



March 2, 2026

Honourable Dave Ritcey
Minister, Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick St., 3rd Floor
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Halifax, NS
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We join our colleagues in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sectors to express our utmost disappointment and concern with the proposed budget that outlines significant cuts in program grants and funding by the Nova Scotia government. This is more than just a hit on our sector - this would have a devastating ripple effect in our communities, as other non-profit organizations are also scrambling to figure out their sustainability, let alone being able to keep up with the day-to-day.

The Arts, Culture, and Heritage sector will be disproportionately affected by the provincial budget cuts - cuts that will do very little to fix the provincial deficit, but will undo decades of building a vital, supportive, and sustainable arts community. The impact of these cuts will be far-reaching and permanent, as arts organizations will dissolve, artists will leave the province, tourism will drop, and communities will suffer.

Visual Arts Nova Scotia (VANS) exists to support visual artists throughout every stage of their careers through mentorship, professional development, sharing work opportunities, exhibitions, advocacy and more. A 20% reduction across the board, especially in funding to non-profit arts organizations is a major blow to our operations. This essentially means cutting a core part of our human resources, which deeply affects our program and service delivery, support for artists, and community outreach. Besides the 20 - 30% cut to operational funding, taking away the funding stream "Artists in the Schools" (funded by both Arts Nova Scotia and the Department of Education) would eradicate one of our core programs, Professional Artists in the Schools (PAINTS). This program has been running for almost 20 years and provides visual arts programming in schools across the province by professional visual artists who live in the communities that they serve. Thousands of hours have been spent with PAINTS artists directly working with students and teachers. So much of the other support for art specialists has already been removed from our schools. With a relatively small financial contribution from the province, we are able to offer moments of connection and inspiration to kids and teachers in our communities. And we, like all arts organizations, do a lot with a little. There is no fat to trim. These cuts mean real losses of staff and programs.



This budget also ignores that artists are small business owners. We at VANS want to emphasize that artists are indeed entrepreneurs, and we bring revenue into the province through many avenues such as tourism, export, and film/television. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce's recent report, *Artworks: The Economic and Social Dividends from Canada's Arts and Culture Sector* highlights that every dollar invested in the arts generates \$29 in economic activity.

Also of great concern is how the cuts will impact equity-deserving groups, who already experience a disproportionate lack of access. Taking away support from the Office of L'Nu Affairs and Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, and their stakeholders is a blatant disregard of the work that is being done towards Reconciliation and Reparations.

We request a meeting with you, alongside our colleagues at the Cultural Federations of Nova Scotia (CFNS), to discuss the implications that will go along with these proposed changes. We urge you to evaluate your priorities and your constituents' overall well-being as you go through the budget process. These cuts are harmful to communities that are already having a hard time. This budget as presented will create an irreversible, negative impact- and it is already starting to unfold. It does not "Defend Nova Scotia" – it fails to recognize the very things that make Nova Scotia unique, valued and revered. It's not too late to do better.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Therese Cruz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Therese Cruz
Executive Director
Visual Arts Nova Scotia