

February 20th, 2024

Kelly Regan, MLA, Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts
One Government Place
1700 Granville St, Halifax

Dear MLA Regan,

Re: Additional Information for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Thank you for your interest in the work that the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage leads in relation to museums and provincial heritage properties. We are pleased to provide additional information as requested by the committee on the following:

1. Annual operating costs and renovation costs for the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
2. Visitation numbers for the Nova Scotia Museums (pre- and post-COVID)
3. Museum revenues
4. Possible heritage property designation of land on Crichton Avenue, Dartmouth

Additional information on these topics is attached.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



Justin Huston
Deputy Minister
Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Question 1: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Operations and Maintenance Expenses

Operating and Maintenance Costs (based on the 2022-23 fiscal year)

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (AGNS) has an approximate annual budget of \$5.1 million, with \$2.27 million of that being funded by the Province. The remaining amount of funding for the AGNS is earned through fundraising efforts, gift shop sales, grants and other forms of earned revenue.

Annually the AGNS is responsible for approximately \$1 million (\$999,243) in maintenance and operating costs, which includes costs for security, storage, building maintenance and repairs, administration and other operational requirements. This does not include costs related to salaries and benefits, exhibitions, retail, marketing and other costs associated with public and educational offerings.

In addition, the Department of Public Works, who owns and manages the building, incurs annual costs of approximately \$351,000 related to maintenance and the operations of the AGNS facilities in Halifax. This brings the total annual maintenance and operating costs for fiscal year 2022/23 to over \$1.35 million. This amount may vary annually based on maintenance and operational requirements.

Current Capital Maintenance Projects for the AGNS Halifax Location

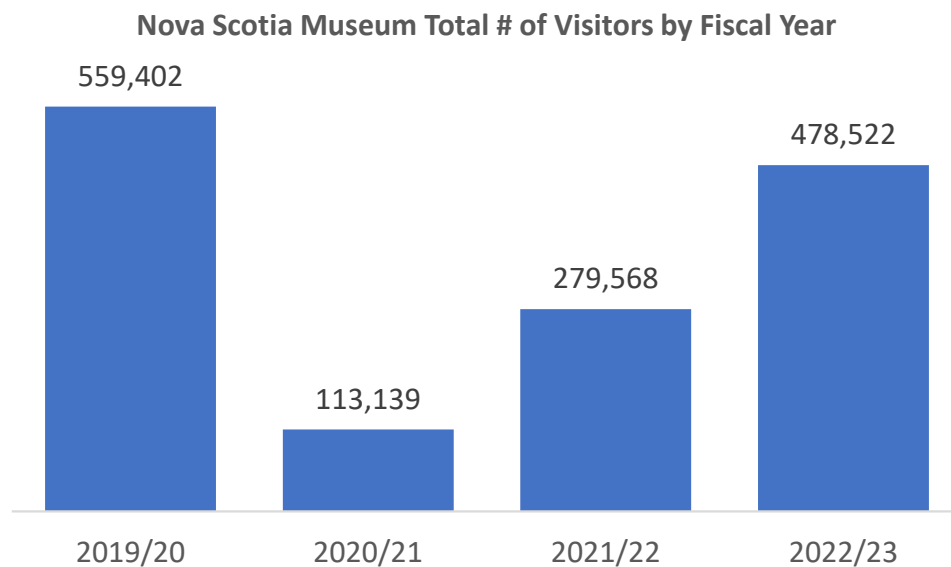
There are currently eight immediate maintenance projects scheduled for the AGNS (Halifax location). The cost to address these capital projects is expected to exceed \$4 million. These projects include:

- Roof replacement in the North Building
- Window replacement in the North Building
- Replacement of the fire suppression system in the South Building
- Elevator modernization in the North Building
- Security camera upgrades
- Card access upgrades
- Humidifier water treatment system
- Replacement of the main entrance and security entrance vestibules

Some of these projects are out to tender and will have final costing completed in the coming months. A more detailed breakdown for each project will be available once tenders are awarded and detailed costing is complete.

