

Funding a new cultural facility: Should you begin construction before every dollar is in place?

Examples, issues, and advice.

(Culture-L archives - June-July 2000)

From the archives:

Ian Forsyth, then Cultural Services Manager at the City of Kelowna, June 2000: We're trying to raise the final \$\$ to start construction of an Arts Centre. We're thinking of recommending when funding is at 90% of the total, we would recommend commencing construction and an aggressive public campaign which has not really been done yet.

Would any of you have any examples of when facilities started going ahead before every dollar was in place, how successful the campaign was when people actually saw a building taking shape? I would like to be able to give some anecdotal examples when I present the report to council.

Carol Beatty [CARBEA@city.medicine-hat.ab.ca] June 2000: We are in the midst of a similar situation. We have completed a feasibility study for a new arts and heritage centre and are ready to embark on a functional/technical plan. Our aim is to complete our building by 2005, our provincial 100th anniversary. Our fundraising committee has just been formed - they have been given a one year timeline to raise substantial funds. If they do not meet their target, no shovel will touch the ground. The idea is if the community is not in support, it will not go ahead.

The City just completed a new Leisure Centre. The community groups were supposed to raise at least \$2M out of the \$17. They did not meet their target but by the deadline, the architectural drawings had been commissioned and the project was well on its way to becoming a reality. The expectation of a 'fait accompli' surfaced, making it difficult to encourage fundraising.

That is why on this project, it is important to secure the community commitment first.

There are many examples - speak to Gavin Farmer at Festival Place in Sherwood Park Alberta. I would also talk to a few fundraising consultants - they can provide many examples. We just brought in Steven Carter, of Carter McRae Consulting, from Calgary whose specialty is raising money for large capital art projects.

Rae Ackerman [VCTRWA@xmail.city.vancouver.bc.ca] June 2000: Talk to Sandy Thompson at the Port Theatre in Nanaimo.

CCPA in Calgary went ahead without all financing in place and without a final estimate of the cost. There was hell to pay, but the building was built.

Sue Morhun [smorhun@tol.bc.ca] July 2000: The Langley Community Music School is doing just this. They broke ground in late May and they have not yet achieved their total funding. I understand that they are still about \$300,000 short. Part of the short fall is the result of a late decision to build a larger recital hall to increase seating from about 150 to 210. They appear to have a good rationale for doing so and are just now explaining their decision publically.

I am told that their fundraising committee is fully supportive of the increased seating and associated cost and are confident that as soon as the building begins to take shape, they will be successful in short order. They have very astute and critical community leaders on board so I would guess their assessment is realistic.

I am reminded of the adage - if you don't take a chance, you can't make a chance. Scary I know, but.... Bon chance!!