

October 14, 1986

Honorable Frank Oberle M.P.
Minister of Science and Technology
Ottawa, Ontario

See file

Dear Mr. Oberle,

The need for the North Peace Cultural Centre (Expo Legacy Project) has gained importance federally as well as locally and provincially. When Fort St. John and Whitehorse have proper theatre facilities, the Canadian Northwestern touring circuit will be complete. The Department of Communications and the British Columbia Cultural Services have placed the proposed North Peace Cultural Centre high on the priority list. The Province of British Columbia has committed \$1 million toward the \$2.6 million project. Will the Federal Department of Communications be able to locate enough funds in the Cultural Initiatives Program to contribute \$500,000 to the project?

From my discussions with the Department of Communications in the Vancouver office, I understand that funds may not be available in Cultural Initiatives until April 1987. Can any action be taken to hasten a decision? The second extension to purchase the vacant Hudson Bay Building for the North Peace Cultural Centre runs out at the end of this year. As long as no other purchaser appears, another extension is possible but many local contributors are holding back, waiting to hear of the commitments from large corporate donors and, possibly, the Federal Government. Can you please assist in obtaining a positive commitment from the Department of Communication?

The residents of the North Peace area surrounding Fort St. John have a unique opportunity to have a much needed theatre and permanent Public Library with the operating support of an Arts Centre (Artspace) and Art Gallery. This community has attempted on three previous occasions to secure a theatre and permanent Library. However, never before has the Government of British Columbia been prepared to contribute so much toward the capital cost.

The major hurdle is not the operating cost, as so often the case in community facilities; but the major hurdle is the remaining \$1.6 million one-time capital cost. Once the structure is in place, the operation will be generated by the user groups, Regional District input and the current rate of City of Fort St. John support the Public Library and Artspace receive. The committee is proud to be able to present this proposal which will not require an additional direct tax levy on the citizens for operation and will not require a direct tax levy for construction if we can locate the required \$1.6 million to complete the project.

The citizens of the North PEace deserve the availability of facilities offered in other regions such as those similar to the North PEace and yet closer to the large urban centres where cultural opportunities are readily available. It is interesting that many of the long time citizens of the area, who have lived all their lives in the North Peace having no theatre or Arts Centre, agree that the North, Peace Arts Centre is an opportunity to pursue now while the Provincial Government is willing to support the project so extensively.

Mr. Oberle, I ask you, please, to contact the Department of Communications and the Honorable Flora MacDonald, to obtain the \$500,000 one-time capital cost assistance so the North Peace can finally have a 500 seat theatre, permanent Public Library and additional support activities of the Artspace and Art Gallery in the same complex.

Thank you for your concern and assistance with the Arts Centre which is long overdo in the North Peace.

Sincerely,

Sue Popesku
Artspace Administrator

B.C. Arts Board Member

B.C. Touring Council Board Member

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