



NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR  
**HISTORIC TRUST**  
*est 1966*

March 30, 2022

Dear Premier Furey,

Every year the province of Newfoundland and Labrador spends about \$14 million dollars on brilliant tourism marketing campaigns that showcase, front and centre, our most charming homes and buildings. A man in a suit walking small children to a wedding up Holloway Street, a woman savouring a cup of tea outside a bright red storm door, a saltbox in Tors Cove, a twine loft in the Battery, riddle fences and hundred year old homes hugging the coastline. Unfortunately, at this time, all this brilliant myth-making is exactly that, a myth. In truth, as any visitor can plainly see once they arrive, a stunning number of vernacular buildings of Newfoundland and Labrador are falling into disrepair, taking their economic opportunities with them.

The annual budget of the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Foundation (Heritage NL), the crown agency which identifies and works to preserve heritage buildings, crafts, and intangible heritage in this province, is currently hovering around \$398,000 per year. In other words, the province's tourism marketing budget is thirty-two times larger than Heritage NL's.

This isn't to say the province is spending too much on advertising. It's to say we're not spending enough on the product we are attempting to sell.

Anyone who keeps an eye out for vernacular (distinct, local) architecture and design here knows that we are losing the battle against vinyl siding and in preserving heritage carpentry generally.

These homes and buildings are part of what define us as a people and a place. As they get torn down or let to rot, part of our identity as a people is buried with them.

And if we are striving to be a global tourism destination, properly funding Heritage NL would put us in good company. Visitors to places like the United Kingdom, Quebec City, and Italy, are visiting there in part because of their architectural and cultural heritage. Each of those destinations put serious funding dollars to make that happen.



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Just as the camera for our tourism commercials dwells on the wooden clapboard of homes, stages, and outbuildings painted in unique, surprising colours, we also choose not to show what's often just out of frame: fishing stages falling apart, storehouses and lofts re-coated in dull vinyl siding. You travel to Venice to see stone houses on the canals, New Orleans to walk the French Quarter, you travel to Iceland to see bright houses standing against volcanic landscapes, and you travel to Newfoundland to see and experience the buildings that hug the coves and make our home stand out on an international stage.

When it comes to built heritage, Heritage NL hosts the best collection of researchers and expertise in the province. Their annual budget as it now stands is so low that there are multiple individuals at Nalcor who make more money than this entire crown agency budgets each year. This is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. We cannot expect to hold the line on our heritage buildings at current funding levels. As members of the board of the Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust, we call on this government to increase Heritage NL's budget in a significant way.

As we understand it, the core budget at Heritage NL is in fact *decreasing*, with full time positions being removed and/or reverted to part time contract positions. In other words, this vital agency is suffering. Their annual \$150k in restoration grants is a drop in the bucket. Tripling this amount would be a start. We cannot afford to lose more of this history. These buildings help tell our story, without them our multimillion dollar marketing campaigns would go up in smoke. We need a Heritage NL budget that rivals our spend on marketing. Otherwise, what are we going to market? Heritage NL is the organisation we have agreed can do this job, and do it well. Now we need to fund it in a serious way, and let it get to work.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors  
Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust