

Mr. Michael J. Audain
2009
Chairperson
NGC Board of Trustees

September 11,

Dear Mr. Aubin,

Re: Lay-off of guides at the National Gallery of Canada

In the next few days, you will be making decisions about the National Gallery's planned acquisitions, including a \$1 million sculpture by American artist Roxy Payne. During these discussions, we ask you to reflect on the recent decision by the gallery's management to abandon the resource that the public values the most at the NGC: the guided tours.

Last week, 8 professional guides employed by the gallery received lay-off notices. Some of them have been with the gallery for almost 30 years. The Public Service Alliance of Canada represents these 8 guides, along with 166,000 workers across Canada.

Beyond the human tragedies those layoffs represent, we must look at the deep negative impact that this decision will have on the gallery as one of the most important art institutions in this country.

A recent study commissioned by the NGC clearly demonstrates that professional guides contribute immensely to the success and popularity of the gallery. The study states emphatically that guided tours are the most important factor in visitors' decision to keep coming back to the gallery. In other words, guided tours have transformed many occasional visitors into permanent friends of and donors to the NGC.

If this is true, why is management abandoning the guided tours that the public appreciates so much? If anything, these services should be supported and enhanced. Attendance at the NGC is already in decline. Eliminating one of the gallery's most valued features will only worsen the situation.

In 2000, the NGC attempted to eliminate the guide program but was forced to reverse its decision due to public outcry. Why is the gallery bringing back the same bad idea?

We are asking for your support. Use your influence to convince the gallery's management to reverse its decision to lay off those employees. The reputation and the financial stability of the gallery depend on it.

Sincerely,

Maria Fitzpatrick
PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President
National Capital region

Philippe Carpentier
President, PSAC Local 70397