
Media Release



Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network congratulates the government on progressive initiatives to support the Arts and Culture sector in the province

On March 27, 2002 the Nova Scotia Arts Council (established in 1995 under premier John Savage with unanimous support of the Legislature) was dismantled by Minister of Tourism and Culture, Rodney MacDonald. The images of security guards closing down an arts council stunned Nova Scotians, and artists were consigned to the bureaucratic wilderness as Nova Scotia became the only jurisdiction to ever abolish an arm's length independent arts council. Standing on the steps of the Nova Scotia Legislature on April 18, 2002, Darrell Dexter, then leader of the opposition, declared that if the Conservative government did not change its position, that the re-establishment of an arts council was only "one election day away."

Thus, the Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network (NSCAN) celebrates February 14, 2011 and congratulates the Nova Scotia government for its announcement that, as a result of its cultural sector consultations during the fall of 2010, it will establish Arts Nova Scotia. Arts Nova Scotia will be an independent arms-length body responsible for overseeing and making decisions with respect to funding support for artists. The professional arts community has been brought back into the fold of Nova Scotia society, and the NDP government has honoured a key promise made to its citizens. To have the interests of artists represented by an independent arms-length agency will bring Nova Scotia into back synch with almost every Canadian province, American state, and indeed, most countries throughout the developed world.

We further congratulate the government on its plans to introduce status of the artist legislation to emphasize the importance of the arts and culture sector to the province. Such legislation will help enshrine the position of the artists in Nova Scotia society and will help them achieve the same status under government and the law that is enjoyed by professionals of other sectors.

The government also announced the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council will replace the present Nova Scotia Arts and Partnership Council (NSACPC) which will "advise government on arts and culture policy and lead the development of a provincial cultural strategy." The NSACPC, created by the previous government, was not an arts funding council and had the effect of confusing both public and those in the arts and culture sector with respect to the nature of arts funding in Nova Scotia.

We are further encouraged that the government will form an interdepartmental committee to coordinate government efforts to support and fund arts and culture development. The creative sector in Nova Scotia is an important one, making significant contributions to both Nova Scotia's economy, and its rich and diverse cultural life. By its very nature it overlaps into many other spheres. Education, tourism, heritage, and economic development are all significantly affected by the creative sector. Film, music, publishing, animation, and crafts are cultural industries that can play a major role in the economic development of Nova Scotia in the 21st century.

Interdepartmental coordination can help ensure that all appropriate departments are on the same page in developing policy to assist in the growth of the creative sector.

Many questions with respect to the structure, composition, role, mandate, etc. of all these initiatives still remain undetermined – and this is precisely as it should be. They require careful thought and consideration and detailed discussions between the government and representatives of the sector. And indeed, the government has announced that a panel of arts and culture representatives will be established in the next few weeks to set out the terms of reference for Arts Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network will be bringing a number of detailed suggestions to the government to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated and that the implementation of these initiatives effectively build on Nova Scotia's creative assets, and respond to provincial, national and international opportunities presented by the evolving global economy and technological environment.

Important issues that need to be addressed include ensuring that Arts Nova Scotia has an adequate financial base and that areas of responsibility between Arts Nova Scotia and the present Culture Division are carefully delineated to eliminate overlap and duplication. It will also be important determine how Arts Nova Scotia will address the needs of the professional arts sector as distinct from the cultural industries and community arts, whose needs are different and have separate programs and funding mechanisms administered by other provincial government entities and agencies.

The Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network congratulates Premier Darrell Dexter and Minister of Communities, Culture, and Heritage David Wilson and looks forward to working with them in the future in developing the rich cultural fabric of Nova Scotia.

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