

BCACG Symposium – September 30 – October 1, 2009

Day 1/Keynote and Panelists

CONFERENCE WELCOME - BCACG President, Susan Marsden

- (a) Overview
 - Update on the Direct Access Grant freeze
- (b) Purpose
 - How have the different charity/non-profit sectors been affected
 - Reverse the gaming cuts
 - Stabilize funding
- (c) Two key points
 - Keep our Bingo affiliations
 - Need for more funding to Direct Access
- (d) Legal position
 - Currently exploring our legal position
 - Open to meaningful discussion with the Minister

AGENDA REVIEW

- (a) Executive Director, Cheryl Ziola, provided agenda overview for day one and two, starting with panel discussions and concluding with action plans/next steps.
- (b) Major media, such as CBC attended the meeting

KEYNOTE SPEAKER – Victor Godin

Victor Godin has worked in business, government and non-profit sectors in diverse fields ranging from strategic planning, economic development to media relations. He is the former Director of Policy and Research for the Official Liberal Opposition in Victoria. For the past 7 years, Victor has been retained by a group of 85 First Nations businesses to help them secure economic security in their communities.

Key Points

- Charities and communities – people, not government help each other in tough times.
- Grants are reviewed by whom? Who makes the decisions?
- Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch - What insight do they have to make decisions regarding your community? Communities should decide their own priorities.

What Do You Need To Do (as a group)

- Understand your potential – you are all voters
- Understand the mission – should be getting the \$150 million + , not less
- Be disciplined in your planning

- Streamline - have a main decision body – not a chat room
 - keep Board minutes short and to the point
 - stay focused – don't get sidetracked
- Discard programs that do not contribute to your success.
- **Define Yourself** - Don't be fractured. What the government wants to eliminate, it usually discredits.
- **Don't Settle For Crumbs.** Don't praise the government when they reverse decisions they should never have made in the first place.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The BCACG assembled a group of opinion-leaders from all of the sectors affected by gaming cuts to tell their stories on how those funding decisions have impacted their organizations, communities and services throughout the province and propose action plans. Invited guests:

1. Honorable Rich Coleman - Minister of Housing and Social Development
2. Honorable Kevin Krueger - Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
3. Shane Simpson – MLA for Vancouver-Hastings, Opposition Critic for Housing & Social Development
4. Spencer Herbert - MLA for Vancouver-West End, Opposition Critic for Tourism, Culture & the Arts
5. Amir Ali Alihbai – Executive Director - Alliance for Arts and Culture
6. Mary Desprez, General Manager, Belfry Theatre
7. Carol Girardi, President, Surrey Arts Council
8. Stephen Miller, President & CEO, BC Lions Society for Children with Disabilities
9. John Mulka, Executive Director, CNIB, BC/Yukon Division
10. Tim Jones, Team Leader, North Shore Rescue Team Society
11. Patricia Thomson, President, Stanley Park Ecology Society
12. Trevor Young, President, Semiahmoo Minor Lacrosse Association
13. Keith Jacobson, Vice-President, BC Bingo Council
14. Susan Marsden, President BCACG, President – Prince Rupert Bingo Association
15. Margaret Mahan, Executive Director, Better Environmentally Sound Transportation

PRESENTATIONS:

1. **Honorable Rich Coleman - Minister of Housing and Social Development – Declined to attend**
2. **Honorable Kevin Krueger - Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts – Declined to attend**
3. **Shane Simpson – MLA Vancouver-Hastings, Opposition Critic for Housing & Social Development**
 - The social contract says that a significant portion of gaming funds should go back to the communities. Gaming revenues are not part of general revenue.
 - The government needs to honour the 1999 commitment of returning one-third of net gaming revenues to charities. Currently, 80 per cent of gaming revenues go to government.
 - Needs to be a two-way discussion with charities, and funds which have been frozen or cut need to be restored.
 - Minister Coleman is wrong when he says that the charities/non-profits have no entitlement.

