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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

F-39

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des débats
(Hansard)**

F-39

**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

COVID-19 study

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Étude sur la COVID-19

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 30 June 2020

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 30 juin 2020

Chair: Amarjot Sandhu
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Amarjot Sandhu
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Tuesday 30 June 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Mardi 30 juin 2020

The committee met at 0900 in room 151 and by video conference.

COVID-19 STUDY

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order now. We're meeting for hearings on the culture and heritage sector as part of the study of the recommendations relating to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020, and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy.

We have the following members in the room: MPP Cho and MPP Arthur.

The following members are participating remotely: We have MPP Crawford—MPP Crawford, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm here in Oakville.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): And we have MPP Mamakwa, MPP Piccini, MPP Roberts, MPP Schreiner.

MPP Skelly, can you please confirm your attendance?

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is Donna Skelly, and I am in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): What part of Ontario?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am in the Ottawa Valley.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Smith?

Mr. Dave Smith: I am MPP Smith, and I am in Peterborough, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We have MPP Fife and MPP Khanjin.

MPP Lindo, can you please confirm your attendance?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm MPP Lindo, and I am calling in from Kitchener.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We also have MPP Rasheed, MPP Vanthof, MPP Simard, MPP Kernaghan, MPP West.

MPP Gélinas, can you please confirm your attendance?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Bonjour. C'est France Gélinas, MPP for Nickel Belt, and I'm in beautiful Hanmer.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Did I miss any of the members? Okay.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak.

Our presenters today have been grouped in threes for each one-hour time slot. Each presenter will have seven

minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. This time for questions will be broken down into two rotations of six minutes and 30 seconds for each of the government, the opposition, and the independent members as a group.

Are there any questions?

SCIENCE NORTH

AVARA MEDIA INC.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION
OF AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Seeing none, I would like to call upon our first witness now, from Science North. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Guy Labine: My name is Guy Labine. I'm the CEO of Science North. On behalf of our board, my colleagues and our partners in the more than 80 communities in northern Ontario that we serve, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, we appreciate your work in better understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the chance to share some specific information related to Science North's role in the heritage, tourism and cultural sector in the province, specifically in northern Ontario.

To give some of you a short context of our organization, Science North is the second-largest science centre in Canada. Dynamic Earth, the home of the Big Nickel, is Canada's eighth-largest science centre.

In 2010, we opened a satellite operating base in Thunder Bay, where we have eight permanent staff, and we did that because we have a mandate to serve all of northern Ontario with programs, services and activities.

Last year, we had nearly 4,000 kids participate in week-long summer science camps in 35 communities. We now have a permanent presence with exhibits and programs in the communities of North Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Fort Frances, Kenora and Red Lake.

On June 11, Science North celebrated its 36th anniversary. Last year, we sold 388,000 admissions to the attractions that we have. Over the past 36 years, we've welcomed more than 11 million visitors to our attractions

and contributed \$2 billion to the Ontario economy. Science North supports, directly and indirectly, close to 700 jobs in northern Ontario and contributes \$85 million to the provincial economy annually.

On March 6, we opened the Science of Guinness World Records. It was the 13th travelling exhibit produced by Science North. We consider it to be one of the best exhibits to have been conceived, designed and built by our team and our industry partners at Ripley Entertainment and Guinness World Records. This exhibit will be seen by two million visitors in some of the largest cultural institutions throughout North America.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, all of this context is important for you to understand the scope, the breadth and the depth of Science North's contribution to the tourism, cultural and heritage sectors of Ontario, the specific role we play in northern Ontario and most importantly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, on March 13, six days after the opening of the Science of Guinness World Records, Science North attractions, like many cultural and heritage attractions in Ontario, closed to the public and has remained closed. The following day, March 14, would have been the start of March break in Ontario, when we typically see close to 20,000 visitors in a 10-day period and earn 10% of our operating revenues for the year.

Needless to say, the impact of COVID-19 on our organization has been significant. As we remain closed, we have been unable to generate any earned income from in-person visits and programs. Earned income represents 65% of our annual operating budget of nearly \$20 million. We've had temporary layoffs of our casual and part-time hourly staff, and we've been unable to engage with audiences at our attractions and in the communities we serve.

Fortunately, we've been able to pivot our organization and move to a significant online presence. We have also been able to develop teaching resources for elementary teachers and their students, with the support of the Ministry of Education.

However, the future is unclear. We've planned a phased reopening of modified visitor experiences, given the highly interactive, hands-on approach we use. We're following public health guidelines and want to ensure the safety of our colleagues and our visitors.

On behalf of our organization, I respectfully suggest some key elements which will allow our sectors and, specifically, Science North to recover. The first is operating funding. The operating funding we receive from the Ontario government is a foundational piece to our success—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Guy Labine: —a building block that allows us to generate earned income from admissions and program revenues, to develop partnerships with the private sector and to seek philanthropic contributions from donors and supports. Our operating funding has been constant for 10 years. A targeted and strategic increase in government support will allow us to serve and to expand our relationships with the communities we work in.

A second is the NOHFC. It's a vital support to our sector, and it will be an important part of supporting the

recovery of the economy in northern Ontario. The NOHFC provides investments that have allowed Science North to expand its footprint, presence and partnerships in the north. It provides seed investments and supports the development of new, engaging, entertaining experiences that attract visitors to Science North and to all of northern Ontario.

The third is support for regional tourism. We know that it will take time for tourists to be comfortable visiting indoor attractions and agencies. Focused support for marketing campaigns—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Guy Labine: —for product development and for other initiatives that can highlight the great assets that exist throughout Ontario would be a welcome investment.

And last but not least, Ontario's agencies and attractions can help in Ontario's economic recovery. We can help by connecting and communicating to a broad public and engaging in evidence-based learning to inform Ontario's population.

Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for your time. We appreciate your work.

Science North looks forward to once again being an economic, cultural, heritage and economic engine for Ontario.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Our next witness is Avara Media Inc. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Vikas Gupta: My name is Vikas Gupta. I am the co-founder and CEO of Avara Media. I've been in the interactive digital media industry for over 20 years. I've been the CEO of both public multinational companies as well as private companies, and sit on several boards, including the University of Waterloo and Interactive Ontario. You will be hearing from some of my colleagues at Interactive Ontario later this morning.

0910

As the CEO of TransGaming—that company was licensing sophisticated software to industry titans such as Electronic Arts, Disney, Ubisoft, Google, and the company was acquired by Nvidia in 2015. Nvidia is the largest graphics-processing company in the world, with a valuation of \$226 billion.

Before I get into the details of my recommendations, I think it's worthwhile to provide a bit of a baseline of the IDM sector. The global electronic entertainment industry is forecast to generate \$153.9 billion in revenue in 2020. This industry's revenue has been growing at a steady pace year over year and eclipsed the Hollywood box office several years ago. By 2023, our industry sector is projected to grow to over \$200 billion worldwide. Pre-COVID-19, our industry in Ontario was on an impressive growth trajectory, contributing over \$3 billion to the province's GDP and employing over 22,000 knowledge-based workers. Some 91% of our revenue is generated through the export of our products.

A distinguishing element of our industry is that we uniquely marry arts, culture and innovative technology in

a way that no other industry does or even can. We tightly integrate storytelling creativity with innovative and cutting-edge technologies and intellectual property. In fact, what I do currently in a professional setting is—I co-founded Avara Media with famed photographer Edward Burtynsky to leverage augmented reality to immersibly and experientially connect a global audience to some of the most pressing environmental and ecological issues of our time. We feature three unprecedented augmented reality experiences as part of the acclaimed Anthropocene exhibition at the AGO and the National Gallery, where over 150,000 visitors had the opportunity to engage in our work. This exhibition is now travelling globally, setting the stage for Ontario innovation to a global audience.

One unique facet of our industry is our ability to generate what we call “long tail revenue.” Specifically, our products, when live, remain relevant and continue growing for years upon years. Ontario Creates has been an important resource in helping to fund some of these exceptional products, and the IDM fund has been directly responsible for accelerating the growth and success of many of our IDM companies. Our industry continues to invest those revenues towards the creation of additional products and has demonstrated the ability to scale quite effectively.

With all that said, our industry is still emerging and pre-COVID-19 was not at a point where we had established a sufficiently mature ecosystem. That growth, unfortunately, has been abruptly interrupted, and as with so many industry sectors, the IDM industry is at risk of being set back many years.

