

Hello Minister French,

Thank you for receiving this very important package from the Newfoundland and Labrador arts community. On Tuesday April 9th we held an important community meeting entitled ART=WORK at Eastern Edge Gallery. There we gathered 90+ amazing voices from our sector which included artists from all fields, arts workers from many organizations, curators, administrators, managers, volunteers, advocates, business leaders, and residents. We were brought together through our shared disappointment of the recent provincial cuts to our sector. We see this document as a beginning of a new conversation with you to make clear the impact of provincial investment in the arts which is proven time and time again to be a good and solid investment. When you invest in the arts, every dollar runs into 22 (according to source). But beyond this economic investment, you also invest in our people's well-being, our history. Your investment assists the presentation of our stories on the world stage reflecting our distinct local culture in a time of increased globalization and pressure. All this, while providing a high quality of life for our citizens here at home. For what is a community without its culture?

These cuts come at a time when new possibilities for growth have appeared. We believe that these cuts have depressed opportunities for growth while also making our sector highly unstable. We cannot do more with less. We need to be a part of the consultation process. As you may or may not be aware, many of those let go in our sector were one-of-a-kind individuals in the province with highly specific knowledge that cannot be easily replaced by frontline staff. These cuts will also discourage many young artists to pursue careers in the creative field with the campus at CNA Stephenville are now gone.

We would like to invite you to confer with us further on this most important matter. To begin this conversation we have transcribed the ART=WORK meeting. You can also listen to the entire meeting at this address.

<http://new.livestream.com/accounts/3566932/events/2016047?query=ART%3DWORK&cat=event>

Regards,

ART=WORK

a public forum on the status of arts workers in Newfoundland and Labrador

The following report is a transcript of our meeting that took place on Tuesday April 9th 2013 at Eastern Edge Gallery in St. John's. Some names have been left as anonymous.

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At the beginning of the event, April White presented **Assemble**, a performance artwork that featured Arts workers and Artists coming together to form an assembly line of object making (the object being a paper cube).

For this performative/conceptual artwork, seven people sat at a long table with supplies, completing various steps in making the artwork and installing it in the white gallery space. The participants worked together to realize and solve any problems that occurred.

Every step in this process is extremely important and must be done by a professional. For example a real curator organized the objects in the space and even contextualized the exhibition with a wall text.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

/// Dave Andrews, VANL-CARFAC

My name is Dave Andrews and I'm the executive director of Visual Artists Newfoundland and Labrador. For me and on behalf of the our board of directors, I'd like to say thanks to everyone for coming tonight, and also huge thanks to Mary MacDonald and the board and staff of the Eastern Edge for hosting and for putting so much work into making this happen in such a short time.

The purpose behind tonight is provide a public forum for people from across the visual arts sector, to give people a chance to voice their feelings and concerns and to get a true sense of what these recent provincial budget cuts have brought. And also, to give a show of support and solidarity to everyone who's been affected.

Tonight we'll hear from a number of speakers, representing different segments of the community including artists and arts workers, galleries and business owners and then, we'll open up the floor for a discussion to get fuller sense of what the situation is, what are our concerns, and where do we go from here?

One of the main challenges at this point in time is that we still don't know the full extent of the effect that these cuts are going to have. We hear new examples every day. There are the direct effects that we know of, in terms of programs cut and jobs lost,

which would be more than enough, but there's also the ripple effect that this is going to have: on the professional lives of artists all over the province, on the public's access to their culture, as well as the effect this will have on the economy.

Just as one example, there's been a huge sea-change in business and in other professional sectors in the understanding of the importance of the arts and of the cultural sector on the overall health of the economy, and not only in terms of tourism, but in attracting and retaining interest of business from outside the province. More than ever before, investment in the arts is important for everyone, and, as the province changes, the return on that investment is getting easier and easier to see.

At this point in time, when there's so much growth and we are encouraged to view ourselves as a "have" province, it's cuts like these which will work towards keeping Newfoundland and Labrador a "have not" province with respect to the cultural sector. They are not detrimental only in the short term, but also in the long term by slowly dismantling much of the infrastructure that would allow artists to be self-sufficient and have enough resources to work to their creative potential.

I see a number of VANL members here this evening, and I would like to encourage others to consider membership. As a professional, members-based organization, we see again and again the value of having a unified sector. There is power in numbers and as the great turn-out tonight shows, there's a need for a unified voice that can address these sorts of issues, and hopefully the forum this evening is just another step in making that voice stronger. Thanks again.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

/// Mary MacDonald, Director, Eastern Edge Gallery

Over the last couple of weeks I have heard lots of concerns from gallery members and friends in the arts community in regards to the future of our sector here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There seemed to be a genuine sense of depression that rippled through our community as news came out about the provincial budgetary cuts, of which its impacts are still not fully clear. But the fact remains, that we are a network and function that way, so when part of that network is damaged, it effects everyone.

As we all know, we are a small yet mighty force of cultural producers, yet I fear that these kind of heavy handed and short sighted cuts shake our confidence in our own self-image. It makes

us question "whats next?" and not in a good way. But we can't let this happen. There is certainly concerns out there, but also potential solutions. So what are they? And how can we move forward.