- **“SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE.”** Charities understand their communities. The government doesn’t. Do not allow the government to decide which charities they think are more important than others.
- Talk to your local Liberal MLAs. They must hear every day about restoring the funding and they need to respond.
- Stay in touch with the Opposition so they can continue to question how these cuts are justified.

4. **Spencer Herbert - MLA Vancouver-West End, Opposition Critic for Tourism, Culture & the Arts**

- Spencer comes from an Arts & Culture background.
- Reach out to your MLA’s and Opposition with details about how these cuts are impacting your community. They cannot address issues they are not aware of.
- The government has arrogance in its approach to dealing with people. **SPEAK OUT** and **SPEAK STRONGLY - TOGETHER**

5. **Amir Ali Alibhai – Executive Director - Alliance for Arts and Culture**

- Social capital is being threatened.
- We must **stand in solidarity with other groups**. We have important allies in this fight (sports and recreation, health organizations, and community services groups).
- Brief history of gambling in Canada
 - 1892 - Canadian Criminal Code declared a complete ban on all gambling activities
 - 1969 - Criminal Code amendment - provincial and federal governments can use lotteries to fund worthwhile activities (e.g. 1976 Montreal Olympics). Provincial governments authorized to manage & conduct lottery schemes. Charities authorized to do likewise under license.
 - 1974 - **gaming is established in BC as long as it funds sports and other licensed charities**
 - 1985 - Criminal Code amendment - provincial governments administer computer & video gaming devices & have exclusive control over gambling. Charitable groups and First Nations’ bands required to operate under their authority.
 - 2001- although government promised not to increase gaming, it had grown dramatically.
- Difficult to apply for funding if you are running a deficit.
- Charities did not lose funding due to poor management.
- BC has one of the highest child poverty rates. Free lunches are not the answer. This treats the symptom, not the cause. Charities try to address the cause.
- **Work together** with other groups.

6. **Mary Desprez, General Manager, Belfry Theatre**

The Belfry Theatre is part of Pro Art, a \$20 million industry in Victoria.

- Impact of recent cuts:
 - 150 artists affected
 - 22 staff will be laid off
 - Jazz festival affected
 - Hundreds of thousands of dollars won’t be spent in the community
- Rename the non-profit sector, “Social Profit.”
- Make your community aware of your purpose.

- Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference, an opportunity to make our cause known. She advised the UBCM conference recently passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to restore arts and culture gaming funding.
- “Don’t buy a lottery ticket day.” If the money does not go to charity, then it shouldn’t go to government.

7. Carol Girardi, President, Surrey Arts Council

SAC represents 70 businesses and sponsors which give back over 60,000 dollars to the children in the community to achieve their goals.

- **For every dollar invested in charities, 2.7 dollars is generated**
- **It is important to stand together. It makes a difference**

8. Steven Miller, President & CEO, BC Lions Society for Children with Disabilities

- Government needs to focus on what a healthy society is all about.
- If charities are not funded and cannot continue to provide services to the community, then the government is going to have to make up the shortfall.
- Funding should not be pulled back at a time when the economy is in a downturn and there are greater needs in the community.

9. John Mulka, Executive Director of CNIB’s BC/Yukon Division

- Reduction of gaming funding will jeopardize the whole association which provides services to 111,000 seeing impaired in BC including: navigating their homes, learning to read Braille, using computer technology to read, walking safely on the street, using public transit, etc.
- Community-based services are more efficient and effective.
- Government cuts to programs will put a heavy load on the health care system and increase the burden on taxpayers.
- Government needs to be held accountable.

10. Tim Jones - Team Leader, North Shore Rescue Team Society

NSR is a volunteer organization established in 1965 that regularly conducts backwoods search and rescue.