We are focused on the immediacy of the issues we’re currently facing. However, I would ask you to think about where our province will be 18 to 24 months from now. More importantly, let’s become the masters of our destiny and envision where we’d like our province to be 18 to 24 months from now. In the wake of this adversity, we have the opportunity to look forward and establish a leadership position in Canada and globally.

The IDM industry does not need a bailout; however, it will benefit greatly from investment. This investment allows IDM companies to retain and create jobs. It allows companies to build world-class products.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Vikas Gupta: This investment generates an incredibly high return for the province through the positive economic impact that our industry is renowned for.

The impact of COVID-19 has been varied and broad for the IDM sector, from lost business agreements, the increased cost of equipping employees with specialized equipment to be able to work from home, to the vaporization of investment opportunities.

My recommendations today, which were also partially part of Minister MacLeod’s advisory panel, really are all about leveraging additional mechanisms through inter-ministerial government co-operation. By creating a system or mechanism that allows companies that have been successful with either organization, through Ontario Creates, Ontario Centres of Excellence and other government entities—we believe that these organizations should be

fast-tracked for additional funding opportunities to help alleviate the cumbersome application process and the navigation between two disparate systems. Most importantly, this allows companies to unlock much-needed capital more efficiently, which ultimately accelerates their product development cycles and go-to-market strategies.

I also believe that the funding programs introduced at the federal level through the BDC and EDC immediately disqualify many IDM companies by virtue of these companies being intellectual property- or content-based. It would be beneficial for IDM companies to be able to leverage and/or collateralize IDM funds from Ontario Creates, ODMTC or OCE-based funding in order to gain access to the BCAP program or the BDC and EDC venture capital matching programs. Currently, the latter programs require companies to have raised \$500,000 independently through qualified investors. Government funds, which are only distributed through a meticulous and diligent process, should qualify to give more variety of companies a chance to survive this difficult period and, ultimately, to thrive.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are unprecedented times. While most of the world reacts, we have the opportunity to act with a view to the future. The interactive multimedia industry—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vikas Gupta: —plays an integral role in the economic health of the province of Ontario. We have the unique opportunity to become leaders in Canada and showcase our strength on the global stage. Therefore, we must look ahead 18 to 24 months and foresee a prosperous future. Those seeds for long-term growth and success must be planted today.

Thank you very much for your time this morning.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Our next presenter is the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Vince Brennan: My name is Vince Brennan. I’m manager of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies.

First, I wish to thank the government for your continued efforts to support Ontarians through the COVID-19 pandemic. We are the umbrella organization of over 200 non-profit agricultural societies. The OAAS is one of the oldest organizations in Ontario, and we’ll be celebrating our 175th anniversary in 2021. We provide support, training and resources for our member-agricultural societies. We are a non-profit organization, and all our income is derived from membership fees and profits from our annual convention. We expect a decrease of at least \$115,000 in revenue this year.

We request that the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries provide the OAAS with similar financial support that the ministry provided to the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario. The OAAS is requesting \$115,000 in funding to allow us to extend our current agricultural society memberships, offer complimentary memberships to our non-members and continue to provide current programs.

Our agricultural societies are non-profit, self-sufficient associations that organize their annual fairs and other community events. Funds raised are invested in their fairs, events, facilities and in the community. However, the pandemic has literally cut off all sources of income in 2020. Without funding to help cover fixed and ongoing expenses, it will be difficult for some of our agricultural societies to survive.

The Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions has estimated that at least one in 10 Ontario fairs will shut down permanently without additional funding to help bridge the loss of income.

We are requesting financial support of \$15 million for agricultural societies to remain viable. Local communities and businesses are being significantly impacted by the cancellation of the 2020 fairs and events. Their permanent loss could be devastating.

Unfortunately, many of our agricultural societies have not been eligible for most of the federal and provincial funding opportunities. Heritage and tradition are an important part of agricultural societies, with over 60% of our agricultural societies being older than Canada. Our oldest fair is more than 200 years old.

Many years before it was labelled tourism, fairs attracted visitors from communities to see displays of livestock, produce and crafts. Our agricultural societies bring significant financial benefits to the communities, and in 2019 over 3.4 million people visited Ontario fairs, with gate receipts of over \$24 million. The provincial tourism regional economic impact model of our agricultural societies is estimated to be between \$360 million and \$370 million, and the estimated local economic impact is between \$680 million and \$700 million.

0920

Our agricultural societies have excellent community support. However, most businesses that provide sponsorship—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Vince Brennan: —are experiencing significant financial hardship due to COVID-19 and are unable to assist this year. Our normally resilient and self-sufficient agricultural societies require government support this year to ensure their survival. The impact of losing agricultural societies will have a significant impact and long-term effect on their local communities, and just as important is the loss of community and belonging—as it is the volunteers and members of those agricultural societies.

Agricultural societies are as individual as the communities they support. They work to improve quality of life and promote economic growth in their communities by supporting and delivering heritage, tourism and cultural experiences and supporting the arts and cultural industries. Some agricultural societies also provide facilities for sport and recreational activities.

In closing, I want to stress that the loss of any of these agricultural societies would be a significant blow to their communities. Local communities and their businesses rely on agricultural societies and the tourism-based income that

comes from their fairs and other events. The local communities rely on the facilities and the fundraising opportunities that the agricultural societies provide.

I can't stress enough the importance of financial assistance that we have requested, one, to help the OAAS over the loss of membership fees and, two, to help our agricultural societies cover their significant loss of income.

Our agricultural societies have survived many hardships in the past, and I know many of them will survive this. I'm asking for your support so that we can ensure that all our agricultural societies—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vince Brennan: —will survive this pandemic and continue to be there for their communities in the future.

I look forward to working with you to secure the much-needed financial assistance for our over 200 agricultural societies in the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies

Happy Canada Day. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the questions now, and the first round of questions will start with the opposition party. MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: First, I want to thank all of the people for deputing today.

My questions are going to be for Mr. Labine from Science North.

First, I want to congratulate you on the 36th anniversary. It reminds me of how old I am, because my first volunteer job was at Science North. I worked in the computer department, and I wanted to mention how it gave me access to science and computers, which were incredibly expensive back then. It would have been unaffordable.

You talked about working with the Ministry of Education on bringing STEM. I just want to give you an opportunity to expand on the importance of Science North and bringing science, technology, engineering and math into the north.

Mr. Guy Labine: Thank you, MPP West, for the question.

Informal STEM learning is an important part of what we do, both here at Science North and Dynamic Earth. We see about 55,000 kids every year. More importantly, our ability to provide outreach and visit schools throughout northern Ontario has been an important part of our planned growth over the last 10 years, and it allows us to bring informal STEM learning in person. Obviously, teachers are well equipped to teach—not all of them are comfortable with STEM. The leading-edge content that needs to be presented on a regular basis comes, I think, in support of teachers. Over the last two months, again, with support from the Ministry of Education, our ability to support teachers with the production of videos that teachers can use to provide curriculum-linked content for their kids has been really important. So it's a key part of our strategic plan, a key part of our mandate and a key part of our interest in wanting to continue to work to make sure that kids have access to great programming and engaging and interactive experiences that we can support.

Mr. Jamie West: Also, you mentioned that Science North brings about \$85 million annually to Ontario's economy and how devastating COVID-19 has been—especially that March break period, when you lost 10%, plus whatever you're losing going forward.

I just want to give you the opportunity to expand on how those recommendations you made would help Science North, in particular, and other organizations.

Mr. Guy Labine: The loss of earned income is an important part. Sixty-five per cent of our operating budget comes from earned income, and the fact that we have no visitors here, who are not buying admission, food and retail items, is devastating. It applies to all of the agencies and other attractions throughout the province.

The opportunity to quickly pivot from being closed to reopening in a gradual way, while maintaining appropriate health guidelines provided by public health officials, and the ability to recover is going to be important, but it's going to take some time. I believe the minister shared in her presentation a survey that was conducted—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Guy Labine:—showing a significant amount of people being uncomfortable with being indoors, and we're an indoor-based attraction. We're going to look at using our site—we have a beautiful location on the shores of Ramsey Lake where we can provide programming, but that is good until winter sets in, and in northern Ontario, we know that that could be earlier.

The support, as I talked about, of the NOHFC and investments at Science North, the operating funding that we get from the Ontario government and our ability to leverage that and secure additional funding from other sources, whether it's municipal, federal and/or the private sector, are going to be key to our survival and, hopefully, the recovery in our growth going forward.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Mr. Labine. I'm going to share my time with the other people. I wish we had more time to discuss, especially with all the panellists.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Vanthof.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to all the presenters.

I'd like to direct my question to Vince from the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies. Unless you come from rural Ontario, it's really hard to imagine how much fall fairs and agriculture sites add to the culture of rural people. For many MPPs—we have all been to the International Plowing Match. Last year, that was in Verner, in my riding. The New Liskeard Fall Fair also is on par, almost, with the International Plowing Match. I know how much work goes into it, including with little fairs.

If you could just somehow explain what that has to do with the culture and it's something—you can't re-create that in another way.

Mr. Vince Brennan: Thank you very much for the question.

It is hard to put in words.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vince Brennan: It is a way of life in rural Ontario. It is the time when people come together. It's that time of year when they come back to their communities. It's their

opportunity to be visiting those people that they only see once a year. It's their opportunity to get hands on, touching, smelling, feeling that agricultural impact, whether it be petting the calves and the ponies or realizing that potatoes don't just arrive at the grocery store in a bag; they do come out of the ground.

Those are all things that make a big impact on them, and it's the culture that comes out of that, the events that are held throughout the fair—all of those you really have to experience it, to be there. It's pretty clear with the amount of people who attend our fairs annually that it's important to them.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll come back to that. Now we have to move to the independent members. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank all three presenters for taking the time to provide such valuable and diverse perspectives this morning.

0930

I'm going to direct my first question to Vince. It's good to see you again. When Harry Stoddart from the Lindsay Exhibition was here, I said that I think I still do have a few fall fair ribbons in my parents' basement. I can't tell you how valuable agricultural societies are, particularly for rural communities.

Vince, you talked about the fact that a number of agricultural societies are 150 to 200 years old, so they've weathered many storms over the years. How devastating has this COVID-19 pandemic been for them, and how much does it threaten their viability moving forward if they don't get some support to weather the storm?

Mr. Vince Brennan: There's just no income for our agricultural societies this year. As of today, out of our 214, 200 of them have officially been cancelled, postponed to 2021. They work from year to year. They don't have excessive reserves to carry them through. There are expenses they have to pay. It's going to be very devastating for them if they can't get through this and get some kind of support.

The other thing that's really important with our agricultural societies, even to try to do something—the volunteer age bracket is that critical age where you shouldn't be out in mixed gatherings or larger gatherings. That's really going to be a factor too, and whether they even are able to come back after we somehow get through this.

So, yes, there's just going to be no income for these fairs to pay their bills this year.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Related to that: I know most of your request is really supporting the local agricultural societies, but their memberships fund the work that you as the provincial association do. So I'm assuming you would need some direct support to remain viable as well, because those local societies won't have the cash flow to pay their memberships.

Mr. Vince Brennan: Absolutely, and thanks for the question. Membership fees are based on gate receipts. There's a formula that is used to be part of the membership of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies. With no gate receipts this year, there is basically no revenue coming in—very, very little. We will have virtually zero revenue from that.

Part of our revenue stems from our annual convention, where we normally have over 1,000 people attending. There's an opportunity for revenue—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Vince Brennan: —to be created there. That's going to be considerably less as well. Basically, the fairs aren't going to be able to afford to go.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm just going to switch to Mr. Gupta at Avara Media. You seem to suggest that with some support for your sector, particularly at a time when more people are going to have to be working from home, there is a real economic opportunity to create jobs and to make Ontario a leader in integrated media. Is that a fair assumption from your presentation?

Mr. Vikas Gupta: Yes, that's a great question; thank you for asking it.

One of the interesting things about our industry is that because we're very technology savvy, while there has been interruption and obviously quite a bit of overhead in equipping people with specialized equipment so they can work from home, the reality is that most companies have been resilient and quite effective at being able to make that transition.

The big advantage that we have is that we are still hiring, where funding is available, and then the products we're developing, once deployed, are really for global consumption. Because these are all interactive digital media products, and of course, most of the world is still at home in quarantine, people are now playing games, they're consuming digital content, so the consumption has gone up quite dramatically. That's why I said that we're not necessarily asking for a bailout. I see this as an investment that allows these companies to survive and then eventually thrive.

It also really catapults the interactive digital media industry within the province leap years forward if we make the right kinds of investments today and give those companies the assistance that they need.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would assume that it's a fairly highly competitive—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: —marketplace to attract talent. Do you think there's some opportunity, especially with the US denying visa applications—is there a real opportunity for Ontario to leverage that into an opportunity for significant growth in the sector?

Mr. Vikas Gupta: I'm ecstatic that you've asked the question.

I really do think there is. We've already started to see more and more former Canadians who moved to the US coming back, and we're also starting to see a lot of very sophisticated and talented Americans decide that they want to leave the country and move to Canada.

What's fantastic about this is that it's not a huge leap to transition into Canada, but they're able to work in the same industries that they've been operating in for many, many years. Our ability to attract that level of talent—which in many cases, honestly, is world-class, high-calibre—again becomes a strong growth prospect for what we have here in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the government side now, and I'll start with MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to start first with the gentleman from Avara Media. Throughout this, we've had a number of different organizations present to us, and you tweaked an idea in me as you were talking. Yesterday, we had the Canadian Canoe Museum. They are having a significant challenge having anyone come—obviously the museum can't be open—but it is a very unique experience that is there, and to me that would be tailor-made for your augmented reality/virtual reality set-up.

Is there something that we could be doing, then, to help those cultural institutions like museums, like Ontario Parks, like Science North to create a virtual reality experience that would allow us to take that living experience online for them?

Mr. Vikas Gupta: That's a great question. Thank you.

One of the things that, just because of a shortage of time, I wasn't able to get into was the details of how I've been disrupted specifically at Avara Media. I've really spoken more on behalf of my industry. We started raising our second round of funding in early March, and then that came to a very abrupt halt as a result of quarantine and COVID-19 and the fact that investors were now really hanging onto their cash and thinking about cash preservation.

One of the areas of investment that we've been making very heavily is in all these technologies. As indicated, we had a great deal of success with the AGO and the National Gallery. That exhibition has been travelling the world. It's set to travel for the next five years to give people digital experiences.

We definitely have been contemplating the idea of exactly what you're proposing, which is: How do we take museums across the country, if not the world, and provide users with a digital experience? We certainly have the ability to do so. We're more than happy to collaborate with our partners and our friends across the province, across the country, but we are an early-stage company, so for us it's really about picking and choosing, and then ultimately gaining access to capital so that we can build that intellectual property that we need to in order to support these other organizations. But you are right: The opportunity is there, and it's massive.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to pivot and go to Vince.

Vince, you mentioned a total of \$15 million to support the agricultural societies. How did you arrive at \$15 million?

Mr. Vince Brennan: It's some survey work that we've done with Canadian fairs and exhibitions across Canada, in addition with the information that was collected through OMAFRA through their annual grants. It's very consistent with the province of Alberta, the same size as us, and the amount of fairs that have events that are more than just a fair throughout the year. They have events 300 days out of the year in some cases. Just pulling those survey results together has been very consistent, and we're very confident that probably \$15 million is on the low side.

Mr. Dave Smith: Mr. Chair, how much time do we have left?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to turn it over to my colleague MPP Piccini.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm just going to continue with Vince.

Vince, you mentioned \$15 million and you said "on the low side." We've met before at the Campbellford agricultural society, and I wanted to just follow up with you. I've got a litany of fairs in my riding. Can you talk a bit about the \$15 million, where it would go, who it would support and how it would set up agricultural societies for long-term success? With COVID-19, have you and agricultural societies thought of any pivoting that can be done for long-term sustainability and success?

0940

Mr. Vince Brennan: Thank you for the questions, David.

Obviously, some of them are trying to do everything they can. Some of our small fairs are not going to be affected that much. If OMAFRA can change their regulations around the small grant that they can apply for annually, it will help a lot of those little fairs. But it's the fairs like the Lindsays, like the Markhams, the CNEs and the Norfolks that rely on revenue to pay their bills day in and day out—I had a meeting with Paris the other day. They will have a loss of close to \$1 million: \$950,000. Lindsay is around \$1 million. On average, that's it—but those costs aren't going to go away. Some of them have mortgages there. They don't have a lot of staff to lay off so they can't save a lot there. That's one part of it, for that, David.

If this ministry could support our fairs through the OAAS by contributing dollars to offset their membership fees, like what happened with the tourism association, that would help a number of them, as well, in the short term.

