



Submission for
Province of Nova Scotia

Pre-Budget Consultations, 2023

From

The Bus Stop Theatre Co-op, Halifax, NS

Respectfully submitted by

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That the Government double the current funding levels in 2023 and onward to the following two provincially funded programs:

1. “Operating Assistance to Cultural Organizations”, at the Department of Communities, Culture, tourism and Heritage, and
2. “Operating Assistance to Arts Organizations” at Arts Nova Scotia

Without removing funding from other arts programs of either the Department of Communities, Culture Tourism and Heritage or the Arts Nova Scotia.

Recommendation 2:

That the government increase the operating assistance to those Cultural Organizations which are separately covered by direct MOUs by a minimum of 50%

Recommendation 3:

That the government further commits to annually indexing the aforementioned programs to the cost of living to ensure they can keep pace with the need in the community.

Recommendation 4:

That the Government commit a minimum of \$3 million over three years for specific initiatives to be determined and adjudicated by Arts Nova Scotia and/or the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage for new programs directly related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts

Recommendation 5:

That the government work with Arts Nova Scotia and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to ensure organisations which were worst affected and still feeling the effects of the COVID-19 shutdowns and slow recovery have stabilisation funds in the next two years.

Submission

The Bus Stop Theatre is a multi-use performance venue located on Gottingen Street in Kijipuktuk/Halifax. The theatre has been in operation since 2003 and operating as a co-op since 2012. We host over 100 different groups and shows annually and are booked for performances, rehearsals and gatherings of all kinds for 300+ days of the year. The Bus Stop Theatre Co-op's goal is to operate theatrical facilities that serve both artists and audiences. We do this by operating the only independent, affordable, accessible and professionally equipped black-box space in Halifax. Not only that, we are owned and operated by those who use it and benefit from it.

Our theatre is dynamic, flexible and customizable to each presentation's needs and able to accommodate a variety of mediums. While the theatre is well suited for theatrical productions and live music, the flexibility of the space allows for numerous other uses: art gallery, workshop venue, film screening room and community meeting space.

We are one of the very few all-ages performance venues in the region and one of the few physically accessible venues with level access and front row seating for chair users.

The Bus Stop Theatre is also financially accessible by providing subsidised rates that are below operational costs to any renter, as well as limited fully subsidised rentals for artists and producers who are African Nova Scotian or Indigenous, and funding support to help defray the cost of accessibility measures and services for events in our venue. Our aim is to make our theatre as accessible as possible to anyone in order to ensure the continued emergence of new and diverse artists in our community.

Our theatre serves an essential role in developing the Nova Scotian cultural sector by providing a space for development, exploration and presentation for artists at all career levels and from multiple disciplines and communities. Shows that have taken shape at the Bus Stop have gone on to tour nationally and internationally, showcasing Nova Scotian talent abroad. Likewise, national and international shows have been presented to Nova Scotian audiences via the Bus Stop Theatre and enriched our local cultural scene.

The Bus Stop Theatre Co-op does not receive Operating Assistance from the Province of Nova Scotia and has never been able to access it because of the funding freeze in place since 2006.

The pressure of demand on our venue is at an all-time high. As of January 26th, 2023, we only have 44 days left open out of 353 days made available for booking in 2023. As of the same date, we have already turned away over 125 days worth of rentals for lack of availability on requested dates in 2023.

These statistics reveal the important need for spaces like ours. And while the increased demand does result in higher earned revenue, it also results in much higher operational costs. The

increase in revenue does not compensate for the inflation in labour and property maintenance costs over the last decade and a half.

The answer cannot simply be to raise our rates as this would not only compromise our mandate, it would price out our client base who is in the same position as we are where public sector funding has not been sufficient to compensate for the operational cost increases they face.

We are in desperate need of support to ensure the sustainability of our operations and pursue the vital role we play in the Nova Scotian cultural sector.

We recommend that the government, at a minimum, double the funding to operating funding programs for core cultural organisations in Nova Scotia. This would not only support existing organisations, but make room for more organisations which have been previously shut out of this opportunity. These programs also need to be indexed to inflation.

The province also needs to help the engagement of diverse communities in the cultural sector through program funding and provide targeted support to organisations most severely impacted by the pandemic and its ongoing effects.

These changes would infuse new potential for growth and vibrancy in Nova Scotia's cultural sector, which makes our province attractive to both those who visit and those who live here.