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November 14, 2023

Hon. Allan MacMaster
Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
1741 Brunswick St., 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 456, STN Central
Halifax, NS
B3J 2R5

Dear Minister MacMaster,

My name is Devin Casario. I am the new Executive Director of the Association of Nova Scotia Museums (ANSM), representing 115 museums across Nova Scotia, including community, provincial, and federal museums.

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. I am confident that you will serve the Department at the highest level, and we very much look forward to meeting with you as soon as your busy schedule allows.

We would like to reiterate our gratitude for the much-needed increase in funding to the museum sector in 2023, which included an additional \$650,000 to the Community Museum Assistance Program (CMAP), as well as \$2.1 million dollars to locally managed Nova Scotia Museum sites. ANSM itself was the beneficiary of a \$35,000 top up in operational funding from the Department.

These funding increases will allow the museum sector to better address our shared priorities with your government, including health and social wellbeing, economic impact, rural revitalization, and enhanced visitor experience. This funding has provided a much-needed financial injection in the sector as substantive financial pressures remain for museums operating in the province.

Provincial support makes up only a portion of museums' operating budgets, however this portion is key to a museum's financial sustainability. Provincial funding is leveraged in other grants and projects, as well as sponsors. Further, this essential funding empowers museums to generate revenue through admissions, donations, retail sales, and events while positioning museums in developing long-term strategies towards self-sustainability and economic impact within their communities.

Why Fund Museums?

Museums help Government address many important concerns, including:

- **Job Opportunities.** Over 800 Nova Scotians are employed in the museum sector.
- **Economic Drivers – Especially in the Tourism Industry.** Museums are attractions and act as visitor information centers, community navigators, and computer/internet access points, especially in rural NS.
- **Health Benefits.** Museums provide mental and public health benefits, including recreation spaces, such as walking trails. They also help attract professionals such as health care professionals.
- **Social Well-being of Seniors and Older Adults.** Over 2,700 Nova Scotians volunteer with museums, many of whom are seniors.
- **Recruitment and Retention in Rural Nova Scotia.** Museums encourage people to make rural Nova Scotia their home. Museum staff and their families volunteer, shop, live, and recreate in their community.
- **Improving EDIA by Sharing Nova Scotia's Complex History.** As supported by ANSM's TRACK program, museums are helping Nova Scotians understand and contextualize our rich history, which includes working with Mi'kmaq, African Nova Scotian, Acadian, and Gaelic communities to share their stories. Further, ANSM provides training and resources to our members to ensure museums are community leaders in accessible spaces and programs.

What Would Happen Without Government Support

Nova Scotia's museums find themselves at a critical impasse. In January 2023 ANSM conducted a survey with member museums. The survey results show an industry struggling to keep lights on but continuing to work towards excellence.

- **Staffing and Volunteer Crisis.** Museums are struggling to recruit and retain staff and volunteers. The survey indicated only 40% of museums in NS have at least 1 staff who is paid a living wage. In the next five years, museums anticipate losing on average 52% of their staff and volunteers due to burnout, retirement, layoffs, or personal factors.
- **Reduction in Offerings.** When asked, if funding is not increased, what results do you anticipate in the next year, 61% of respondents said they will reduce operating hours. 63% said they will reduce hiring and/or cut existing staff. 50% said that they will reduce programming. 61% said their ability to respond to community needs would be negatively impacted.

- **Reduced Visitation.** 41% of museums indicate they have returned to or increased their visitation numbers from 2019. Museums are working hard to meet public needs through special events, school programs, new exhibits, and rich collections. This return to success will be delayed when museums are struggling to keep their lights on and doors open.

We look forward to continuing our work with your Department as we continue to advocate for resilient and sustainable museums that represent and serve all Nova Scotians. **The Association of Nova Scotia Museums is formally requesting a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss our shared priorities and strengthen our collaboration.**

We appreciate your time and consideration.

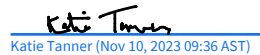
Sincerely,



Devin Casario

Executive Director

Association of Nova Scotia Museums


Katie Tanner (Nov 10, 2023 09:36 AST)

Katie Tanner

President

Association of Nova Scotia Museums