

Pre-Budget Consultations - Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Feb 25, 2015

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Co-presenter representing Visual Artists Newfoundland and Labrador

### **The Specific Situation for Artists in Labrador**

#### **1) The lack of any public visual art exhibition space in all of Labrador**

In St. John's, The Rooms operates the public art gallery and it presents art programs, displays and exhibitions which benefit the general public, as well as artists. Other communities on the Island benefit from the province's funding programs to operate art spaces and travelling exhibitions. In Labrador, there is no public visual art exhibition space, and artists and the general public alike have no access to displays and programs that other citizens of the province are able to enjoy and benefit from.

#### **2) The loss of the Labrador Craft Marketing Agency.**

It has been several years since the closure of the Labrador Craft Marketing Agency, which operated as a wholesale agent for producers of Labrador crafts. A few Labrador producers of clothing, accessories, jewellery and souvenir items are selling independently, but many producers have stopped working because there is no access to markets that the Labrador Craft Marketing Agency provided. This is an economic loss to the province, and it is also risking the loss of traditional skills only made in Labrador.

#### **3) The off-season closing of the Labrador Interpretation Centre, and the subsequent impact on curatorial work that is usually done in the off-season.**

Up to last year, the Labrador Interpretation Centre in North West River operated year-round, with programs and staffing tailored in the summer to tourism, and in the winter to educational programming, and to the revitalization of displays and artifacts. In addition to loss of services, this closure meant the loss of the jobs of the employees of the Centre, and corresponding

economic loss.

**4) The closure of three commercial galleries in Happy Valley-Goose Bay--the Birches, John Neville's Studio and Drumdancer.**

In the past two years, three commercial galleries specializing in Labrador themed art, sculptures, paintings, photography and crafts have shut their doors. There are various reasons for these closures, including the businesses' lack of access to outside markets, and the inability of the businesses to maintain sales stock, especially in craft items.

**5) Restrictions on the carving program at the Labrador Correctional Facility due to overcrowding and budget cuts in the Department of Justice.**

The Labrador Correctional Facility has had several successful programs in wood and stone carving and inmates who learn skills have found them helpful in rehabilitation. Upon release, some have continued to carve and generate income from their work.

**VANL and artists from Labrador request that the Pre-Budget Consultation committee look at these concerns with an eye to improving the artistic and the economic environment of people who live in this part of the province or who visit here.**