Mr. David Piccini: Over to my colleague MPP Khanjin.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute. MPP Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just wanted to start the line of questioning with Science North, if you don't mind commenting on what your thoughts are on an incentive tax credit for parents to take their children to places like Science North so that not only do they gain in competence, but there's also a bit of a carrot involved, as well.

Mr. Guy Labine: Thank you for the question.

It is an important element in providing support to allow parents to take their kids. We've experienced that type of support in the past with a student pass or Fun Pass that allows group visits to come. Kids get in free, parents pay a reduced admission price. Certainly, it has been a boost to our numbers, so it's an important element in being able to attract audiences. Anything that we can do to encourage people to visit attractions in Ontario is going to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

We'll have to move to the independent members for their second round now. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Guy, I'm going to direct my next question to you.

I just want to say that every time I visited Sudbury, especially when my kids were younger, they always begged

to go to Science North. It is truly a location that they loved to visit every time we were in Sudbury. You do fantastic work.

I just wanted to give you an opportunity—you were halfway through your answer to MPP Khanjin's question, so I'd be interested to hear a bit more about if you think some sort of tax credit would create incentives for families to be back and visiting science centres and museums etc.

Mr. Guy Labine: The last part of my answer was that, in fact, anything that can be done to encourage people to visit Ontario attractions is going to be important, whether it's a tax credit or a subsidy to provide support for admission. But earned income is important. Our ability to provide free admission is somewhat limited, but we have memberships and we have other tools that we can use, including donors and sponsors who provide access to individuals who can't afford. I really encourage creativity in being able to find mechanisms and tools that allow people to attend not only Science North but all of the agencies and cultural attractions in Ontario.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: You talked about the importance of the operating funding that you receive from the Ontario government and how you leverage that into other funding opportunities to support the work that you do. Are you at committee asking for maintaining your existing operating funding? Do you feel like you need an increase in operating funding to help weather the COVID-19 storm? What would that look like, and how could you leverage that into other revenue opportunities?

Mr. Guy Labine: Thank you for the question.

It's important to really clarify that operating funding is the underpinning; it's the foundation. Without being an agency of the Ontario government and that operating funding, we're not sustainable. It allows us to have a science centre that is very large in a relatively small marketplace. Not only operating funding to us but operating funding to all of the agencies is an important part, and obviously, in due course, it will be beneficial to engage and be able to see an increase in operating funding. Our costs of operating are growing, our reach into northern Ontario is growing and the expansion of our programs is growing, and that needs support, including support from the private sector, other levels of government, but the province plays an important role in that.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My final question for you is, how important is it to have sector-specific guidelines for science centres, museums and those types of indoor attractions to be able to reopen and ensure public confidence and safety?

Mr. Guy Labine: Thank you for the question.

It is important. At the same time, we're working with local public health officials. In fact, today we have public health officials here to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Guy Labine: —vet the processes that we're using and the standards that we've put in place. As well, we're a collegial field. We share best practices with others across Canada and obviously in the province. So we're learning together as we move forward. As you've heard many times, there's no playbook for this, so we're trying to make sure

that we remain flexible, adapt and, first and foremost, create a safe environment for our workforce and for our visitors.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Okay. I'll go back to Avara Media for my last few questions here.

You talked about the challenges to access capital, both from what's happening economically due to the pandemic—but also just the application process, the fact that some of the federal BDC, EDC doesn't apply to IP. What are some things that the provincial government could do to help you attract the capital you need to make the investments to expand and create more jobs, to take advantage of this economic opportunity that you see before you?

Mr. Vikas Gupta: Thank you for the question.

One of the recommendations that we made as part of our advisory panel was to increase the amount of funding for Ontario Creates, first and foremost, so that the interactive digital media production fund was able to provide capital to more companies, and ultimately, that allows more projects to come to fruition.

One of the other recommendations, and the one that I highlighted today, was that—we have within the province of Ontario multiple funding entities. Ontario Creates is one; Ontario Centres of Excellence is another one. However, because they're under different ministries—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vikas Gupta:—they operate completely disparately. We think that if you're a qualified company at Ontario Creates, which is really where our industry goes for funding, there should be an almost automatic vetting or prequalification process for Ontario Centres of Excellence; the reason being is that our content, whether it's games or augmented reality or virtual reality, is all built on very sophisticated technology, and the Ontario Centres of Excellence, that's what they invest in. They invest in intellectual property, so a tighter co-operation and collaboration there becomes very helpful, and then the ability to use those funds that are gained from Ontario Creates or OCE as part of a company's contribution for BDC, BCAP or EDC to meet that minimum \$500,000 threshold for matching dollar-for-dollar funds becomes a huge boon for our industry, and then allows, obviously, massive acceleration and growth opportunities further down the line. But in the—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off.

We'll have to move to the government side now, and I'll go back to MPP Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just wanted to pick up off of my line of questioning. We talked about the tax incentive for Science North and other children's activities, but I also wanted to ask about the idea of a discovery pass, where you can—and my colleague MPP Smith touched on this—link agricultural components, link our Ontario Parks and Science North in a discovery package. People are very familiar with Science North, but they may not be familiar with other things. It gives them that introduction to other

experiences, whether they be agriculture, Ontario Parks or virtual reality.

0950

Mr. Guy Labine: Thank you for the question. The quick answer is yes.

Again, any opportunity to put a spotlight, especially for those individuals who may not be familiar or have used one of the assets in Ontario in the past—it would be important to be able to support that. For example, last year we had an exhibit booth at the International Plowing Match in Verner. We exhibited there and we were able to connect with people who don't see Science North as a place to come and visit. We virtually brought Science North there.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I also want to ask Vince a question.

My riding is Barrie–Innisfil. Just across the way, we have the Barrie Fair every year. I wanted to ask you what impact that's having on youth employment and getting more youths and young people into agricultural work. We had this carrot-and-stick volunteer campaign that you could sign up for, to help volunteer at the fair. What impact does that have on the sector?

Mr. Vince Brennan: It's going to be huge. Obviously, a number of our agricultural societies allowed students to fulfill their work experience that they needed for their hours for school to graduate; that's always been huge. It's been a stepping stone for many of our young people to get into that agriculture community and connect with the other vendors and the entrepreneurs that are out there.

I thought it was interesting when a guy was speaking about attending the International Plowing Match, which is an agricultural society member of ours.

The CNE would normally have had 4,000 or 5,000 part-time students working through them this summer; it isn't happening. It isn't happening at any of those fairs.

At the same time, we do rely on a lot of volunteers. We're volunteer-driven, so it's really hard to say how many would have a job out of that other than being a volunteer—and there are thousands of volunteers.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Has the federal subsidy for students impacted the amount of youth exploring the agricultural sector?

Mr. Vince Brennan: It doesn't really fit in there, where we are, with being non-profits at this point in time. We met with the Canadian agricultural minister's assistant the other day and we raised those same concerns there, and they've noted that. Maybe there will be some change there—but a great question.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you.

Just to build on that: In terms of this season and the GDP impacts, what are ideas you have to ramp up for next year, to have the agricultural sector continue to contribute so heavily to Ontario's GDP? Again, what perspective do you have on how youth can impact that sector? What can we do to incentivize more young people to explore agriculture?

Mr. Vince Brennan: Well, certainly it's going to be a time to sit back for a few weeks to regroup. The general

feeling from our agricultural societies is that they're going to come back bigger and stronger than ever, hopefully. They're going to try to engage the youth in there.

We see that there's potential coming out of this. There's been an increased amount of baking, growing plants, gardening and crafts at home, since no one can go anywhere. We anticipate a surge in entries for that, which will be a surge in youth, so I believe it could be a new generation of volunteers for agricultural societies that we've been desperately needing. I think if they can get their structure around working on their policies—what their whole vision of how they can social distance going out of this.

They're also concerned about what the health regulations are going to be looking like and what that impact could be, and I encourage that as an important part of this to be considered—and that does scare us, as well.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Interesting.

In terms of where we're going in the next few years with all the different sectors, what are ways we can help promote or advertise, in your experience?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vince Brennan: What I've learned from going through this exercise is that our agricultural societies fit under this committee as much as anyone does. We fit all those requirements. In addition to that, agricultural societies do play a huge role in our agricultural community. So I think working together and collaborating without duplicating anything will help a lot. If it's fair for one to be given consideration for support, then I think we should be as big a part of that as any of the other tourism associations in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the opposition side for their second round. MPP Gélinas.

Mme France Gélinas: Thank you to all the presenters. My question is for Guy Labine at Science North.

Guy, you went through some pretty specific asks about operating funding, about NOHFC funding, about investment in regional tourism, so my questions will be focused on those three.

First, you told us that your operating budget has been flatlined for the last 10 years. Are you asking that it continues that way, or do you need a bump because of COVID-19?

Mr. Guy Labine: Thank you for the question.

Again, that operating funding is a stable source of revenue for us, and obviously we would like it to continue in due course. We'd like to provide a value proposition that is worthy of seeing an increase in that investment, whether it's targeted specifically to supporting admissions through the ideas that were mentioned earlier—the ability to provide increased tourism marketing.

The question earlier was about how we encourage people from Sudbury, northern Ontario, Ontario and beyond to visit Ontario again. It's going to be important that the government be able to make strategic investments in those, whether it's tourism marketing or product development. So that level of support is going to have to increase, I think, like it is for many other sectors—and I know that's going

to be a challenge for the government to be able to fund that.

Mme France Gélinas: I'm pretty sure you know the different programs that exist within the NOHFC. Are those okay, or would you like to see a COVID-19-specific grant through NOHFC?

Mr. Guy Labine: Again, thank you for the question.

NOHFC is an important supporter of economic growth in northern Ontario, and we've benefited—Science North and many other organizations in northern Ontario have—and we'd like that to continue. Obviously, we'd make a case for support based on the values of the economic impact of our projects, and we are hopeful that, again, there's an opportunity to continue doing that. There's no reason—it's not like I'm sounding the alarm bell—that we won't be able to do that.

At the same time, there is a need for strategic investments to help the economy in northern Ontario recover. I would argue that obviously northern Ontario has its own set of challenges, like other parts of the province, and the ability for us to have targeted support over the next 18 to 24 months, I think, is going to be really important for us to get back to the tourism industry being an important generator of jobs, economic development and growth for northern Ontario.

Mme France Gélinas: You mentioned, specifically, regional tourism a number of times. Could you give us an idea as to who would lead that and what it would look like? Would it be for northern Ontarians to come to Science North? Do you have ideas in mind as to what you would like to see rolled out?

Mr. Guy Labine: Again, thank you for the question.

It's interesting; the visitor mix at Science North is one that's varied. In the summertime, there are obviously a lot of tourists. During March break and summer, we have a lot of folks from outside of northern Ontario who come and visit.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Guy Labine: The ability to continue building on that is going to be important, but the barriers are that there's some resistance for people to travel—and the ability for them to be indoors. That mix is going to be important. Again, focus on local to start off with. Region- and province-wide and then beyond is going to be important, and that's going to need coordination and support from the various bodies, including funding from government, to be able to do that successfully.

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Mme France Gélinas: MPP Fife, please.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to all the presenters; very interesting.

Right now, I'd like to focus on Mr. Gupta. You mentioned in your presentation that you're looking for leadership around—the language you used, actually, is what I found most interesting—the bailout versus investments. This entire committee is set up, Mr. Gupta, to set us on a course to economic recovery. What I need from you are three direct things that this government can do, very

quickly, to set us in motion and to signal that the economy around tourism, culture and heritage—this is an important part of the economy and we need to act quickly. So can you please address some of the three things—around capital access, perhaps? Even procurement around government would be good, as well.

Mr. Vikas Gupta: You'll hear some of this from my colleagues at Interactive Ontario shortly, but very quickly: (1) increasing the size of the IDM production fund through Ontario Creates so that more companies are receiving capital for viable projects; (2) decreasing the timelines for the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit down to a certain standard that gives companies those funds—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Vikas Gupta: —much, much more quickly. And then the last one is really facilitating those relationships between various ministries within the government, both provincially and federally, to unlock capital that's been made available by the various government entities.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Those are some of the issues that you identified between Ontario Creates and the OCE and trying to get more streamlining so there are no barriers set up. Is that right?

Mr. Vikas Gupta: That's correct—a little bit more facilitation, concierge-type introduction services etc. so that companies don't need to go through disparate processes when it comes to their applications.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Those are excellent suggestions. Thanks very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time for the presentations. Thank you to all three presenters for your time and for your presentations.

CANADIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

INTERACTIVE ONTARIO

MS. REBECCA BRETTINGHAM-FILICE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to our next presenters for the 10 a.m. slot. First, I would like to call upon the Canadian Olympic Committee. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. David Shoemaker: My name is David Shoemaker. I am the CEO and secretary general of the Canadian Olympic Committee.

Thank you very much to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and to Minister MacLeod for inviting me to speak today.

If you will allow me to begin with just a bit of background: The Canadian Olympic Committee is a results-driven organization. We're headquartered in Toronto, and our mission is to help Canadian athletes and Canadian teams reach the Olympic podium.

Allow me to brag for a moment; we're getting pretty good at that. At the most recent winter games in Pyeongchang, Korea, we finished third in the world, with 29 medals. At the most recent summer games in Rio, Brazil, with 22 medals, we finished 10th in the world—our highest medal counts in our history, both summer and winter

games. We've evolved, as a result, into a considerable business and a valuable and recognizable brand. Hopefully, you'd recognize our logo on Cadillac Fairview malls throughout the province and other places, such as the Eaton Centre.

I would say, much to people's surprise, we are almost completely funded by the private sector, via sponsorships, or what we call marketing partnerships, with 27 marketing partners. As a result, I like to think that we are an example of a private-public partnership that is working.

Oakville's Donovan Bailey, London's Tessa Virtue, Adam van Koeverden, Penny Oleksiak—these names are familiar, I'm sure, to everyone. They are gold-medal-winning Canadian Olympians, and all of them started their journey here in Ontario.

Like any enterprise, resources must be invested in order to benefit from the desired long-term results, and invested over time. It must not surprise you, therefore, to hear me say that just like virtually every other sector across the province, the sports system has been profoundly impacted by COVID-19. I'd like to provide context for the central role Ontario occupies within the national sport community and offer a few suggestions or highlight some areas on how the government support could be targeted to assist in the sport system's recovery and survival.

Sport itself significantly strengthens Canada's economy, generating roughly \$7 billion a year, and is a powerful tool for building communities and addressing important social issues. It can deliver on priorities of promoting health and wellness, fostering safe communities, improving education outcomes and assisting with the social and cultural integration of new immigrants. It develops transferable skills that individuals can apply to the workforce, including team-building, leadership and resiliency.

I often like to think it's not just about learning how to win; it's also about learning how to lose. All the times I lost to my brother in foot races down the street, I like to think, helped me become a better contributing member of society and teammate.

The sport industry is an integral contributor to the economy, providing employment and hosting opportunities, and this results in increased levels of tourism, job creation, enhanced public infrastructure and tax revenue for our great province. And COVID-19 has been a barrier to these economic and social supports—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. David Shoemaker: —that sports provide. It has halted sporting events and high-performance training and impeded our communities from accessing sport and being physically active.

Before COVID-19, our province and our country made a name for themselves as attractive destinations for sport tourism. As an important contributor to the Canadian economy, sport event hosting was a \$6.8-billion industry, and Ontario realized the highest visitation share of that, 41%. So pausing these events in a pandemic era has already had a devastating impact on the province's sport tourism economy.

While sport has been a key driver of mental and physical health, the onset of COVID-19 has also meant a

world where everyone has been sitting at home, resulting in a temporary sedentary reality for Canadians across the country. And now, as Ontario opens up, sport has a powerful role to play in our recovery efforts as a catalyst for a healthier life, both physically and mentally. We need to ensure that this is done in a safe and healthy way.

Thanks to its leadership and its athletes, Ontario has a valued history as part of the national sport framework and is a significant contributor to much of Canada's international success. Today, I'd like to touch on three factors highlighting Ontario's importance to the national sport ecosystem. The first is the province's history of developing a significant number of Canada's Olympic team and medal hopefuls. This is not a result of happenstance; rather, the product of years' worth of effort. The Canadian Sport Institute Ontario and programs such as Ontario's Quest for Gold have become a model in this country, supporting high-performance athletes to reach the podium—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. David Shoemaker:—and I thank you for your leadership and your vision in supporting these platforms. Despite COVID-19, we must continue to safeguard and nurture Ontario's athletes so Canada's role models continue to pursue the highest levels of achievement.

The second and equally critical factor is the many national sports organizations, provincial sports organizations and clubs based in Ontario. These organizations set and administer the road map for their respective sports, impacting stakeholders across the province. Each level is interdependent and sensitive to the pressures on the others, and therefore, we need to ensure that attention is paid to each as we move forward. The waves of layoffs in these organizations, that I'm sure you've all been reading about, due to the lack of expected revenue, have threatened their ability to function, and in some cases, severely. Without support, it may take them years to reconstitute themselves to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. Your time has come up now.

We'll go to our next presenter, Interactive Ontario. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

1010

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: I'm Lucie Lalumière. I'm the president of Interactive Ontario. Interactive Ontario is the trade association representing the interactive digital media industry in Ontario.

Before we start, we want to thank you for your time today and for your support during these difficult times. Also, thank you to Minister MacLeod for inviting us to speak today.

Today, our group includes three members of Interactive Ontario who are in leadership roles in their interactive digital media companies:

Joel Burgess is the studio director of Capybara Games, a small game developer that has been making award-winning games for over 15 years, including titles like *Grindstone*, *Below* and *Sword & Sorcery*.

Mary Sorrenti is the vice-president of Game Pill and VRGEN. Mary founded the company, and they got their

start helping brands bring their properties to life across mobile, PC, virtual reality and augmented reality—I should have mentioned that she founded the company with other partners. In recent years, with the support of Ontario Creates and the Canada Media Fund, they have transitioned to developing their own unique property.

Next is Jonathan Stanton-Humphreys, CEO of HitGrab Game Labs. Jonathan is the CEO of an indie studio that has been producing award-winning games since 2008. They have games on mobile, Web, PC and console platforms.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present our industry today.

What is interactive digital media? Interactive digital media is video games, virtual and augmented reality applications such as what Vikas told you about in the prior hour, e-learning content and other innovative, interactive digital media applications.

We are a techno-creative industry. Since the skill sets required to succeed are both technical and creative, we are also innovation-based, because we need to innovate constantly, and we are proud contributors to the cultural fabric of Ontario.

Pre-COVID-19, our industry was on a steep growth trajectory. We generated over \$3 billion in GDP. We brought new money into the province, with 91% of revenue coming from international markets. We employed 22,000 people across the province, with a steady need for a young workforce. In fact, the average employee age in our industry is 31 years old, and they hold high-paying and knowledge-based jobs. The average salary in our industry is \$74,000. However, compared to more mature jurisdictions, our ecosystem of companies is still emerging. Indeed, most of our companies are small and young SMEs. In fact, over a third of them have been in operation for five years or less—so lots of entrepreneurs, but we're still vulnerable as an emerging industry.

COVID-19 happened, and we conducted a survey at the beginning of April to understand the impact of the pandemic. It highlighted two main risks for our sector. The first one is the limited cash flow runway, of four months on average. The second risk is the fact that business development has been significantly impeded. Companies in our sector need to secure work many months in advance, but since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, business development activities—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière:—have been severely impacted. Therefore, it's critical to act decisively to prevent a major setback.

We were poised to grab a bigger piece of the global market—and that's a huge global market; it's estimated to be \$159 billion by the end of the year. Just in Canada, there are 23 million gamers—half of them are women—and people are consuming more interactive digital media during the pandemic. In fact, the World Health Organization is promoting games as a recommended social activity during the pandemic. So there is a clear market opportunity, but to seize it, our sector in Ontario must be able to pull through the cash flow and business challenges

triggered by the pandemic. We fully support the recommendation of the interactive digital media council created by Minister MacLeod and, today, we want to call your attention to the fact that Ontario must improve its Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit. Why? We need to ensure recovery, growth and the competitiveness of the province in our sector. This tax credit has been instrumental to our growth, but it's time to bring it up to date to what other jurisdictions are doing.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced jurisdictions around the world to look at growth sectors that will create high-paying jobs post-COVID-19. They are tuning into the opportunity. As an example, our Ontario companies right now are currently being courted by another jurisdiction that is offering them to open virtual offices of remote staff—very clever. So it is imperative that we improve our Ontario tax credit to create and retain jobs in the province and also attract investment. We have to implement a service standard for the tax credit.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: We have to allow companies to claim the SR&ED tax credit. We have to adapt our residency requirement to the reality of our industry, and we have to lower the threshold for annual filing further. We have to allow companies to collaborate together and to innovate together.

Ontario has what it takes to become one of the leaders worldwide in interactive digital media. We have a diverse workforce, high-quality creative and technical talent, top-notch post-secondary institutions and great entrepreneurs. Let's make sure we don't pass up the opportunity to recover from the current crisis, grow and significantly contribute to the economic prosperity of the province. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is Rebecca Brettingham-Filice. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Rebecca Brettingham-Filice. I am the owner and artistic director of Dance Extreme located in London, Ontario. I am here today representing myself and over 500 dance studios from various cities, towns and communities across the province of Ontario.

We would like to respectfully ask three things from you today: We are requesting clarification that we are now allowed to open in phase 2, that rent relief be extended, and that clear and consistent guidelines for reopening be given to the health units and shared with the public.

We need clarification if dance studios are now allowed to open in stage 2. Subsection 13(1) mandates that dance studios are closed. We are asking if we are included in phase 2, subsection 13(5) allowing amateur athletes to train in our facilities. Dancesport, which is ballroom dance only, has been allowed to open because they have a national body. As no national and provincial sports organization currently exists for dance studios, such as ours, we ask you to consider the plan we have developed as a group

instead and that dance studio owners could voluntarily choose to operate as a self-governing body who agree to abide by these regulations we have set forth in our document, Ontario Dance and Performing Arts Studios Workplace Guidelines for COVID-19.

I am here to discuss the financial impact the closure has had on the owners, employees, dance families and our communities at large. Since closing in March, to date, my dance studio has lost over \$250,000 in revenue. I have laid off over 20 employees. My rent is \$20,000 a month. While the rent relief has been helpful, four months isn't long enough. Paying 25% for four months was extremely difficult, but having to pay full rent while closed is impossible. Our industry needs the rent relief extended.

Here are some ways our community and other businesses have suffered due to dance studios being closed.

(1) Cancelled dance competitions that were starting their season when everything closed down: Hotel rooms cancelled, no restaurants patronized, shopping and entertainment in these cities cancelled. Theatres, hotels, convention centres that host the events sit empty and their staff are unemployed.

(2) Cancelled year-end performances: No theatre rentals, no photographers, no revenue for 3,000 recital costumes I purchased. They are sitting in my office, paid in full by the studio, and are non-refundable by the costume companies. I can't sell them to parents without a show. The business model for dance studios is to use the performance revenue to help pay for summer expenses, including rent.

1020

(3) Cancelled season: We refunded our customers three months of class fees. We laid off all dance teachers, assistant teachers, office staff, cleaning staff. Dance retailers are also suffering due to us being closed.

(4) Impact on limited camps: Parents are scared to send their children, and 50% of people who registered in January have now cancelled. Usually, we hire four to five instructors per week; this year we will hire one, maybe two. We usually hire eight to 10 assistant teachers; this year, we will hire one, maybe two.

(5) Uncertainty of the future of children's activities, especially dance lessons: With social distancing requirements, we are expecting a 40% to 50% decrease in enrolment. Our rent costs remain the same. Teachers' costs will increase with smaller class sizes—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice:—administrative costs increase; having to hire more staff to enforce social distancing and to have health checks prior to entering our building; camera and video systems being installed, as we cannot allow parents into the building. Cleaning supplies costs increase. Social distancing measures including signs, decals and taping floors are needed. So far, I've spent \$10,000 and we remain closed.

With the cancellation of gym in the school system, children will have fewer opportunities for physical activity. This leaves our after-school programs, such as dance, to be the best opportunity for kids to be physically active.

Dance studios are a fixture in every community and in your ridings. They are an extracurricular activity for males

and females, while 86% of dancers are female—this is our sport. We provide fitness for children and adults. We provide entertainment for local events, and fundraising in our communities. Dance is a sport and an art form.

While every dance studio is unique in what they offer in their size, dance studios are large, open rooms ideal for physical distancing, basing our ability to reopen on the square footage that's cleared by [*inaudible*] for each studio to reopen safely.

We are prepared to limit parents, siblings and others from entering our premise, to only allow young children's parents and those with special needs to enter. This will decrease the overall number of people in our studios to be well below the numbers currently allowed in stores.

