
From: Kristin Slaney [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2015 11:43 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Laws Amendments Committee

Dear Law Amendments Committee,

I write to you today as one person, but also as a representation of a demographic of people that is a problem for Nova Scotia right now-- a twenty-something person who left the province two years ago study and acquire skills, but who does not see how she could have a professional future in Nova Scotia, particularly if the current budget passes.

My name is Kristin Slaney. In 2013, I spent my summer raising enough money to pay for my first year of tuition at Columbia University, where I was accepted as an MFA candidate. The support I found from the people around me was amazing-- friends of mine donated money, people I barely knew donated money, complete strangers donated money. And for all these people there was the idea of investment: of helping one of their own leave to learn skills to bring back to NS.

I just finished the second year of my MFA in playwriting and I've learned so much during that time, but one of the saddest facts I've had to face recently has been that that I don't know how it would ever be a responsible decision for me to move home. I have written a number of plays, many of which are about Nova Scotia, since those are the stories I most want to tell-- but how can I expect to viably make theatre in a province whose creative sector has been so disrespected? I am a Teaching Fellow at Columbia University, which allows me to teach Composition in the English Department-- but I know amazing professors (who taught *me* during undergrad) with PH.Ds, who somehow can't find jobs, and so how could I ever assume there would be a place for me to teach at a university level in Nova Scotia? I have found a love of TV Writing through the teachers I've worked with in my program, and I've been working on developing a show that, in my ideal world, would shoot in NS -- but television shows are pulling out of Nova Scotia by the day, so how could I ever assume that TV writing or production in NS would be an option for me?

I'm asking you to consider this from the "Demographics Dilemma" (to use the words of the Liberal website) end of the spectrum-- you are poised to lose so many Nova Scotians because of this budget. Not because people are spoiled and are digging in their heels, but because people are honestly asking themselves: "How can I provide for myself and/or my family when the work I thought I had is being widdled away?" "Why should I stay in a province that has loudly said it doesn't want me?"

The failure of this budget is that it doesn't account for people. I know so many people who work on crews or in casting or who are actors who do will whatever it takes to stay in the beautiful province of Nova Scotia. They are addicted to the province and the stories that can be told about that province-- they love their communities, their families, and their work. They have skills that will be welcomed with open arms by any other province in this country, especially Ontario, Manitoba, or BC. But by taking the film work of these people away, and by insulting these people with what the Honourable Minister Whalen called a "deal" (one that is still not competitive, since it doesn't allow for the same financing guarantee that producers can get from Ontario or Manitoba), the province tells these people that it doesn't care about them, their livelihoods, or their families. It's not that you give them a reason to leave-- it's that you take away their ability to stay.

And on that note, as a clear symbol of the "Demographics Dilemma", I ask you this question today: Why. Why should I come back to a province whose government has done everything in its power to tell me it doesn't want me? And even worse, that it doesn't want the people it already has?

I appreciate you taking the time to consider my letter, and to reconsider a budget that I think will severely damage a province I love.

All the best,

Kristin Slaney
Columbia University MFA Playwriting Candidate 2016
Columbia University Teaching Fellow