

For Immediate Release

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Nova Scotia Arts Coalition Calls on Tim Houston to Reverse Cuts to Arts, Culture, Tourism & Heritage

(Halifax, NS) – The Nova Scotia Arts Coalition, a non-partisan advocacy group representing arts organizations, individual artists, and culture workers province-wide is calling on the Nova Scotia government to reinstate essential funding to arts, culture, tourism, and heritage sector programs. They say that Tim Houston’s 2026-2027 budget proposes funding cuts that will devastate generations of artists, arts organizations, industries, and workers across the province and is flawed economic policy.

“This budget has targeted the cultural sector disproportionately with proposed cuts that will devastate individuals, organisations, and communities across the province,” says Chris O’Neill, member of the NS Arts Coalition and Executive Director of the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, based in rural Kings County. “Without a swift reversal, these cuts will negatively impact the economy of Nova Scotia through job losses, loss of tourism dollars and cultural activity, and remove one of the strongest draws for new immigrants to the province - our culture.”

On top of proposed cuts to the operational budgets of cultural organizations, including a 30% cut to Arts Nova Scotia, 72 grant programs would be fully or partially cut in the Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage sector. The Artists in Schools program, the Nova Scotia Talent Trust, the Publishers’ Assistance Program, the Art Bank and the Ministers Awards for Excellence in the Arts are all among those programs fully cut in this budget release. Grant programs for non-profit arts organizations and artists and funding for arts and culture activities rooted in community have also been decimated.

The Coalition is urging the government to immediately withdraw the proposed cuts from the budget. “Beyond the loss of the next generation of Nova Scotian artists through the cuts to arts education opportunities, paired with anticipated resulting outmigration of Nova Scotian talent, it is against all available evidence about the significant and positive role the arts have on economies and communities when they have adequate investment.”

As an example, O’Neill points to the recent national Chamber of Commerce study, *Artworks: The Economic and Social Dividends from Canada’s Arts and Culture Sector*, which found that over the past three years, GDP stemming from the arts and culture sector

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federally has grown almost 8%, outpacing Canada's overall economic growth of 4%. This kind of growth is what the Coalition says the province should be investing in, and it can be part of what puts the province back on track.

The Coalition also asserts that the proposed cuts will affect ordinary Nova Scotians. The sector employs almost 14,000 people, with Nova Scotians working in culture in every riding of the province. In an ongoing survey of the cultural community, they have already found that many organizations will be forced to lay off or not rehire workers, leading to further strain on the provincial economy. Tourism will be affected by the reduction of the Visitor Information Centres and the reduction or elimination of cultural offerings that draw visitors to rural and urban Nova Scotia communities, reversing the tourism gains made over the past years. "A fiscally Conservative government should understand that there are no dividends without investment, and this outsized reduction in investment in our shared culture means that Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotians, will lose," says O'Neill.

Her concerns are echoed by fellow NS Arts Coalition member and Chief Executive Officer of Symphony Nova Scotia, Scott Tresham, "The savings the government seeks through cuts to grants and community organizations are proportionally small—the sum total of the cuts is \$130M on a net deficit of \$27.9B, less than half a percent. Yet for the arts, culture, and heritage community, composed largely of non-profit and charitable organizations, these reductions will be seismic and their negative impact on broader economic activity in the province will be disproportionately damaging."

The NS Arts Coalition sees clear alignment between the priorities laid out in the government's plan for the province and what the Arts, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage sector provides through provincial investment. "On top of the economic dividends, and the employment for Nova Scotians, we know that health care workers are drawn to live in communities with cultural opportunities for their families, and that physical and mental health outcomes are better in communities where the arts are accessible and vibrant," says O'Neill.

The NS Arts Coalition is inviting Nova Scotians to write or call their MLAs and ask them to resist and reverse these cuts— and to attend a rally on Wednesday March 4 at 12p.m., at Province House to raise their collective voices in support of Nova Scotia's arts, culture, tourism, and heritage sector. For full information on programs that are subject to the proposed cuts and to find out more about the advocacy efforts of the coalition, visit www.nsarts.ca

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Additional Information

The NS Arts Coalition is an ad hoc advocacy group made up of individual artists and arts, culture and heritage organizations across the province. We are dedicated to ensuring that provincial policy and funding is responsive to the needs of the sector for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

“These cuts will have significant economic ripple effects on so many of our region’s greatest goals and achievements, from tourism to homegrown businesses to our ability to attract and retain newcomers, to recruit healthcare workers, and so on. Cultural events are a major draw for visitors. Vital cultural communities are communities that doctors and nurses want to come to, and where people want to visit or stay to raise their families. As we saw when the film industry faced cuts, those short-term savings can have immense and widespread long-term costs. And what can be destroyed very quickly can be very hard—and expensive—to rebuild.” - Rebecca Silver Slayter, Artistic Director, Cabot Trail Writers Festival

“Our sector has spent decades stretching every dollar, leveraging modest public investment to deliver outsized social, cultural, and economic returns in communities across the province. These proposed cuts won’t save the province money—they’ll just kick the can down the road apiece, till we trip on it later.” Chris O’Neill, Executive Director, Ross Creek Centre for the Arts

For more information on the Nova Scotia Arts Coalition, visit: <http://www.nsarts.ca>

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