Eastern Edge is very thankful of the support it receives from governments at all three levels. And so we would like to see ways in which we can work with rather than against government, even though at times like these it's easy to get upset. we have to communicate. we need to support one another.

For our arts community can only thrive if we have the infrastructure to support it. Galleries, Educational programs, curators, writers, installers, the list goes on.

Young artists (many of whom who become members of Eastern Edge, our volunteers, our staff) need access to early art education in school programs such as those at the College of the North Atlantic.

Artists also need institutions and galleries to gain valuable working experience and to exhibit their first major shows in such as the Rooms.

And everyone needs exhibitions and cultural projects that reflect their own stories but also open their minds to new ones.

As another example, I d like to forward the idea that artists such as Peter Wilkins and Will Gill who this year will be representing Newfoundland at the Venice Bienalle, arguably the worlds biggest art exhibition, would not be there if it were not for a supportve and thriving arts community as found here in Newfoundland. Behind them are our arts institutions, supportive artist friends and arts workers. These workers are deserving of the biggest rewards not black curtains for the time, energy and love they put into their work.

I'd like to see our community keep its status as an amazing incubator for these emerging artists and arts workers and producers of world class contemporary art . We need to retain the talent that we bring here, not chop it when the going gets tough. We need to build more connections not less, locally, nationally and internationally.

The other day I saw that the Toronto Arts Council has just invested 6 million more dollars into the arts. BC is also investing more money into the arts not less. I'd like us to take this as a challenge, to communicate positively with our governments, private sponsors and larger community to change this perception of the arts as "expendable". I would like to thank everyone for coming out tonight, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

/// Philippa Jones, Professional Artist

I first arrived in St. John's in February 2009. With just a suitcase and no family or friends in the

province, myself and my partner attempted to make a home here. In no time at all we were welcomed by the arts community. Employment and art opportunities were generously passed my way and at times people pushed me forward, believing in me more than I did myself. I wasn't expecting to stay here long term, and until a few weeks ago the thought of leaving was unimaginable because St. John's truly has become my home, this is my arts community. With that friendship and support I have been able to practise my art in St. John's.

The Romantic tourist ads certainly show Newfoundland off at its best. But we all know that the weather cannot be relied upon, the Icebergs are intermittent, the Whales contrary. On those days there is always the Rooms, the epitome of Newfoundland's cultural dichotomy, from its rich history to its vibrant contemporary art. That is not likely to last is it? With a 17.5% cut in funding the government has cut the reputation of the whole province. A reputation that already does not do justice to the diversely skilled and talented people here.

If just 3 months ago someone had asked me 'what is the art scene like in St. John's?' I would have replied, 'it is energetic, enthusiastic, full of well-educated, hardworking and talented artists making thought provoking, high quality art. But it is a hidden gem, we are not making the impact on the national and international scene that we should be, but we are about to break out of the Newfoundland bubble.'

That hope for greater national and international recognition was fostered with the appointment of Mireille Eagan as the Curator for Canadian Art. Mireille was working to enhance our reputation and standing . Without her our place in the context of Canadian art is greatly impeded and an active, supportive and involved member of our community is lost.

Realistically when money is mismanaged and there is a deficit, cuts have to be made. We accept, all be it reluctantly that this includes the arts. But the short sighted, arbitrary nature of the system for clawing back this money will destroy what we have be striving towards for years. No account has been made of the larger impact each individual has upon the community, or the vital need the Rooms has for the new perspective, enthusiasm and knowledge of it's now lost employees.

The cuts have ensured our continued artistic isolation. The message is that we are not respected, the government is not interested in cultural integrity but short term gloss and under such an atmosphere I cannot see the art community thriving. I fear that with the loss of opportunities, representation and inspirational exhibits, artists will leave. We will have no choice if we want our efforts to be recognized, and Newfoundland will be a greyer and a more isolated place for our loss.

/// Dave Hopley, Local Business Owner (Pi, Rocket Bakery, Living Planet/Johnny Ruth)

Hello. I am not sure what to say too specifically. However, being in the small business world I

certainly place a value in the arts. It has always been a source of inspiration and a source of product really as I do sell peoples artwork on tshirts, its one of the things that I do. The biggest challenge is to communicate to the government the actual value of the arts seen here in Newfoundland. Its certainly one of the main reasons I am here in the first place. Newfoundland is such a culturally rich place and was attractive to myself. I think we need to relentlessly communicate to the powers that be this idea, in the coming days.

Further to business it is my belief that the business community is not an isolated community. It is important that relationships be established between business and artists any way that this can be accomplished. Every business has some arts involvement, whether it be graphic design or advertising for example. I think its again, inncumbant upon artists to force this issue with business leaders as well, and that's going to be another challenge ongoing. And even in the case with larger companies, oil companies, their employee are attracted here cause St. John's is a pretty cool place to live. If St. John's was a hell hole they would have a hard time attracting people to live here. Because its such a gorgeous place to live a lively art scene, its easy to attract employees to live here.