Lastly, we are asking for the government to assist us in spreading the message that dance studios following our guidelines can provide a safe place for children. As I mentioned, we are already experiencing a significant decline in enrolment due to families being financially impacted by COVID-19, but concern about safety is a driving factor in parents choosing to register their children for dance classes. We need your support—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice:—public forum to spread awareness that it is safe for children to return to dance. Our small businesses need your support. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll start with the questions now. This round of questions will start with the government side. MPP Rasheed.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to Interactive Ontario. Lucie, thank you so much for your presentation.

When you talked about the industry being impacted because of COVID-19, because one would think that how things have moved more towards the use of technology—one would have never thought that we would be having committee meetings via Zoom, but we also have changed the way we do business in the Legislature.

I was just trying to understand what the key things are that have impacted your business, or the industry, based on what you presented.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: Thank you for your question.

The challenge is the fact that most of our industry in Ontario are SMEs, and small ones that have been created less than five years ago. About half of our industry in Ontario has under five employees, so that means we're very entrepreneurial and innovative. We're getting there, but these companies don't have the cash flow to support a crisis like this for a long time.

The other issue is the fact that business development has to be done way in advance for people to book work, and that hasn't happened as much through the crisis. So that's the main issue.

But you're correct; we can work from home, and that's why if we pass that hump, we can really grab market opportunities that aren't global in nature.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: When you talk about business development—and I know MPP Skelly will follow up after I'm done. I come from a technology background. I

used to work for BlackBerry, and I remember developments were done way in advance, sometimes a year in advance, based on what the market requirements were.

How has the gaming market changed with COVID-19, when somebody who was playing games online yesterday is still playing games online today? That's where I'm just trying to put the puzzle together.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: I'll pass it on to Joel.

Mr. Joel Burgess: One of the things that I like to point out to people is that, while we have seen some sectors of games boosted as a result of COVID-19 and more people at home with quarantine orders, a lot of other developers have suffered. It has just changed the way that people play games, the types of games they're playing. So it has helped a small number of developers, but it has hurt others.

One of the things about Ontario is that we have a very high number of small companies, and like film and TV, we are a hit-driven industry. It takes a lot of different creators and a lot of different projects to find that hit that's going to make a success out of the entire sector. One of the concerns that—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Joel Burgess:—we have is that this crisis, this pandemic is going to squash a lot of our smaller developers who have greater risk in the first place and will have fewer opportunities to have that kind of growth in the future after the pandemic has passed.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Chair, how much time?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I'll pass it on to MPP Skelly. Thank you for the answers.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is also to Lucie, and Joel, if you want to jump in.

Lucie, you mentioned that you want to see improvements to the interactive digital media tax credit. Can you be specific, please?

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: I'll pass it along to Mary.

Ms. Mary Sorrenti: While we have already seen improvements to the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit over recent months, one concern that the industry has had for a long period of time is the length of the queue. Once you apply for the tax credit, the return from the application date until you actually receive the tax credit in hand was upwards of 18 months or more. That was after your project had already wrapped and the expenditures had already been remitted to employees and contractors.

We have seen that time diminish in recent months to somewhere around 28 weeks, and they have indicated that they would like to target 12-16 weeks, which is in line with other jurisdictions. We would like to see that put in place as a service standard. That would allow the industry some sense of guarantee and a better ability to predict their cash flows and allow them to better—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Mary Sorrenti:—streamline their cash flows and finances over a period of time.

Also, there is a labour threshold. There are two streams in the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit. One of those streams allows for an annual filing of the tax credit, as opposed to waiting for a project to wrap. In prior years, that labour threshold used to be \$1 million in labour, and as we've already mentioned, given that many studios are smaller studios, a \$1-million labour threshold is a rather high number. Last year, that threshold was lowered to \$500,000. We would like to see that threshold lowered even further, somewhere in the ballpark of \$50,000 or so. That would allow bona fide interactive digital media companies to apply for annual filing. Again, that would allow for better predictability and sustainability of these companies in estimating their cash flows and finances going forward.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Mary, if you could put that in writing and send it to us, that would be very helpful. Thank you.

1030

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the opposition side now. MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you all for coming in.

I'm going to start with David, because I don't think we quite got to the asks at the end of it.

While I was at university, I was a varsity rower. While I was never particularly good, it certainly had a huge impact on my life. The skills development and leadership—how to work hard, how to be part of a team—have impacted everything since. I rowed around the time that Own the Podium was launched. Peterborough and Kingston actually both became—I think “centres of excellence” was the name that they used back then for developing rowing talent going forward and looking ahead to the Summer Olympics. So I understand the value that you're talking about, in terms of what it does for both Ontario and Canada.

What is it, directly, that you need, in terms of support from this government, to make sure that that is there for future generations of athletes?

Mr. David Shoemaker: It's my fault we didn't get to the specific asks, so my apologies for that.

There are 47,000 jobs, whether they are national sports organizations, provincial sports organizations or clubs that are located in Ontario in the sport industry, that have been dramatically impacted by COVID-19, so it's not the Canadian Olympic Committee's business that I'm focused on. It's the other end of the sport continuum, as athletes go through their developmental phase, that I'm really focused on; the jobs that are in jeopardy. So I'm very focused on the kinds of requests that have come through to the government that are asking for emergency funds or tax credits to help keep those jobs in place so that when we return from the pandemic—when the clubs can reopen, when the provincial sports organizations and training centres can reopen safely—we don't have to rebuild the infrastructure all over again. That's one thing.

I'm also very focused on the safe return to sport and the mindset of parents and the mindset of athletes about the

environment that they're faced with: “Can I go into a pool and know that it is free from risk for me, or it's optimized?” “Are there sufficient guidelines?” “Is there personal protective equipment and other things so that I can allow my children to go back to karate or tae kwon do or fencing or badminton in a safe way?” Those are added expenses, and so being able to fund that, creating tax relief, rent relief, for those clubs and provincial sports organizations, is very important to me.

Mr. Ian Arthur: What would that investment look like, or tax deferrals or whatever it has to be? Do you have any specifics, in terms of numbers associated with that, or anything that would be particularly useful, over another approach?

Mr. David Shoemaker: I do not. We can work on that with our team.

Frankly, I came here today to highlight the importance of a tsunami of 47,000 jobs in the sport industry.

Mr. Ian Arthur: If you could work on pulling some of that together and submitting it to the committee, that would be fantastic.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. David Shoemaker: We will.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Over to MPP Lindo.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm going to direct my questions to Interactive Ontario, as well. Many people don't know—the government is going to be thinking, “Who is this person?”—but my thesis supervisor when I was at York University used to look at girls and gaming, and so I've done a lot of background research on the work that this industry has been doing to actually diversify and to use play as an opportunity to get many people who wouldn't necessarily have access to high-paying jobs access to those jobs.

I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit more about the importance of ensuring—I think you said it near the end of one of the last questions—that those smaller developers have the investment that they need to weather the storm. My understanding is that those smaller developers are the ones that are creating innovative storylines for their video games and trying to bring more diverse voices into the industry.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: Thank you for your question.

By the way, we couldn't agree with you more that we need more women in our industry. In fact, right now—it may not show with this panel because we're 50-50—there are fewer women than men in our industry, and Interactive Ontario and the industry are working hard to change that.

I also completely agree with you that the small companies are usually the innovators pushing the boundaries. Within our recommendation to the IDM council that Minister MacLeod put in place, we also have emergency recommendations in there, one of which is adding more funding, \$5 million, temporarily to the IDM fund—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière:—which is critical to kick-start companies in Ontario and help them develop their own IP.

Mary, I'm going to ask you if you want to add more about this.

Ms. Mary Sorrenti: I think we are an example of that. Our studio was founded in 2008. We started as a service studio working with brands, and it was through the support of Ontario Creates and the Canada Media Fund that we were able to transition to start to create our own unique IP. We are a similar story to many other indie developers in Ontario that, without this type of funding, may not have been able to take on the risk of creating our own titles.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Chair, how much time is there?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three seconds. Out of time.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: We'll come back.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the independent members now. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three groups for your excellent presentations and taking the time to be here today.

My first question is going to be for Interactive Ontario, and it will be to Mary. You were talking about the reforms to the interactive digital tax credit. I just want to make sure I understood this correctly. To be able to apply for the credit, your minimum labour threshold is \$500,000, and right now it's taking about 28 weeks to reseed the credit from the time of applying. You would like to lower the threshold to \$50,000, and you'd like to see a window of 12 to 16 weeks. Is that correct?