Question 2: Museum Admissions

The pandemic impacted visitation across the 28 sites that make up the Nova Scotia Museum (NSM), but the system is rebounding.



For Community Museums (funded through the Community Museum Assistance Program), only 2022/23 visitation numbers can be provided due to changes in how reports were submitted. For 2022/23, visitation to community museums was approximately 264,232.

Visitation numbers at the Nova Scotia Museum are impacted by many factors. For example:

- Visitation to the Museum of Natural History increases in correlation with major temporary exhibits.
- Visitation at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic dropped due to pandemic restrictions to cruise activity.
- Infrastructure upgrades at some sites (e.g., Perkins House Museum, Fisherman's Life Museum) resulted in closures which reduced visitation numbers.
- The Museum of Natural History is experiencing off-season growth related to a focus on building the local family market and the relative affordability of admission compared to other family activities in metro Halifax. The museum experienced a 160% increase in visitation in December 2023 when compared to December 2022.
- 2023/24 funding increases to the 17 locally managed NSM sites resulted in some sites being able to extend their tourism seasons and direct new visitor experience development which has resulted in increased visitation to these sites.

Question 3: Nova Scotia Museum Revenues

Museum revenues are generated primarily through admissions, programs, gift store sales and rentals. Directly Managed and Locally Managed sites handle revenues differently.

Directly Managed Sites

Revenues for the 11 directly managed sites go back to the centre of government as government recoveries. Revenues are not directly invested back into museum operations. Government recoveries from revenues generated at directly managed NSM sites in 2019/20 were \$1,840,519. Recoveries in 2022/23 were \$1,748,083.

Locally Managed Sites

The 17 locally managed NSM sites which are operated by a local not-for-profit group, can directly reinvest their revenues into general operations to offset operating costs. This has been integral to site sustainability and to innovation in maintaining and developing new sources of revenue. Revenues generated at locally managed NSM sites in 2019/20 were \$2,514,233. Revenues in 2022/23 were \$2,912,268.

Revenue generation activities differ between sites. Some examples of these differences include:

- Some of the locally managed living history sites (e.g., Sherbrooke Village, Ross Farm Museum) have certified carpentry shops that are able to take on contracts in the off-season that bring in revenue as well as providing a specialized service to individuals and organizations, including government, who maintain heritage buildings.
- Other sites like Highland Village and the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic generate additional revenue through cruise ship excursions.
- 6 locally managed NSM sites developed online stores to provide access to tickets for admission and onsite events and for the purchase of retail products facilitating easy access to museum products and services and generating new revenues while supporting local artisans.
- Some museum sites are involved in the creation of specialty items (props for movies, and the heritage sector), venue rentals, film site contracts, and workshops.

Community Museums

The Department does not track revenue generation at Community Museum sites in a format that can be used for reporting total revenues. On average, the CMAP grant covers 26% of operating costs at these community museums. The boards that operate CMAP sites are responsible for securing the funding needed to operate the site (e.g., other funding programs, revenues etc.).

Question 4: Potential Heritage Property Designation in Dartmouth North

Community historians and residents of the “Avenue” in Dartmouth recognize 232 and 234 Crichton Avenue as the location of the historic, Richard Preston-founded Dartmouth Lake African United Baptist Church (also known as the 'Colored Meeting House'). Both properties are owned by the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and are identified as potential surplus lands but are under review.

In March 2023, a Dartmouth resident contacted the Minister by email regarding the protection of these sites. The Minister replied by email on May 8, 2023, recognizing the rich African Nova Scotian history of Crichton Avenue in Dartmouth and noting that there is work to do in terms of acknowledging that history. The Minister suggested that the resident connect with Kevin Barrett, Coordinator Heritage Property Program, to discuss the sites. By email on May 10, 2023, Kevin Barrett offered to discuss these sites in more detail but has not heard back from the resident.

If there is interest from the community to have the properties considered for either municipal and/or provincial heritage registration under the Heritage Property Act, we encourage the community group to discuss these potential opportunities with HRM, the owner of both sites.