Businesses are also impacted by things like free trade, globalization, issues of a larger nature. And so we must remember that creativity can't be outsourced. If ppl are creative and dynamic you are not easily replaced. I guess as far as our local political leaders go, we must again communicate and convince them that artists are valuable. We are a commodity, if we want to put it in their terms. There is certainly a dollar value. iAnd this must be impressed upon.

/// Marlene Creates, Professional Artist

I've been a self-employed artist for over 30 years. My income comes from exhibition fees from publicly-funded galleries, copyright fees when my work is reproduced in publications, visiting artist projects, guest lectures, grants, commissions, and selling my work.

The point I want to make about this is that most of my income does not come from this province. In fact, I would not be able to live here if I was dependent on what I earned here. I even wonder if any kind of artist could make a living from what they can earn here. We simply don't have a large enough population in this province to support all the cultural activity that takes place here.

So I earn most of my money offshore. And then I spend it here. That's economic development, as I understand it. Otherwise, you just have the same money going round and round (with the government collecting taxes each time it changes hands). Real economic development means new money coming here. And this is exactly how artists contribute to the local economy. (Christina Parker could perhaps confirm that a large amount of economic activity for artists here comes from selling work to people outside the province.)

For several years we have had a provincial Cultural Economic Development Program (the

CEDP) administered by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. And we had a component for individual artists that would assist them with precisely this kind of economic development — bringing new money to the province. In fact, the component was called Market Access and Export and it was for artists in Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance, Literary Arts, and Interactive Digital Media. (There were separate programs for Film, Music, and Crafts.)

The program provided grants not to assist in the creative side of producing our work, but with the costs of getting it out there once it was made. Over the years, the program has had various names: the Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Economic Renewal; the Canada/Newfoundland Cooperation Agreement on Cultural Industries; the Canada/Newfoundland Comprehensive Economic Development Agreement; and finally the provincial Cultural Economic Development Program (CEDP).

With CEDP, we were eligible for up to \$5,000 for the costs of the shipping and insurance of our work, our travel and accommodation, and the production and distribution of promotional materials. I've had assistance through CEDP for various activities:

- in 2005, a contribution toward a publication to accompany and promote a touring exhibition of 10 years of photo-installations I did with found public signs;
- in 2009, assistance with shipping and travel costs for an exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World in Exeter, England;
- and promotion costs for an exhibition next month at Paul Petro Contemporary Art in Toronto, as part of the CONTACT Photography Festival.

The support from CEDP contributed materially to the success of these endeavours, and there have been many ripple effects from each one.

Perhaps you weren't aware of this program, or maybe you were planning on requesting assistance for something this year. Unfortunately, last week I was informed verbally by staff (because it's not on the website yet) that, as a result of a 10% cut to the CEDP program, the Market Access and Export component has been eliminated. And, in fact, individual artists are no longer even eligible to apply to CEDP — it will only be for organizations and festivals. Individual artists can apply to the Newfoundland & Labrador Arts Council for some of these costs. But the arts council's budget was not increased. And the kinds of activities that CEDP supported — like ads in national magazines and producing publications — are not likely to be supported under Professional Project Grants to individual artists, which are judged on their "artistic merit" rather than their "potential for stimulating economic growth" (CEDP).

Yes, there are budget cuts. But there's been no open consultation with the arts community — none that I know of — and no input from artists about decisions that are being made which affect us. I feel that by holding this forum, Eastern Edge and VANL-CARFAC have initiated a consultation, and I want to thank them for doing so.

/// Sheilagh O'Leary, Professional Artist and Councillor for the City of St. John's

Good evening folks and to all artists, cultural workers and supporters at tonight's Art Forum.

I send my sincere regrets that I am unable to be here in person but I am committed to two other community meetings this evening. Believe me when I say, I am here in spirit.

As an artist, a cultural advocate and as an elected city councillor running for Mayor in the upcoming fall municipal election, it distresses me greatly to see the negative impacts of the short-sightedness of this provincial budget, not only in the arts, but in many important service areas including the environment, our justice system, and in our municipal operating cuts.

Tonight is about a discussion on the impacts it will have upon the arts and I would like to put my voice in the mix.

A Creative economy is a healthy economy, one that marries artistic merit with great economic benefits. It is astounding to me that in this day and age, with such a vibrant arts community as we have in this city and province, and in a time of economic prosperity, that the arts can be disregarded in such a fashion.

In a report prepared by the conference Board of Canada on measuring and understanding the value of culture, it revealed that " the cultural sector is the cornerstone of the creative economy". Arts and culture industries play a vital role in attracting people, business and investment, and in distinguishing Canada as a dynamic and exciting place to live and work. It provides a strong quality of life for residents as well as for visitors.

For this and many more reasons I advocate strongly for the continued support of artists and cultural workers for the benefit of the citizens, including artists but overall for the masses who benefit directly from its smart economic growth and diverse richness in our everyday lives.

In solidarity
Sheilagh
Councillor O'Leary
City of St. John's
576-8567/631-3902

PUBLIC FORUM

/// Moderated by Dave Lane (Happy City) Happy City St. John's is a non-profit organization that informs, encourages, and facilitates public dialogue around civic issues in the city of St. John's. Dave Lane is the chair of Happy City.

Introduction

Dave Lane - I'm just going to start. Is there anyone here that has been directly affected by these cuts?

Anonymous - I was hired on at the Rooms after a national competition, and I had planned to stay here for an extended period of time. I was honored to come and work here. I started my job working on a series of projects around the community and engaged as much as I could, but it was last week, was it last week? wow, I was supposed to be done last Friday, but I am staying on to finish my current project. But what this means for the Rooms... After starting at the Rooms with a staff of 14, and now after these lay offs to 9, they have now reduced staff to the point where they do not feel like they need a secretary anymore. And what this means is that we can not do mundane functions, basic paperwork will be difficult. And this comes at a time when we had just hired a curator and a manager of exhibitions and publications and we were in a position to be proactive and not reactive.

But now we have been reduced to one curator who for the Memorial Collection and one for the provincial government. And they were working already hard as it was. To be quite frank, I am concerned for the ability of the Rooms to be active and are extremely bare bones.

Dave Lane: Thank you very much. The reason I ask the question that htis is touching individuals. And there are 2 reasons why we are here. It touches individuals but it affects all of us our quality of life. What drove people to come today?

Sharon LeRiche (CC) - I work for the Craft Council Gallery . We don't know the specific cuts will mean. But certainly in terms of the Rooms we have been working over the past few years to increase opportunities for craft people, to advance their careers to a place where they are able to move into a professional level. I think there is a lot of development of someone's career that you don't see until they reach a certain level and you can look at their resume. But there are so many things done along the way to get them to that level. And when you work in the industry you see how important those things are. When you take away say a curator at the Rooms who was just getting things to a certain level, an administrator who was getting things organized and making things possible, a manager that had the knowledge, history and experience in ways that were new to the area, and had an understanding of Craft in particular and made connections to our craft community, it is a major loss. To see what won't be someone there who will take some time is a loss. In addition there is also the loss of the CNA Stephenville VA program. That program contained the only place to study ceramics and metal work full time in NL. Started a lot of artists and craftspeople who went to other programs and became professional artists.

Programs like that are good transitional programs, for people who may go onto other art educational programs. When you come from rural areas of NL it is sometimes hard to jump into an art program, and it was here not away. Artists like Michael Flarhety who went there. They had a clay studio in the basement, and they had a major effect on local community and the professional community here in the province.

Dave - People were growing their careers. And now people might not have other places to go. Where else can they go? Are there any other thoughts on that? Cause were developing an industry. Let's talk about career development in the arts. How is this affecting people's careers in the arts. Who here is an arts worker?

Candace Fulford (artist, youth arts coordinator) - For us its a combination of cuts (Federal Service Canada, and Provincial social services) that has impact. We (Harbourside Community Youth Arts Progam) deals in a combined sector of social development and arts education. We're trying to connect young people to creative careers. So you can imagine how depressing it is over a short time period where I come in to my group and have to say that this person has lost their job in social services, arts programs etc. It is hard for me to encourage them to follow their dreams, Go be a graphic designer! Go to art school! And in the same breath, not even know if I am going to have a job. So what kind of message are we sending? Youth are already facing tough job realities every day anyway. Yet they are becoming involved in the arts community, but at the same time it is disheartening because I am worried for my own job, my peers, and even the artists that they are learning from on a daily basis.

Dave Lane: Any other thoughts?

Jessica Butler - I have my own craft practice, and I am also in the tourism sector. I am really concerned about the cuts, especially to the crafts sector. Lost a program (the CIDP program, different from the CEDP program, but this CIDP program offered assistance for tuition to go to art school, to start own studio plus a whole host of other attributes) And like Candace, I do a lot of work with young people to encourage them to get involved with the arts. But if theres no follow through or support its not sensible for me to encourage them, if there is no follow through, if there is no financial plan. Similar to my work with tourism, we try to help a lot of beginning craftspeople or museums develop site specific projects. When visitors come to the province they want to experience the place but also they want to take something away with them in craft/art form. And now there is no funding to help develop those things. There won't be those special objects of visitors anymore.

Dave Lane - Why are we here today?

Tara Bryan (artist) - I moved to NL in 1992. Im a painter. I've been involved heavily ie craft council, eastern edge, st. michaels, vanl-carfac. I have been involved with all of the community discussions since then, from the provincial gallery separating from MUN to the Cabot 500 year, the Viking Celebrations, all the meetings with government, and we've had the same discussions over and over and over and over and over and over. The reason I am here, although I feel to a degree that I am beating my head against the same wall again, is that the only way we are going to convince the government of anything, is to keep beating our head against that wall. We can't do it as individuals. They only seem to perceive things in percentages of the community and direct influence on the economy. And the only way we as artists and cross-creative disciplines that we have a hope in hell is that we have to do this as a community.. And thats why

im here.

Dave Lane: What do people think about the idea of tying what we do as artists to the allmighty dollar?

