



March 12, 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to confirm this government's commitment to providing gaming revenue to community organizations for the coming years, and to let you know about changes to the direct access program.

I am pleased to inform you that the provincial budget, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on February 18, authorizes my ministry to distribute \$136.5 million in gaming grants to community organizations in the province in the 2003/04 fiscal year – \$65 million of which will go to the direct access program. This is an increase of \$3.3 million in gaming grant funding.

The budget also confirms that the government top-up, guaranteeing funding to community organizations affiliated with commercial bingo halls, will be maintained.

Over the past year, we conducted a comprehensive review of all aspects of the direct access program. Our goal was to find a better method of funding as many community organizations as possible, in ways that are fair, timely and consistent.

To reach this goal, we proposed a number of changes and consulted with community organizations and other interested parties across British Columbia. I'd like to thank participating groups for their interest and expertise, as a number of recommendations have been incorporated into the direct access program.

These changes shift the emphasis of direct access grants to programs and the benefits those programs provide to the community. Organizations that previously received direct access grants remain eligible, provided they can demonstrate community benefit and a link to one of the four funding sectors:

- **Arts, Culture and Sport** programs that enhance performing, media, or visual arts, literature, heritage and culture, or sport opportunities.
- **Environment** programs that help sustain the environment or protect animals and wildlife.
- **Human and Social Services and Education** programs and services that contribute to the quality of life in a community, including helping the disadvantaged or distressed, promoting health or enhancing opportunities for youth.
- **Public Safety** programs that support public safety initiatives, disaster relief and emergency preparedness.

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Applications under each of the four funding sectors will be reviewed at the same time of year to ensure that groups with similar programs and services receive equitable treatment. This will mean more certainty as to when a decision will be made. It will also mean a more predictable process for applicants, and ensure that funds are used to support organizations that provide the most community benefit. As well, the application form, supporting documentation and overall application process will be easier to use and understand.

There are also positive changes for Parent Advisory Councils (PACs). To ensure that revenue to help students is distributed fairly, we will provide automatic funding of \$20 per student to PACs in public and independent schools, and we will provide new funding of \$2,500 for district PACs.

These changes come into effect on April 1, 2003 and there will be some flexibility during the first three months to allow for the transition to the new system and criteria. A more detailed description of the program changes is attached.

We are committed to making sure that as many organizations as possible have access to gaming funds. I am confident the changes we're making to direct access will benefit communities across British Columbia.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R.T. Coleman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

R.T. (Rich) Coleman
Solicitor General

Attachment

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch

CHANGES TO THE DIRECT ACCESS PROGRAM

Under the direct access program, the Province distributes revenues earned from casino and lottery gaming to community organizations across B.C. in the form of grants. The total direct access funding distributed in 2002/03 will be approximately \$61.5 million.

The government is improving the program, effective April 1, 2003.

Eligibility

With the changes to direct access, grants will be given to organizations that demonstrate clear community benefit. The previous eligibility groups have been streamlined into four sectors to make administration of the program easier:

- **Arts, Culture and Sport** programs that enhance performing, media, or visual arts, literature, heritage and culture, or sport opportunities.
- **Environment** programs that help sustain the environment or protect animals and wildlife.
- **Human, Social Services and Education** programs and services that contribute to the quality of life in a community, including helping the disadvantaged or distressed, promoting health or enhancing opportunities for youth.
- **Public Safety** programs that support public safety initiatives, disaster relief and emergency preparedness.

Program funding may be limited if the amount requested raises federal and provincial government funding to more than 75 per cent of total program funding. We are making this change to ensure communities support funded programs.

The remaining 25 per cent may be satisfied in a variety of ways, such as fundraising, municipal contributions, in-kind support and volunteer time, cash or donated labour, equipment, services, and materials from other sources.

Application Process

The applicants will now select the sector under which they are applying for funding. The application form also requires that the applicants describe the program(s) for which they would like a grant and demonstrate the benefit of their program(s) to the community.

Fixed application deadlines have been established for each of the four funding sectors. Previously, application requirements were linked to the applicant's fiscal year. Now, all applications for a similar program type will be considered at the same time of year. Organizations will have clear deadlines to apply, and they will be informed about the outcome of the review of their application within 12 weeks of the application deadline. Each funding sector's deadline will be printed on the application form.

The new application process will be phased in over three months, beginning April 1, 2003. This will help to accommodate applications already in the system and mitigate the financial impacts which may result from the transition to quarterly intake.

New application forms and supporting documents, including new application deadlines and information about applying for a grant, will be posted on our Web site at <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/gaming/> and also be available at government agents or by calling 250-387-5311.

The new application forms and supporting documents are easier to use and understand. They also allow applicants to provide details about the program(s) for which they are applying. They require significantly less information about the organization, particularly for organizations that received direct access funds in the past. For example, the structure, bylaws and constitution of an organization will be kept on file so that this information doesn't have to be submitted each year if it hasn't changed.

Allocation of Funding

A fund will be available for each of the four funding sectors and there will also be individual funds for Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) and capital projects. The size of each fund will be based on historical levels. Existing limits of \$100,000 per organization per year will be maintained and formalized, as will the limit of \$250,000 for grants awarded to programs with province-wide impact. This will ensure that direct access funding lasts throughout the year and is distributed to as many organizations as possible.

Groups receiving gaming funds will have substantially more control over the spending of their grant and must only ensure that the spending is related to the delivery of the approved program. For example, gaming funds may now be used for fundraising, legal fees, recognizing volunteers, and the purchase of food and beverages.

Parent Advisory Councils

All public and independent school Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) in the province will receive \$20 per student, and all district PACs will receive \$2,500. Only a basic application package and a dedicated gaming bank account will be required from the PAC or district PAC to receive this funding. Total funding to PACs will increase substantially as a result of these changes.

Automatic funding ensures that funds will be distributed fairly and will benefit all students in the province. In past years, PACs in rural and inner city areas were less likely to apply for a gaming grant.

Grants provided to PACs from gaming proceeds will fund extra-curricular purposes such as:

- Student publications: newsletters, yearbooks.
- Educational field trips within British Columbia like band trips and sports team trips.
- Ceremonies, including dry grads.
- Competitions: writing, debating, chess, music.
- Uniforms and equipment.
- Computers: software, hardware, accessories.

Capital Projects

A capital project fund has been established for capital projects in excess of \$20,000. Organizations receiving direct access grants may apply separately for a grant from the capital project fund. A separate application form, posted on the Web site, will continue to be used. Groups can apply for a capital project grant in the same year that they apply for direct access program grants.