

Questions for Provincial Candidates on the Arts in NS

Context:

Culture is the heart and soul of our communities. Through our contemporary artists and cultural traditions, we reflect ourselves and we enchant the world, from children expressing themselves through drama and music in schools to the most accomplished professional artists. Artists draw the world to NS, and also enhance our own communities' mental, social and economic well-being, and yet will be some of the last to recover from the pandemic fully. While emergency funding has been helpful, as we build our society back, there is an urgent need to embrace the opportunity for us to build back into something better and more equitable, and to ensure we are stronger than ever.

1. Investments in the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage and Arts NS improve the lives of Nova Scotians, including artistic and cultural engagement opportunities.

There was recently a [report](#) that recognized that professional arts have been severely underfunded for more than 2 decades. The report stresses the need for ongoing support for sustaining (operating) programs - to allow for a much needed increase to existing organisations and to make space for new artists, **especially those who have been left behind**, to gain sustainable, equitable, and adequate funding to do their work.

How will you and your party support that recommendation and the report and put forward a major increase to operating funding programs for Arts NS and Communities, Culture, and Heritage not just once but in a sustainable and significant way?

2. The concept of [Inclusive Economic Growth](#) as a department that folds in different industries is exciting, but it is not inclusive enough. As a major attraction for both our own people and for people from outside our borders, arts needs to be actively included in discussion around tourism campaigns and opportunities to promote and highlight the culture, both traditional and contemporary, that NS has to offer, from Yarmouth to Glace Bay. Similarly, we need to see expanded work with Labour and Advanced Education to build our sector's administrative capacity.

How will you and your party support the deliberate and strategic addition of Culture into Inclusive Economic Growth and ensure that it is well represented in Tourism, Labour, and other economic areas of Provincial focus as we restructure our future?

3. Arts Education is consistently under threat. While NS curricula state that arts are vital, in practise arts programs are often the first to disappear from schools, threatening the future of young artists in this province and potential opportunities for scholarships, post-secondary entrance and general well being. Recently a school was forced to reconsider cutting its drama program after a lobbying effort by students. We need to protect our youths' cultural opportunities, while also innovating in the way we approach arts education in small or rural schools by collaborating with the cultural sector.

How will you and your party commit to the protection of Arts education programs in Nova Scotian schools and communities, understanding drama, music and visual arts as essential to our students' ability to express themselves, think critically, and gain confidence?

For further information, contact Ms. Chris O'Neill, chris@artscentre.ca.