Greg Bennett (artist) - I find myself nodding my head here at everything Tara has said. We have this problem and it is very obvious. Whenever we talk about these things we come up the economic argument, the taxable argument, what we do with the tax money. And this is an obvious way of looking at things. The accountant can then sit down and say I'll give some money here, Doyle will get a tax credit here, and some here etc. It gets sold here, bought here. We have a perception problem that way, they don't appreciate the qualitative nature of what we do, they appreciate the quantitative culture. We need to express ourselves to Minister French as much as we can. I looked at the website, and the website was last updated in 2006, under a different premier and a different Minister. So we are not being addressed, we are not being looked at. We are not on the radar. We don't have a strong lobby group. These are things we need to look at as a group to come up with some solutions on to how to simply educate the government. I don't believe they are. I don't see any wisdom here. I don't see any leadership, sensitivity here, its just brute actions.

Dave Lane - So flowing from that point, I think that this discussion comes up a lot, that we have to justify ourselves all the time. So lets see, hypothetically, if the government is representative of the people in terms of decision making, what is your sense of the broad community's understanding or connection to or feeling about the arts? Do they understand it? Do they think its necessary? Or what does it even mean?

John McDonald (artist) - I think that's why the Rooms exists! To help educate the public, introduce them to the arts and bring them in, so by cutting the Rooms it's going to get worse and worse, and it's going to snowball.

Mary Ellen Wright (archives worker) - It is terribly frustrating to see the Rooms -- I have to say I was involved in the Rooms in its infancy, and I was asked to predict it in 5 years what would each person be getting, and I said I hoped that it wouldnt be an individual but that each collective of people would be getting what they need. But there is quite a good community at the rooms. and I've just been thinking, how in the last few years how much it's grown, how many programs there are, in the art gallery in particular. And this is coming from someone who did not have a lot of involvement with the arts. I have been exposed to so many new things that I would not have seen before. And then to have the guts kicked out of it again. And what they've cut is the internal workings, so its the curators, the administrators, the people who describe the material, they've sort of left the frontline people but my analogy that I have been using over the past few days. Its like you have a beautiful car, gorgeous paint job, etc. but its got no transmission inside. (audience claps)

I have to speak my piece for the archives, and I think the art gallery, and the museum as well has not only been offering services to the public, but it has also provided support and advice to the archives community and probably to the artistic community as well. We would ask questions of their conservator. And now we have lost the only conservator in the province who had any expertise in fine art in the province so now there's nobody to call. We've already lost the federal funding to shall we say rent a conservator for a day and ask questions. So now this conservator at the Rooms is gone, the only one left has a specialty in objects and they won't have any time at all. I don't have the heart to ask them now. We won't have anyone to ask. So that is problematic. The Rooms was also very good at hosting our organization, and offering workshops these would include things like CCI works on paper, and they would let us use their space and equipment. But I don't have the heart to ask them now - the transmission's gone right out of er.

Dave Lane - How are we feeling about that, let's look forward 5 years...

Anonymous (artist) - *Comment withheld*

Dave - What is your vision of the future? As of today, starting now. Here's how we feel today-feeling kind of gutted. Its pretty concerning. if we have a clear picture of what this means then we can get an idea of the future.

Journalist in the audience - Well for me as a journalist, if there's less stuff going on there's less for me to write about to do my job.

Mr. Lane (resident) - I think what has to happen, theres a great group of people in this room. and were all looking for answers. we all have our own ideas. but if we go away tonight saying yes i got my thought out there or no i didn't get my thought out there, but thats all there is then we've just had a nice night together folks, thanks very much.

We have MHAs in this province that represent each district. They need to hear the voice. If they don't hear the voice they won't be pushed to do anything on their own. The minister will continue or try to continue to run the department in whatever isolated way that they do. But it's upon all of us, each of us to write to our MHAs.

Here's what from my personal view what is happening - Ok so we have a beautiful looking car without anything in it. We've got beautiful advertisements. We've got the Republic of Doyle showing St. John's in enhanced colour. But we just kicked the guts out of 'er b'y! So the tourists are going to come, and they might see it, and they might not. But the Rooms won't be open for some of those days when the tourists come, something that we are so proud of. We need to tell all the MHAs in the province. There has to be a lot more thought. There needs to be a lot of consultation. MHAs have to have town halls. And we have to send letters, and then they will see that these individuals form a very large group and they have to react to it and respond to it. We can't just sit here tonight and do what i am doing that is ranting. (crowd laughs) We have to take

that next step.

Dave Lane: Well that is a great point, dad (crowd laughs). But you're right we need to gather together, you see i'm the calm version and hes the violent type. (crowd laughs) but seriously, we do we say and what's the objective.

Michael Venart (musician) - It doesn't matter what we say, as long as we say something. We just need to keep saying it! For my whole life, and I'm not a young guy, this has been constant. The government has consistently gone for the cheap money, and they have forgotten about *building*. I'm sick of it. You can't build anything if you don't start building it. Like that car, if you don't move it it's going to die. This has been constant my whole life, and they've slowly been picking away at it. I'm just sick of it. So 10 yrs ago, I started randomly writing MPs just randomly telling them what I think. I think everyone needs to start doing this. They need to read this perspective that's not happy with what they are doing things. And if enough people do it, they will be like *OH!* this is how we should build community. It's like an amoeba.

Pat Montes (resident) - In response to your statement... I am not an artist but I do appreciate art. And it seems to me like we are frustrated. And we really need to get together in a constant manner. And we would be really strong, not just one person there and one person there. I do think that we have to stick together and be really pro-active and really work until we get things done..

Mary Ellen Wright - (archivist) And they do count the letters!

Micael Venart (artist) - There's no reason that we can't do both.

Mary Ellen Wright (archivist) - Yeah. And I remember, there was some sort of campaign for library renovations or something, and there was extensive lobbying campaign run about not changing the framework, and one of the observations that the Minister made to the group was that they had received all these letters and so it does work. Collective action and individual action is also powerful.

VANL representative -- I just want to say one real quick note, is that in addition to that that is why VANL CARFAC exists. And I would encourage all of you to become members of VANL and join the advocacy committee. Get on it. Together we can have a strong voice.

Dave Lane - Lets talk about that. What does this idea of collective action look like? VANL, EE, this meeting. What else?

Sharon Pippy (resident) - I think we are witnessing a movement where lots of provinces' and moving away from government involvement with the arts. And this is a tragedy. The white elephant in the room then is what do we do in its absence? And the expectation globally is that the cooperate community will just take it on as a matter of course. But the question is who is the

cooperate community and where do they live? How do we access these people? Many corporations do have big hearts. But their hearts will go to health, social services, cancer, children. So what gets missed is the arts, animals and nature. So whatever avenues that now, EE and VANL I think is a beautiful melding of organizations with similar interests, even a melding of population base, but how do we target the corporate communities who come here and pillage, excuse the term, and *encourage* them to be more responsible citizens.

Anonymous (artist) - To add to your comment. Where are the cooperations? Well I just set up a cooperation, we are here in the room. I just sent one up with 8 artists. The predominant view of cooperations that they are blood thirsty is not really accurate. Not everyone has to be operating under this mindset. Our business model is a metaphor for how we treat each other in life. We try to use a lot of our profits, to give back to our community, to give free seminars. In my case its face painting, and balloon animals. So how do we take a negative situation into a love story? Where's the creative energy? There are ways that we can come together. I think we're in the baby steps of an artistic revolution, where people are realizing that art wasn't created by government.

Dave Lane - Cooperations have a place. Where is it? You're saying that if they should set aside a part of their profits that should go into the arts. What are thoughts on who manages on where the money goes what they decide on what they spend it on and how do we make sure where the money is going?

Greg Bennett (artist) - I thought that was what government was. (crowd laughs)

Dace Lane - How can we invest money in things that will educate the public. How can we use artists to educate the government?

Jessica Butler (artist) - I think we should have a social media campaign. I think leading by positive example would be one of the best things. And even though I was just up ranting about the cuts to the craft sector, up until that point we were one of the best funded craft sectors in the country. And I would like to say that we are one of the better developed craft sectors in the country as well. Us and Quebec had the most funding for Craft. I think we could show the . We have lots of volunteers and passionate people and employees in our **sector**. I think we could show the government, that when they invest they have both qualitative and quantitative results, they are in direct relation.

Mary Ellen Wright (archivist) - I think that one of the biggest problems from the archival perspective, is the government people often will get the end product but they don't really understand the process, whether it's the the creation of an artwork or curating of an exhibition--they don't understand that process, they don't understand what it means to have that finished product. We spend a long time talking about context. And that's what we've been talking about. It's the process that's been lost (at the rooms). They don't understand the process. How do we sell the process? How do we make it understood, what the the cultural value of this process is,

the economic or what have you. We never figured it out how to do it for the archives and I don't know if it has been figured out for the art gallery, but that's what they've lost at the art gallery-- what makes it go, and it's a problem.

Coleen Quigly (librarian) - We have so many institutions and associations in this province that have these same interests as the arts. We always speak in different sectors, but what if we all came together, for something traditional, like a press conference or a showcase. Or we could go the negative route and shut down wikipedia for the day, black curtains on art/ library books (they got cut too!), close everything for the day! Then open it up and say this is what you have now-- you have no culture, nothing. There is a famous story in Florence where they cut the library, and then one of the librarians took their books, a rare book hostage, and they said "I'm going to burn this book by the end of the week, unless you give me some reasons on why we shouldn't?!" People became outraged, it became important. It was about getting acknowledgement about the value of the library not just economic but qualitative. -- Shuttin it down!

Josh ? - I'm trying to think about this optimistically. There are some ways that we can speak about this and get through to people who do not speak this language. So I am not an artist myself, but I am here because of the arts. And I think a lot of people share this experience with me. I am here because its a vibrant arts scene or because their friends are involved. To me the conversation about the back end stuff, the process -- well its really about infrastructure! Nobody gripes about the fact that you have to build a service road right? People wouldn't move here if there were a bunch of empty galleries. People are moving here because there is access to opportunities to do really interesting and creative things. Im starting to hear that kind of logic. We are competing for people. That kind of thinking. So in this way, we can make a case that its doing something really important for our community. We're having to fight for people to come here and stay and build these communities. Let's pry open the door on this conversation.

