**Hon. Josie Osbourne**

Minister of Municipal Affairs

Room 310 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

DATE

**Re: Support for a New Commercial Assessment Sub-class for Arts and Culture**

Dear Minister,

Across British Columbia, arts and culture groups are proud of the role we play in creating jobs, building communities, enriching tourism, and supporting local business. However, many in our sector are struggling with the burden of high property taxes due to triple-net leases. Recently, our colleagues at C-Space wrote to your office with recommendations that would prevent these practices from continuing. We are writing to express our support for their efforts.

**For more than six years, our sector has been asking government to consider measures that would prevent triple-net leases.** The ideal solution – supported by numerous municipalities and non-profits – would be a new arts and culture commercial sub-class within BC Assessment, one that is applied evenly and consistently province-wide. A comparable approach was adopted in the City of Toronto in 2018, providing an important demonstration of its viability and support.

We appreciate your government’s efforts to help with the 2020 *Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act*, but this did not create a subclass and instead requires municipalities to make assessment decisions in a piecemeal fashion across thousands of businesses.

We know the Province of B.C. understands the importance of a thriving arts and culture sector. Under your leadership, we urge the Province to immediately consider the following recommendations:

* Legislate a new province-wide commercial property subclass within BC Assessment for arts and culture organizations. By providing consistent assessment and taxation regulations, B.C. municipalities will have the tools and clarity they need to provide meaningful and long-term financial support to our sector;
* Formally include arts and culture representatives in any future policy development and implementation;
* Explore other tax-relief opportunities or grants to immediately reduce the pressure on our sector.

Time is short. Without a quick solution, many arts and culture organizations could be forced to close forever – some in the next six months or less.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and compassion.

Sincerely,

INSERT SIGNATURE BLOCK HERE, INCLUDING EMAIL ADDRESS AND PHONE.

CC:

John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia
Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance
Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
David Eby, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing.