

From: Ruby Boutilier <rboutilier@nscad.ca>
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Importance: High

Here is the formal copy of my 5 minute speech last night. Please post.

Thank you for your time.
Ruby Boutilier
Recruitment Coordinator

NSCAD UNIVERSITY
(902)494-8241
Email: rboutilier@nscad.ca



Hello, My name is Ruby Boutilier and I have a difficult time when asked to articulate how the recent decision to eviscerate the film tax credit will affect me personally. It is difficult for me, because to be quite frank, it effects everything in my life. How can I make you understand that in 5 minutes? In a nutshell? for the first time in my life, I am terrified. And it is a large, far reaching fear, I fear for Nova Scotia. I fear for its future and I believe that if this budget goes through as is, it will be a defining moment in Nova Scotia's history.

In 1996, I began studying at NSCAD University, a choice that was discouraged by my family due to the quite common belief that it was impossible to have a career being creative. In fact, my mother cried when I told her I was going there. (not out of joy) I did not know specifically what I would be when I graduated, but I knew I was taking a road not travelled before in my family. In my second semester there I discovered film in a Super 8mm class, and my life was changed forever. I found my life. I found my voice. And I haven't stopped working since.

I have had a lot of roles over the past 20 years. I have been a student at NSCAD, a camera trainee, a camera assistant, a director, a shooter, a mentor, a teacher at NSCC, and a Board Member of AFSCOOP.

The indie people at Afcoop are the most hardworking, genuine, passionate people on the planet. Somehow, with the tiniest amounts of money, they create unique visions and stories that travel the world through film festivals.

The people I met during my time in the industry? They are thousands of the most hardworking, resourceful, intelligent, resilient people in the world. I learned how to dig to the bottom of my reserves and keep going from them. I learned to keep moving forward when a rational person would have stopped from them. They live this way every day. They are fighters with poet hearts.

As a teacher and mentor I have spent 15 years meeting new storytellers who are filled with all the passion, excitement and drive that you hope to see in the next generations. And over these years I have seen the change in attitude slowly. Now, 18 years after my mom cried at the thought of me going into the Arts, parents aren't crying when their children say they want to go into the Arts and Film. They see and interact with film people all the time in their communities. It's a legitimate, viable life choice now. And boy are young people choosing it. It's amazing what a few decades and a healthy tax break can do isn't it?

These groups who I have called my family for the past 20 years are the people you have been meeting in your offices and in Province house during this past month. These are the people I am standing here for.

I am certain that you have spent today hearing from all sides of the film industry and indie community, so the history I have just provided is merely for you to understand from where I come. You have been told what this impact will be over and over from communities like Chester and Lunenburg, from other Arts organizations, from local businesses, from politicians, from students, from senior citizens, from Parents, from Commissions, and even from your own 2008 study.

So what can I say that is different from what you have already heard today? Well I'd like to talk about one of my current roles: that of Recruitment Coordinator for NSCAD University. My job is essentially to go out into the world and find the best and brightest artists and cultural contributors of tomorrow and bring them to Nova Scotia. I travel across Canada, New England, and have even been to India twice.

I'm really good at my job. Because I believe NSCAD is amazing and also because I believe Nova Scotia is amazing. I get to tell them about its beauty, it's people and more importantly it's culture. I talk extensively about the Art communities and all the possibilities they offer. And, when I meet a young person interested in film? Well, my gushing about Nova Scotia goes up even higher. Sometimes I travel with recruiters from the other Nova Scotian Universities. Their job also is to celebrate Nova Scotia. And they usually do this by **SHOWING** them VIDEOS. Who shoots, edits and makes those videos? You guessed it...the local film crews.

What do you think I speak about when I am in these places? I speak of people like Ray Charabaty, who came to NSCAD from Lebanon for the film program. How he just last week, won the Starfish Award for his short film Alia. He came here because of the film program and specifically the 4th year scholarship that Film and Creative Nova Scotia was offering. Guess what? Next year is his 4th year, and Film and Creative no longer exists. How do you propose I finish his story when I tell it on the road?

I speak about Andrea Dorfman who came to NSCAD and has since become a unique and beautiful voice as a filmmaker who consistently shares the common human experience marrying technology and fine art. I often show examples of her work. And I think you should know, one of her short films about being alone has been viewed across the globe more than 8 million times.

I speak of people like Halley Davies and Martin Hellmich who have just been chosen by NASA as the winners of the International Ode to Hubble competition with their animated short. I would also like to point out that Halley graduated from NSCAD's program and Martin graduated from NSCC's program. So in 20 years we have gone from zero film programs to 2. How do you think this happened?

I tell them all about AFCOOPS film 5 program.

Then I talk about the independent film community, and finally the Industry itself. I tell them that this is the type of community that will work 5x16 hour days in a row and then volunteer their Saturday to help out on a public service announcement for the SPCA. This is a group that gives everything it has, every day. And who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

I show them that this is a place that will first teach them and then open a world of artistic and professional opportunities upon graduation.

In the past 4 weeks I have never been more proud of Nova Scotians in my life. I have seen everyone from students to business owners to wizened film veterans join together and fight. They are not fighting for raises, they are not fighting for vacation days, they are fighting to STAY IN NOVA SCOTIA. When I take a minute away from panicking about all of the lives that will be thrown into chaos, I am actually dumbfounded that this government is literally ignoring some of its best and brightest voices basically pleading with them to make it possible for them to stay. Do you get how insane this is? Everyone in this room has had a friend or relative who has had to move away for work. Not because they wanted to, but because they had to. And now we have a film community that has grown over the past 20 years to a level that actually DRAWS young people from as far away as Lebanon? And it is in jeopardy?

I have become acutely aware of the expression "toeing the line" this month and honestly? It is the most depressing and ridiculous phrase I have ever heard.

People spend their entire lives hoping for a moment where they can matter. Where they will be called upon to be the hero. Where they can change the course of life for the better. Life is confusing, complicated, filled with uncertainty, and fog. Most of the time, you just try and hope for the best, never really sure that you will be affecting anything.

Right now, you have been handed the most clear cut Dare to be Great chance you may ever have as politicians and as Nova Scotians. By postponing this cut for even just a year until you have an accurate picture of its impact would immediately affect the people of your province in a positive way. There is no doubt that this needs to be postponed. The facts have been disproven, the numbers have been disproven, the politicians behind them have been disproven.

To move forward with this as it is right now? When everything that it was based upon has been proven to be inaccurate? What does this mean to the people of Nova Scotia? Well it means that this government has chosen ignorance and maliciousness over communities and research.

And the people of this province understand that, and they are watching.

To move forward with this and what it means to me personally? Well it proves that this government will decimate an industry and the Art communities of Nova Scotia rather than acknowledge that they made an error. It means that the only people who actually CAN turn this around chose to ignore the people who have been unanimous, impassioned and sincere in their pleas for a delay. It will have proven that the ARTS are not important to this government. It proves that they are putting their 2 years of employment before the immediate survival of 2700 families' livelihoods.

So, as a person that travels around the world telling people about Nova Scotia. Moving forward, what would you like me to tell them?

It is the job of this government and the MORAL obligation of these elected people to look out for Nova Scotians. And they are failing.

YOU are the people that get to choose how this particular story goes. You get to be the storytellers. What will this story be?

Ruby Boutilier