Joan Scott - There are some great ideas here, the beginnings of a campaign. You could write your letters, organizations can write letters. You are not the only ones. But what is going on is a giant campaign to frighten, to scare people who may be asking for money. I happened to visit two sites where there were strikes going on. I recommend you try that. I had to go to the airport, and I felt guilty about crossing the picket line so I made some muffins, and gave them to the people there. The protesters there were very low key. And if you've been on strike for as long as they have, and the public hasn't noticed really they've been held up at the gates, so there is very little public pressure to get them back to work. Then I went to a dangerous strike, I parked in a bad location and I looked up and there were 3 guys running at me, they didn't have sticks but they sort of looked like policemen. I put my head up and realized that they were harmless. They said 'you have 2 minutes!' to get out of here. Now this is a very different kind of protest. This stike was very tense. So that's the world that you are trying to get into. I think you have to think about joining up with CNA, they have a demonstration tomorrow at 12pm.

Anonymous (artist) - I quickly want to touch on the question of showing process, or giving context. Hands up, how many in the room are practicing artists? How often do you exercise your

skills in a public forum, how often do you let people see your medium as you're exploring it? (many hands go up) I find in many ways we don't get the opportunity to show process. Imagine if you had an artist who would be on display all day long watching an artist paint.

Dave - I guess that's what Eastern Edge much of the time and other art galleries. Phillipa?

Phillipa Jones (artist) - The reality is that we have to prove ourselves to the government. Some of us are saying that we have to educate them. Somehow it's our fault that we didn't get the message across about how important we are. And I don't believe they don't know that. I think it's willful ignorance. We should hold them to account for their willful ignorance of the arts. We are important and everyone knows that. And I do think it is willful ignorance. I don't believe for a second that they don't know that.

Greg Bennett (artist) - I am continually discouraged by government. We've got a Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, the message that he is sending is terrible. They act like it's not a big deal. We don't even get lip service. We get "Don't worry about it, we'll get you your culture or whatever". They say that people won't get affected by the Rooms (cuts), nothing will be happening there so don't worry about it. It is this tone. I think the leadership on this is very poor. Once again I'm directing my anger at them.

And the only other thing that I would like to mention is that I work a day job, a labour job, and then I go and I paint in the nighttime, another labour job. When am I going to be an advocate? And this is the same for most artists I know, they have 2 jobs, then they work the weekends. So the reason it is hard for us to maintain action is that we are physically tired! So my thought on this is that, we need advocates that aren't necessarily artists but people who have power or who are in power. But we need people at the cocktail parties. The cocktail party that the Minister goes to or the Minister's Aide goes to. We need the person who talks to the minister, and say oh by the way, I just saw this exhibition at the art gallery, oh by the way, I was just at the Craft Council, oh by the way -- so that is what I find an area that we should look at.

Dave Lane- That is interesting, that you are saying maybe they are not artists themselves, but that is how they are involved with the arts, advocating, being a part of an intentional task.

Mary Ellen Wright (archives) - We need a champion!

Dave Lane - An evangelist.

Dave Lane - So we're nearing close to 9, want to get to the next steps. Is there anything that has been missed so far?

Young Journalist at back - Wanted to bring the focus back to CNA cuts in Stephenville. I know ppl who are there right now. I have friends that are in the Visual Arts Program at CNA, Stephenville.

Journalists friend - Well I know teachers up there who are losing their jobs. I went there too, and the reason I did was because I couldn't get into Grenfell. Also a lot of people don't want to sign on to a four year program right away.

Candace Fulford (artist, youth arts coordinator) - And there's nowhere really for those students to prepare their proposals if they want to go to Grenfell. So again, the services are not going to be available. The services to connect those young artists are being cut, the skill workers to assist them are being cut, and now the programs are being. And I have to agree with Phillipa, I think it is a bit of willful ignorance. I think its like either one sided assuming that they know everything about what we do, how we are educated, how we are professional. And the other side is that no they don't and we need to educate them, choosing not to know anything about us.

Tara Bryan - I think that the government also counts on the fact that we are individual artists that we work alone in our studios and that we won't organize and put up a united front.

Phillipa Jones (artist) - And I think that they think we will just continue what we do because we love it. But we need to eat. We need to have the opportunities to show our work. I just finished a 3 month residency at the Rooms, all my time was given, I was not paid for it, but I was given space and materials. I was there, all my time was given to the community. Cause I want to give back to the community. But there is this perception that artists should constantly be grateful for the opportunities they've been given. But I'm not very grateful. I worked really hard to be an artist. I spent 7 years in education, I have worked hard for the opportunities that I've been given and then I work hard to fulfill those opportunities. And I am doing it for no money. But it is this constant thing that I should be grateful.

Colleen Quigly - I feel I have to speak for my friends who work at the Rooms, I don't but I have friends that do. And some of them said to me that I am not comfortable coming to this event because I would like to keep my job. So there is a fear that has been installed in government workers. They are afraid to speak out. There is something bigger going on here, when we're not just silencing individuals but the people who are supposed to work (for this sector).

Anonymous - I've worked for the federal government, and I don't want to start consip theories but this is familiar.

Dave Lane - One thing I heard was this idea of building a career, it takes a lot of work! That's what really is the crux, a lot of people in the arts do not work for regular salaries and it is a real shame. So next steps -- we are coming together, we need to share our ideas, this is a big deal. How can we keep these meetings going when we are all so busy? So then we say lets write letters. You are all saying similar stories. If we can all share what this common thread will be. I think it is important to keep doing what you're doing and sharing what you do. When the community values it its less likely to disregarded. And some have mentioned, that many things

were cut, this year and last year, so that's what you're up against too. So you are doing wonderful things and we can take pride in that. But what are the next steps?

Michael Venart (musician) - Well one thing, we could organize a buy nothing day, except perhaps a don't have any media day. No music, books, music, art.

Phillipa - That would work if you could stop the media for everyone.

Dave Lane - What about bombarding people, let's put art up everywhere!

Anonymous - I think bombarding people is great. I'm part of a group that had a gallery show that the curator made up stories about how it was made. And since this has happened there's been so much more conversation, the community has exploded.

Anonymous - It is really inspiring to see so many people speaking. I didn't know this meeting was happening, but it is a really good experience for me so thank you!

Anonymous- What about some sort of Facebook group? We could share our emails, and people could start there, and add to that. To get everyone together, keep them together.

Mary Ellen Wright (archives) - call the open line shows, they all listen to those!

Dave Lane - So I'm in marketing, so is there an underlying current, a hot message, what is the message that we can all carry? Everytime we do something we can say..

Anonymous - Well it should be what Eastern Edge has put out there that artwork is hard work!

JC bear (artist) - I will leave it to you to say it in a way that is not condescending or from away-- but that art is something that will attract people here, and attract people back here to and make this place an interesting place to live. The idea of a FB group or media campaign is frankly much more effective than writing letters to MHAs. The MHAs are ciphers these days, but it's all run from the top just look at cabinet. If you meet in public, then the powers at be will pick up on it.

Mary Ellen Wright (archives) - What we are talking about now is a general and persistent constant message about the life and work of the artist. I'm just wondering if we should talk specific issues, the impacts of the cuts, to the gallery, to the CNA programs, and

building a campaign around those specific things. They got the justice ones reviewed. Is it the broader message we want to change, or these cuts in particular. The first is a long term focus, is there also a short term.

Dave Lane - My thought is that if you have that broad message, you are bringing up more

issues at once.

Craig Francis Power (artist, writer) - I've got something to say back here. It might be relevant to what you guys are talking about. So the situation that we are in, we are talking about different modes of thinking about how making art more in the public sphere, more quote on quote attractive to the average person or whatever. But we shouldn't be talking about art being classy, we should be talking about making art cool you know?

There are a lot of people coming to St. John's cause of the oil industry. Most of them are young people. And they like cool things. So in Toronto, the Queen West people, the gallery district, that was all artists who started that. What if everyone went home and started a fucking art gallery at the front room of their house? And then they said, "we're going to coordinate openings the first weekend of every month". And everyone just did their own thing. That would create a *very* public buzz about all the people who are creative in St. John's. Right? Its easier said than done, and it takes a lot of organizing, and It is hard work. But I think that it is something that we should be thinking about that is outside the bounds of corporate sponsorship, outside the bounds of knocking on every door of every government official in the province and pleading "please pay attention to us!" They are not going to buy it. Cause like art is not as important as doctors so they're not going to buy it. So we may have to do it ourselves. Something like that that has worked in other places. Granted it has worked in bigger centres, do it yourself grassroots, but its still in the public sphere. So it is still easy for people to engage with us and not . (Someone in crowd: yea so they will notice us!) Yea, lets just go be assholes!

Dave Lane - Ok so now are we ready to go forth?! Go forth! But really, this is definitely a tough time. We are here because we know there is a better way forward. We are here to recognize this. It's why we love being here. It's why people are so shocked when they get here. I just want to invite Mary back up here to say a few closing words

Mary MacDonald (Eastern Edge) - I just want to thank all the speakers who spoke today, as well as those at the beginning of the meeting. We are drafting a letter that will be available online and a paper copy as well in the coming days. I have been typing your notes here at the back and all of this will be made publically available. If there is anyone who was too shy to make a comment and would like to do so, send us an email, or you can talk to me personally and I will add your notes. Finally, I would just like to thank Dave for moderating our discussion and Dave Andrews from Vanl-Carfac for helping organizing this event. Dave would you like to add anything?

Dave Andrews (VANL-CARFAC) - Nope, I think that is good. Thank you everyone.

-- Meeting adjourned.

Notes by Mary MacDonald (Eastern Edge Gallery)

PHOTOS

All images by Devon Crosby











