, by the UN and throughout the world! With the Anti-Racism Data Act, the K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan, and funding for community-led efforts, our government is committed to addressing and preventing racism.

These funds and initiatives are evident here in Courtenay-Comox. Read further to learn more.

## Community Justice Centre in the Comox Valley, and anti-racism work in our province

The CV Community Justice Centre was provided funding and used it to host the annual Campagnolo Lecture Series in Restorative Justice. This year's series was Conversations with a Renegade Judge: A Recipe for Reconciliation—A public presentation by John Reilly, the author of a trilogy of books about Indigenous experience with the Canadian justice system.

This funding was a part of a larger initiative in BC to support organizations who are making a difference in combating racism and celebrating multiculturalism. 60 organizations throughout the province received the BC Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grant totalling almost \$300,000. These grants are one important way to support grassroots organizations that know best on how to address systemic racism for their communities.



And more than 100 people and organizations were nominated for the 2023 B.C. Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Awards for efforts to address racism and build a more equitable B.C. for everyone. At the first in-person award ceremony since 2019, a number of organizations were honoured for their work on March 21st.

This month we celebrate Asian Heritage Month, honouring people of Asian heritage who, throughout our history, have done so much for our province. Did you know that the very first Chinese workers arrived to work on Nuuchahnulth territory alongside British settlers in 1788?

Recently, Mable Elmore announced \$250,000 for the planning and public engagement for a provincial cultural centre celebrating the Filipino community and in a few months the Chinese Canadian Museum in Vancouver's historic Chinatown will open its doors.

May is Jewish Heritage month and we celebrate the Jewish Community's significant contributions to British Columbia's collective success, social welfare, cultural achievements, politics, growth and prosperity. Early on, Jewish leaders took on key roles like David Oppenheimer, who was elected the second mayor of Vancouver in 1888. establishing the first fire department, a ferry across Burrard Inlet, the streetcar system and Stanley Park.

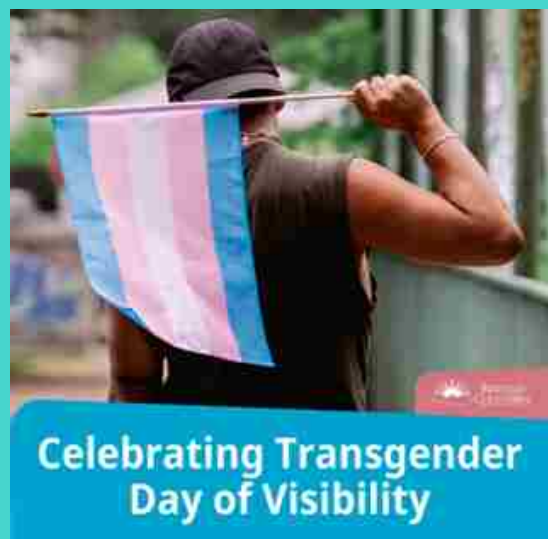
Today, these contributions continue. For example the Jewish Community Centre in Vancouver, is being redeveloped and expanded to include recreation facilities, a theatre, art gallery, a performing arts school, a youth and senior day centre, and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. It will also provide up to 200 new child care spaces and 500 units of mixed-use housing. The government has provided \$25 million for this community-changing project, and we applaud the vision and ambition that is bringing this dream to life.

### **New enterprise co-ops will open doors to income and protections for racialized communities**

Racialized people, especially new Canadians, can often be employed in working-class industries and on a contractual, casual or "under-the-table" basis, which can result in precarious employment and a lack of protection from unsafe work environments. With this new three-year grant, Solid State will help racialized migrant people build and launch 15 co-operative enterprises in non-traditional areas, focused on working-class and in-demand services, such as cleaning, delivery and laundry services.

### **Transgender Day of Visibility**

March 31st was Transgender Day of Visibility and at the BC Legislature we celebrated the transgender, non-binary and Two Spirit people in our families, communities and workplaces by raising the pink and blue flag. To all the trans people who are our friends, family and community members: we see you, honour you and stand with you.



### **Condemning hate**

We also stand with drag performers and condemn hate-fuelled violence against them. Last month, in response to the intimidation, violence and hate that drag performers experience here and around the world, MLA Spencer Chandra-Herbert, brought forward a motion to support the performers and condemn violence against them.



## B.C. Ferries removing booking fee if you're traveling for medical reasons

People living in rural and remote island communities sometimes need to travel to the mainland to receive medical care. BC Ferries will now be waiving the \$18 booking fee for British Columbians who must travel for medical reasons by ferry.

## 6 new Electoral districts to ensure every vote counts

In response to recommendations from the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, the Province is introducing amendments to the Electoral Districts Act to make sure votes are weighted evenly across 93 electoral districts in BC.

## Universal contraception coverage started April 1

We celebrate a momentous occasion this month. British Columbians are the first in Canada to benefit from universal coverage of prescription contraceptives. This will make it easier for people to access prescription contraceptives and is a milestone for gender equity in B.C. as costs will no longer be a barrier for people to make choices about their reproductive and sexual health. The Province is funding more than \$119 million over the next three years to provide coverage for eligible prescription contraceptives.

## Funding helps women get free family law services

To help more low-income women and gender-diverse people access the free legal services they need to keep their families safe and healthy, the Province is providing \$1 million in funding to Rise Women's Legal Centre.

## BC wants pet to be treated more like humans and less like property in divorce

Pets are beloved members of our families. We're changing the Family Law Act to provide more guidance for the pet, the pet's relationship with the kids, and any risk of harm to the animal.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Would you like to lend your voice on important topics in BC? There are many topics on which the government of BC would like to hear from you. Take some time to lend your voice - with EngageBC.

### CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

Is someone in your life, your workplace, or your church celebrating a Milestone birthday or anniversary? Make sure to put in a request for a letter from your MLA.

### Get in touch

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about any provincial issue, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help you. My office can be reached at 250.703.2410 or [Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca) Our office hours are Monday to Thursday 10am-4pm. If the door is locked, simply knock or call 250.703.2410 to get our attention. Fridays are by appointment only.

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