



**Submission for
Province of Nova Scotia
Pre-Budget Consultations, 2023**

**From the
Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, Canning, Kings County, NS**

Respectfully submitted by

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That the Government double the current funding levels in 2023 and onward to the following two provincially funded programs:

1. "Operating Assistance to Cultural Organizations", at the Department of Communities, Culture, tourism and Heritage, and
2. "Operating Assistance to Arts Organizations" at Arts Nova Scotia

Without removing funding from other arts programs of either the Department of Communities, Culture Tourism and Heritage or the Arts Nova Scotia.

Recommendation 2:

That the government increase the operating assistance to those Arts Organizations which are separately covered by direct MOUs by a minimum of 50%

Recommendation 3:

That the government further commit to annually indexing the aforementioned programs to the cost of living to ensure they can keep pace with the need in the community.

Recommendation 4:

That the Government commit a minimum of \$3 million over three years for specific initiatives to be determined and adjudicated by Arts Nova Scotia and/or the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage for new programs directly related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts

Recommendation 5:

That the government work with Arts Nova Scotia and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to ensure organizations which were worst affected and still feeling the effects of the COVID-19 shutdowns and slow recovery have stabilization funds in the next two years.

Submission

The Ross Creek Centre for the arts is a multidisciplinary, multigenerational and multicultural centre for arts creation, education, and dissemination. Based in rural Nova Scotia, we host artists from across Canada and around the world for residencies, operate children's arts programs, including overnight camps and preprofessional programs, and are a creative hub for our community, including outreach in arts and culture including access to local and good food for community participants most in need.

Set in a beautiful landscape, we foster exploration and development in arts and culture at all levels of artistic practice and in all disciplines throughout the year. Working to remove barriers to lifelong creative exploration, we connect diverse communities and artists to each other through the interplay of professional and community-based cultural experiences. We do this with a commitment to stewardship of and education about the land we are on, part of Mi'kma'ki which is the ancestral and unceded territory of the L'nu and covered to this day by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship.

Since we founded the Ross Creek Centre, we have:

- Contributed over \$5 million in construction and renovation labour and materials spending in NS
- Served over 3500 young people in meaningful on-site programs
- Served thousands of NS school children through cultural field trips
- Brought dozens of artists from around the world to rural NS for extended periods
- Brought thousands of visitors to our community as part of their visit to Ross Creek including stays in local inns and meals at restaurants.
- Made thousands of meals for the most marginalised in our community, increasing their access to all of our programs.
- Employed dozens of creative workers as staff, including dozens of youth
- Hired dozens of artist faculty providing meaningful engagement with NS artists and community.

Our story is repeated by dozens of arts organisation across Nova Scotia, as we are all deeply rooted in the fabric of Nova Scotian life.

With over 14,000 cultural workers, culture contributes \$989 million to Nova Scotia's GDP, and employs more people than farming, fishing and forestry combined.

Culture Satellite Account (2020)

However, the cultural sector in NS is in crisis – we have been the hardest hit sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and before that we had been limited in our potential effectiveness because of historic underfunding. The majority of our sector is not for profit, and operational funding from the Department or the Arts Council is vital to have strong, effective organisations.

Those programs have effectively been frozen since 2006 which has both stopped existing client growth and stability and denied the opportunity for new voices in the cultural sector to be admitted into the program(s).

Over those 16 years, the sector has been diminished each year as the real costs of wages, goods, and other aspects of our work rise while our core funding is stagnant. We have seen exciting and vibrant organisations give up as they were repeatedly told there was no way to admit them to the core funding programs without more money, and often these are equity- deserving groups who need to take their place at the table for Nova Scotia to reach its potential.

Our Cultural workers are vital to the health and well-being of our communities and to our vision of NS as a vibrant, attractive both to live in and immigrate to. While we are resilient, the pandemic has exhausted us, and we need hope and forward thinking to revitalise the sector and make the province ready for the influx of immigrants who will want meaningful ways to discover Nova Scotia and what we have to offer.

"Our sector has suffered tremendous hardship throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last two years, we have seen drastic reductions to income, workforce, and wellbeing. The sector has endured repeated and prolonged closures, layoffs and terminations, the loss of highly professionalized staff, and alarming impacts on mental health. We were the first to shut down and will be the last to fully reopen. Federally, the sector has been categorized as "hardest hit."

[While] the culture sector [has] greatly suffered as a result of COVID-19...culture [has] played an essential role in helping people through the pandemic...Perhaps now more than ever, we find ourselves in a moment where the public understands that culture is an intrinsic and necessary part of our daily lives.

...We believe culture must play an essential role in the province's post-pandemic recovery plans.

Throughout the spring of 2021, the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council and Arts Nova Scotia partnered on an initiative to solicit input from the sector on how best to do this. Together, we facilitated conversations with nearly 200 stakeholders...These sessions focused not only on the challenges they faced and the issues that emerged during the pandemic, but also on how this sector could and should be harnessed to make Nova Scotia more vibrant, resilient, and inclusive."

From the introduction to Building Back Better: A Vision for Culture Sector Recovery in Nova Scotia (BBB)

Cultural workers who work with operating organisations in this province are Nova Scotians. We are rooted in our communities and dedicated to creativity and innovation for and with the larger community. We are an integral piece of making NS stronger and ready for the future, but we need help and we need it now.

Our recommendations, **at a minimum, are to double the funding to operating funding programs for core cultural organisations in NS**. This would not only support existing organisations, but make room for new organisations which have been previously shut out of this opportunity. This funding will result in increased employment, programming and other benefits to the province. Those with direct MOUs should gain at least a 50% increase this year since they are adjudicated separately.

These programs also need to be indexed to inflation to ensure that while this is the minimum investment that is required as an emergency correction to historical neglect, at the very least there is an ability for organisations to keep looking forward.

We also need to better reflect and engage the diversity of our community, especially vital in a time of reconciliation and immigration increases. **This Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work takes time and meaningful investment, and we recommend an investment of \$3 million over the next three years** to facilitate this work in all parts of the province, from audience development to micro grants, as the department and Arts Council prioritise. This will immediately engage more Nova Scotians and new Canadians in cultural opportunities so they see themselves on our theatres, in our galleries and to ensure a vibrant and diverse cultural community.

Finally, there are organisations which have not yet recovered from the public health crisis of the past three years. **We recommend that there be a pathway for emergency funding – a lifeline – for vital organisations which will need extraordinary support over the next two years.**

These recommendations are not going to eliminate the historic underfunding but they will begin to pave the way for a revitalised, stable, and growing arts and culture sector. Together this will help us attract new talent to Nova Scotia and keep it here, while providing current workers with a way to stay in the sector and mentor the next generation. It will entice other kinds of immigrants to NS, including health care professionals. This first step toward robust cultural investment will create a renaissance of cultural activity in the province and is vital for the health and social fabric and vision of Nova Scotia for the future.