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March 2nd, 2026

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

Dear Minister Ritcey,

The Association of Nova Scotia Museums would like to express our profound disappointment, shock, and disbelief regarding the proposed 2026 Provincial Budget, which has already led to the closure of twelve provincial museum sites and would represent debilitating 20% reductions to 70 Community Museums as well as 10 locally managed provincial sites. This is in addition to stripping the sector of dozens of essential grant programs.

Furthermore, the Association of Nova Scotia Museums' operational funding was decreased by 20% and a core training program that serves over 100 museums was gutted in half from \$100,000 to \$50,000. This results in a net loss of \$73,000 in our overall budget.

Equally concerning was the absence of meaningful consultation or advance communication with sector leadership before the budget's release. After years of goodwill between senior bureaucrats in your department and ANSM, this cavalier approach has eroded trust and actively destabilizes a sector that serves as essential cultural and economic infrastructure across Nova Scotia.

Your actions over the past year, your many visits to museums, and your growing relationship with our organization have demonstrated your understanding of the importance of protecting our rich cultural heritage. This budget negates the value of our sector to the province, a sector that has entrusted you with our future.

The negative impacts of these cuts are already being felt, with museum closures, job losses, and disenfranchisement of our rural communities in Nova Scotia. The government has signalled it wants closed sites to transition to community-based management, but it simultaneously cut funding on the Community Museums Assistance Program (CMAP) that supports community-run museums by over \$300,000, a program that is already oversubscribed.

In 2023, your department increased funding to the museum sector, which had been stagnant for years, and 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 allowed the museum sector to better address our shared priorities with your government, including health and social wellbeing, economic impact, rural revitalization, and visitor experience.

It is unconscionable that your government would recognize the need for additional and stable funding only three years ago, only to then turn around and take it away- without warning or meaningful consultation. The consequences will fall hardest on marginalized communities who rely on arts and heritage spaces for visibility, belonging, and opportunity, including Indigenous peoples, African Nova Scotians, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, rural communities, seniors, and school children.

At a time when museums across the province are facing closures, operating reductions, and significant uncertainty, ANSM represents the primary sector body positioned to support institutions, coordinate responses, and provide informed, province-wide leadership. We were not afforded the opportunity to meet with you personally to walk through the proposed cuts or explore potential mitigation strategies, thereby weakening the very organization that museums rely upon for guidance, capacity- building, and coordinated sector support during a period of acute disruption, especially small rural and small town museums that rely on the provincial museums association heavily. As mentioned earlier, your department cut our core training program (TRACK) that supports over 100 museums by \$50,000. Just a few months ago, I was in discussions with your department about an increase in this vital program.

In museums, where the majority of operating budgets are allocated to human resources, reductions of this scale translate directly into staffing losses, diminished programming, and reduced visitor services. In rural regions, especially, museums are not peripheral amenities; they are employment anchors, tourism drivers, and essential components of local economic ecosystems.

Museum funding is an investment- not an economic expenditure. Tourism continues to be a significant contributor to Nova Scotia's economy, generating approximately \$3.7 billion in revenue in 2025 and supporting tens of thousands of jobs across the province. Cultural and heritage attractions — including small, locally grounded museums — play a critical role in sustaining tourism in rural and coastal regions by connecting visitors to local stories, businesses, and experiences. Together, they form the fabric through which Nova Scotia's authentic and place-based stories are shared with visitors each year. Nova Scotia welcomed 2 million visitors in 2024, and culture contributes \$949 million to Nova Scotia's economy and supports almost 14,000 jobs - representing 2.7% of provincial GDP.

The Association of Nova Scotia Museums is **requesting a meeting with you immediately** to discuss the impacts to museums alongside our own organization and corrective measures that can be taken before irreparable harm is done to the sector. **Further to this, we are requesting a**

moratorium on closures and funding cuts pending public and sector-wide consultation, a phased implementation timeline, and investment in community-based transfer models with adequate transitional funding. As well, we are asking that the entirety of funding for our TRACK training program be immediately restored so we can continue to support over 100 museums that rely on us- especially during this time of great upheaval in the sector.

We remain committed to constructive dialogue and solutions. However, we cannot overstate the urgency of this moment. Without swift intervention, the damage to the museum sector, Nova Scotia's cultural fabric, and the communities most dependent upon it, will be profound and lasting. ANSM looks forward to working with your department as we continue to advocate for resilient and sustainable museums that represent and serve all Nova Scotians while addressing the needs of the wider community, as addressed in this letter.

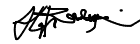
Sincerely,



Devin Casario

Executive Director

Association of Nova Scotia Museums



Tegan Rowlings

President

Association of Nova Scotia Museums