- Direct access grant (approx \$100,000) covers one-third of NSR annual costs.
- Direct access grant was frozen by the province while it conducted a budget review.
- Grant funding is necessary to provide equipment and helicopter flight rescue training to its members. Without it, the safety of both victims and responders will be compromised. NSR performed 10 helicopter rescues in the last two weeks of September.
- Discretionary is not an appropriate term for charities. These funds are crucial.
- **No organization is more important than any other.**
- We need to **stand up together and speak out.**

11. Patricia Thomson, President, Stanley Park Ecology Society

The Stanley Park Ecology Society has provided programs for over 15,000 school children per year since 1988.

- In 2009, statistics show that for the first time globally more people live in urban environments than rural environments. Many children are affected by “Nature Deficit Disorder.”
- SPES is Vancouver’s only nature centre.
- Focused on the environment, they include the community in conservation work.
- Not on the payroll of the Vancouver Parks Board.
- Employed 1500 volunteers in 2008 (over 10,000 man hours).
- Received \$60,000 (direct access gaming grant) in 2008. Just received a rejection letter from the government informing them that this year they will receive \$0.
- Unless they are able to raise funds elsewhere, they will have to cancel their school programs.

12. Trevor Young, President, Semiahmoo Minor Lacrosse Association (SMLA). Lacrosse is Canada’s National Sport.

- Association run by 10 volunteers and volunteer coaches.
- Hundreds of hours are donated each season.
- Have grown their association over the last year and included a girls' team.
- Were promised three-year funds in June 2009. Found out they were cut off from the funds in September.
- Loss of safe facilities and safe equipment must be addressed.
- Sports engage children who might otherwise fall through the cracks and end up in the parks at night. SMLA wants to help children through sports. In light of the cost of the Olympics, is it right to cut funding to kids’ sports?

13. Keith Jacobson –Vice President BCBC, & VP Gaming Management Carnegie Community Centre

- Program cuts would cause fee increases that kids and families may not be able to afford. Kids would drop out of programs.
- ***Studies show that for every dollar spent on youth, the community saves \$11 down the road in policing, etc.***
- Program cuts mean you lose volunteers. Once volunteers leave, an increase down the road won’t necessarily bring them back.
- BCBC launched a “Task Force” a couple of years ago to lobby for :
 - i. 5-year terms
 - ii. increase of funds
 - iii. meaningful role for the volunteers - legitimizes gambling for the public
 - provides a source of info to the public.
- BC Lottery Corporation web site acknowledges the need for charities. ***“Every time you play, you’re contributing towards better education and health care, social programs and municipal projects that benefit all British Columbians. Thousands of worthy charitable and community organizations around the province depend upon your help.”***
- Government needs to maintain their support for charities
- **Be pro-active and stand united.**

14. Susan Marsden – President BCACG, and President Prince Rupert Bingo Association

- The move from bingo to direct access has been under the radar
- Direct Access funds came from “Casino Funds”
- Bingo affiliates worked in the hall and monies were from pooling
- Many halls were upgraded to “Gaming Centres” with the direct assistance and support of charities and their volunteers.
- No new bingo licenses being issued
- No clear word from government on the future of bingo licenses
- Charities are more vulnerable under Direct Access
- Examples: Powell River - Unable to have a Gaming Centre – Council would not support it.
 - Upgraded their Bingo Hall
 - Income from Bingo dropped
 - Switched to Direct Access
 - Direct access funding either denied or seriously cut

Questions to Panel Participants

Q - Someone said there are 6,800 funding applications, does that mean that’s how many charities there are?

A – No, that is how many charities received funding.

Q - How many charities have applied?

A - The government says they don’t have that info. (From the floor – Last year it was mentioned that there were between 11,000 -12,000 applications.)

Comments from the Floor

- Huge repercussion from communities who go without services supplied by charities. BCACG should be trying to encourage local area groups to get together and speak out.
- The sports community has gotten together and has a plan. BCACG needs a business-like plan. Stop throwing rocks and make a plan on where you want to go and how to get there. BCACG executive director advised that Day 2 will involve action plans and steps to achieve those tangible goals.