



February 19, 2010

Spencer Herbert, MLA
Room 201, Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Herbert:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the 800 members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association living in the Province of British Columbia. Canadian Actors' Equity Association is the professional association representing 5500 performers, directors, choreographers, fight directors and stage managers in English Canada engaged in live performance in theatre, opera and dance.

We have been following the story of the British Columbia Ministry of Culture's arts funding cuts with increasing dismay. These decisions seem to have come right out of the blue and with no rationale attached.

The B.C. Gaming Commission arts and culture funding cuts in September of 2009 were estimated to be between 11% and 26%. We understand that projections are for an additional 85% cut to arts funding in next year's provincial budget.

Currently, B.C. arts funding represents only 1/20th of 1% of the province's total \$40 billion budget, so any potential savings will barely put a dent in the existing deficit. The planned cuts even come in the face of a report issued in November 2009 by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services that included a recommendation to "Make funding of the arts a high priority in the 2010/2011 budget by returning to overall funding levels of 2008/2009."

In response to these cutbacks Equity launched an outreach campaign for our B.C. members, calling on the provincial government to restore arts and culture funding.

The article entitled "Cancelled due to lack of funding" on page 6 of the enclosed Canadian Actors' Equity Association magazine, *Equity Quarterly*, recounts the struggle of our membership to understand and cope with such drastic cutbacks.

On behalf of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association membership, our arts colleagues across B.C., and the citizens of the province who value the quality of life in the province, I strongly urge you to take a stand against these onerous and debilitating cuts. The very culture of the province we are all so proud to showcase at the Olympics in 2010 may well be irreversibly damaged if these cuts stand.

Yours truly,

(Ms.) Arden R. Ryshpan
Executive Director

CANADIAN ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION