

June 12, 1999

Honorable Ian Waddell
Minister of Small Business, Tourism and Culture
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4

Dear Honorable Ian Waddell,

Heritage Vancouver is a non-profit advocacy society dedicated towards the conservation of historic resources within Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver region. It is with alarm that the Board of Directors recently learned that another round of cuts within your Ministry has imperiled the viability of heritage conservation in this province.

The Heritage Branch in Victoria, already encumbered by insufficient funding to support community heritage initiatives, has been further decimated by more staffing cuts. This leaves only skeletal personnel to administer the flagship heritage properties operated by the Province. Also disturbing is the obvious escalating erosion of the Province's once strong leadership role in the protection of our collective British Columbia heritage. In 1994, heritage advocates shared the government's pride in launching progressive heritage legislation. This legislation showcased a toolkit of strategies to assist communities seeking effective ways to champion and prevent the loss of their built heritage. Today, we see that victory as increasingly hollow.

All municipalities are faced with dwindling resources – many as a result of cuts to other provincial programs. Most small communities rely solely on government funding to lever grass-roots fund-raising efforts. And yet, funding for the Heritage Society of B.C., the Heritage Trust and Heritage Properties remain dangerously low. The Ministry's web page proudly proclaims that “The Ministry's Government Agents provide streamlined access to government services in communities around the province”. It is becoming increasingly evident that ‘streamlined access’ in fact means ‘limited access’.

These, and previous cuts, are foolhardy - given the well-documented revenue-generating capability of cultural tourism. It is our hope that the government will reconsider its ill-conceived decision to reduce staffing at the Heritage Branch and will work to reinstate budget allocations to levels that will once again spark community resourcefulness and encourage local heritage conservation efforts.

Yours truly,

Susanna Houwen, President
Heritage Vancouver