

Dear Premier Ball,

**A CASE FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT IN THE ART AND ARTISTS OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

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Newfoundlanders have a long and celebrated history of creation and innovation. Living here has never been for the faint of heart and would have been impossible without our people's capacity for hard work, keen intelligence, and an ability to innovate creative solutions to complex and difficult problems. And those are exactly the qualities that are carried over into our storytelling, song, painting, and in fact to all facets of the arts. We are an artistic crowd from the shaping of our boats to the melodies of our music and everything in between.

This tradition of hard work, innovation and diversity lives on in the creative spirit and ability of our modern artists. Alongside, and respectful of, the traditional arts and the artists who make them, our modern day creators have garnered a national and international reputation for their music, writing, theatre and visual arts. It has been said that if lovers of the cultural world travel to Germany for Berlin they travel to Canada for Newfoundland.

Here in St. John's, the arts have been serving as an economic engine since the seventies when the aptly named Newfoundland Renaissance was in its heyday. The cultural travelers of the world (and they are many and inquisitive) go to places that have a vital and spirited arts scene. Places where there are many artists doing many diverse things. And that is the definition of what we have here in St. John's, across the island and in Labrador. That St. John's has the highest concentration of artists is in keeping with its population and proximity to the other big economic drivers that are centered here. Besides practicing the fine arts, artists work in many of the other creative industries from marketing to game creation for the Internet.

Study after study has shown that investment in the arts is a wise economic investment that embraces many other important factors. The arts give life to the city and the province. The arts enable our people to tell their stories to each other and the world. And we have the ability to tell those stories with both traditional and modern voices. A land that supports its painting, singing, dancing, acting, and all other art forms is a beloved land. People admire it for its vision and daring. They travel to it to partake of its pleasures and the company of its people.

Investing in the arts is sound practice in maintaining both the financial and spiritual health of our people. In the coming days we are going to need spiritually healthy people in order to help each other and the others who will come here to benefit from our creations. While the future might appear uncertain the spirit of our artists remains strong and willing to do the hard work that will continue to provide an uplifting and exiting vision of our province.

Artists are hard working people who have a faith and a hopeful vision that our province can be one where their innovation, creativity and professionalism will be rewarded in kind for all that they share with the community and the world.

The arts in Newfoundland and Labrador *have* received funding. We have The Rooms provincial gallery, Fine Arts College at Grenfell, the Arts and Culture Centres and ArtsNL. While all of this is true and good a lot of the money funded to the Arts by government goes to support infrastructure and staff while the actual artists that do the work of art have been woefully underfunded. To my mind this is like a country building a high-speed railway where the engine and tracks are in place but they've forgotten to put fuel in the engine. And the artists *are* the engine of this possible super-dynamic delivery system of ideas and creativity.

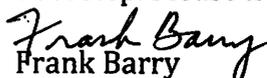
This is a time in our history for bold and forward thinking that looks at our assets and how we can assist in growing them. When every dollar spent on arts investment has been proven to yield an economic return of over 30% that investment is a no brainer. When every dollar spent on arts investment has a spiritual return that sheds its light around the world - that investment is a fair and noble principle.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a lot to boast about and certainly many of our politicians do so often and vigorously. And one of their biggest boasts is reserved for our creative arts and it is certainly one of the most legitimate. But we shouldn't boast about something so closely tied to the expression of the Newfoundland spirit and then fail to help it achieve its potential status in the nation and the world. A lot has been done so far with a very restrained level of funding but we can imagine what could be achieved if that funding were to increase to normative national and international levels.

Many mistakes have been made in Newfoundland but the decision to fund the arts has never been one of them. The self-confidence that the work of our artists gives our people when it represents us on the national and international stage cannot be underestimated. What has been achieved with a small investment can be duplicated many times over with a larger investment of money and concern.

We ask you to seriously consider the no-risk and high-return reality of increasing our investment in the artists of Newfoundland and Labrador. The decision to do this would be considered the highest of moral, visionary, and pragmatic statesmanship. The decision not to do it, or at worst to undo it, would be seen as a failure of vision and a failure of leadership at a time when we need them most.

We have the people to do the work. We have the work to do. With your help, we can export the spirit of our creativity around the world and bring the world to our doorstep. Please help us to achieve great things.


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*We would love to meet and
talk with you at your convenience.*