Ms. Mary Sorrenti: Slight modifications there: The way the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit works—otherwise referred to as the OIDMTC—is that there are two distinct streams, essentially. One is a stream where companies can apply on an annual basis, and they can receive their tax credit annually. In order to be accessible to that stream, you need to have a minimum labour threshold now of \$500,000.

The second stream is a project-based stream, and there are two paths that you can apply to. One is for original projects and one is for service projects. There is no labour threshold for that stream. You submit it on a project basis. However, you have to wait until that project is complete before you can submit. So if you are in a project that is two years long, the production cycle is two years long, potentially you have been financing and paying these costs, labour and other costs, for a period of two years before you've been able to apply for your tax credit. Then, from that point, there is a 28-week period before you receive your eligibility certificate on that project.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks for the clarification on that.

I'm going to shift gears now. I'll ask Rebecca this question, but I think it applies to David as well.

We've had other dance studios come to committee, and I've just met with some dance studio owners in my own riding. They're very frustrated about the lack of clarity around ability to reopen. Some are doing things like, "We're a camp"—just lots of different things. How vital is it to have government clarity on (1) you can reopen—and what it would take for that clarity—and (2) having guidelines for safe reopening?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: Thank you very much for your question.

We actually created reopening guidelines and submitted it to the government over a month ago and have not heard a response with regard to those guidelines. Right now the issue is that every health unit is giving different information to dance studio owners. They help—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes. 1040

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice:—with interpreting the information, and everyone is getting different information. And we're all communicating to each other, which makes everything very confusing. If we're confused, how do we expect parents to understand what's going on?

So [*inaudible*] was taken out of the emergency guidelines last night, around 4 o'clock, which we understand; however, subsection (1) still states that dance studios have to be closed. So do we qualify our athletes to be coming back to our facilities under subsection (5) or are we still mandated to be closed under subsection (1)? It's very confusing.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I can definitely see how confusing that is.

David, I'm assuming, particularly for these local sports organizations you talked about—how important is it to have clear guidelines around safe reopening, and consumer confidence, but also confidence for the business owners and employees?

Mr. David Shoemaker: At the risk of repeating what you just said in the question—exactly. I think those who operate and own clubs, often without a huge staff, would benefit greatly from the guidelines, so they would know what to do. Adhering to them can communicate to their clientele and to the athletes and the athletes' parents a sense of confidence—"We are adhering to these guidelines, therefore you need to know and to trust that it's safe for people to return to sport"—which we think is vital.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll go to Rebecca and then to you, David, if we have time.

You talked about the importance of extending the rent relief program, which I know is going to require us to partner with the federal government. Are you thinking through the end of the year—or do you have a bit of a time frame on how long you think it needs to be extended?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: The issue is that, right now, we're closed, so [*inaudible*] open, setting a guideline is really difficult to do. We know our revenues are going to be down 40% to 50% when we do reopen, so having rent relief only until the end of July—I understand it was extended four months, but that's not long enough. I have no income. My business has not had any revenue, so even paying 25% of \$20,000—my studio is 16,000 square feet. Fees in Toronto etc. are way higher.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the opposition side for the second round. MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm going to bring it back to my gamer friends. One of the other things that you said was that half of the gamers are women. So we know that's

part of why, as part of the industry, we're trying to make sure that we get more women developers.

And part of the goal of this committee is to think innovatively about ways that we can boost the economy and recover from this pandemic.

I don't think people understand where developers work or what that looks like, and that they are small business owners, and so the impact of the small business owners is having a big impact on this. However, you folks are also bringing more money in, both internationally and here, and you're also finding ways into education. There's a ton of new post-secondary programs around game development, design and that kind of stuff.

Can you speak a bit about the return on investment for providing you with what you need right now to be able to navigate this storm?

Mr. Jonathan Stanton-Humphreys: Great question.

We often talk about in the industry that sometimes the perspective on gaming is, "Oh, cute; they make games"—but it couldn't be farther from the truth. The gaming industry is set to have anywhere between a 9% to 13% CAGR. We're set to become a \$300-billion industry by between [*inaudible*], which pretty much puts the gaming industry at the forefront of any growth industry. There's hardly anybody who actually matches our growth trajectory.

With that in mind, we really believe that, with the support of government, we can support our small businesses, as Lucie and Joel have mentioned. In supporting them, we can gear up so that we can recover our economy and contribute to the economy.

In our presentation, we've put forward that we would like to have an ongoing partnership with local government so that we could work toward finding ways of working with local government to supply training initiatives for our companies. We have real shortages in labour. We also want to streamline immigration processes. We know that if we can bring in skilled labour from other jurisdictions, on average that means that companies can hire between three to eight extra personnel who they can then skill up to meet the need in the market. So we've also put forward immigration initiatives.

We'd actually like to set up an ongoing work group, which would tackle a focus on education, ensuring that we are upskilling people in the right way and ensuring that we have really gold-standard skilled labour in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Over to MPP Kernaghan.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Kernaghan.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to Rebecca Brettingham-Filice.

Dance Extreme is widely respected in the London area. It has been in business for over 20 years.

Dancers are truly athletes. Dance studios support the physical health and socialization skills of youth and adults.

Why is your business important, especially now, during the time of COVID-19?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: For two reasons: One, with the elimination of physical education in the school system next year, children will be getting their

physical activities from after-school programs only, and dance is critical in that. Also, mental health-wise, dance is a release for many children, to express themselves through movement. So right now, more than ever, kids need dance.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Most definitely. You also mentioned the lack of clear, consistent guidelines and how you had sought clarity from the government yet received no response. It reminds me of a number of small businesses who reached out to the hotline during the pandemic and received different, often contradictory, answers.

We know that small businesses have been struggling. You mentioned that you were able to access the CECRA, the landlord opt-in, where you're only paying 25% of the \$20,000 you need to spend on rent. Do you know how many other business owners in your network were given this opportunity by their landlords?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: I would say it's less than 50% at this time. Landlords still are not on board. There have been four dance studios in the last week—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice:—that have closed in the province and will not reopen their doors.

I've been fortunate that the London health unit has been absolutely phenomenal, but other health units are giving out different information. They're telling people they can't open camps because they have dance in them and the government ruled that there's no dancing or singing. It has nothing to do with day camps. So the information out there is inconsistent, and it's very frustrating.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Can you tell me three direct things this government can do to support small businesses such as dance studios?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: We need the rent relief, we need clear guidelines on how to reopen and we need the government to communicate that to the public. We need Doug Ford to go on TV and say, "Support your local sports organizations."

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go back to the independent members for their second round. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll pivot my last question to Rebecca to you, David. How critical is the rent relief program for the local sport organizations? Do you feel like the federal and provincial governments should change the program to make it tenant-driven and extend it so it lasts longer?

1050

Mr. David Shoemaker: It is, as I understand it—and it's not my business, but as I understand it—critical, because as they come back to their business, as these clubs return to sport, the business model is completely upside down. In order to do it in a safe way, you can't bring in nearly the number of participants that you could. You have additional equipment needs. Even with the return to business, there isn't the revenue to offset the incredible rents that they are paying.

I apologize; I'm not equipped to answer the tenant-driven part of your question. It's not my area of expertise.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: That's fine. I appreciate you being forthright.

I'll ask this of David or Rebecca. I feel like both of your presentations are so linked because of the sport component to it and the small business component to it. Rebecca, I'll start with you and then shift to David on the same question. Given the financial challenges you're facing—not being able to open, still paying high rents etc.—will you need support to purchase PPE and potentially for other public health measures, like Plexiglas, extra cleaning protocols or whatever it is, in order to safely reopen?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: I've already spent \$10,000. I have to put in an entire camera/video system in my studio, because we allow parents to watch their kids, which they can't do because they can't come into our facility. We've purchased tape to square off squares in our studio and to direct people throughout—decals etc. All the PPE equipment that is required, the hand sanitizer, all the cleaning devices for the studios themselves, the Lysol wipes to clean the bars and mops to clean the floors in between studios—I'm doing all this, but still I don't have a response if our document has been accepted, so we don't even know what our protocols are going to be. That's the frustration.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I hear you.

David, what about from the local sports organizations?

Mr. David Shoemaker: I think it's an important and very significant expense that needs to be offset for them to be able to be viable.

If I can pivot slightly, because I've given so much attention to local sports organizations: There are big organizations like the Rogers Cup and Tennis Canada that have laid off 70% of their workforce, that had to cancel the event at what has been publicly reported at \$15 million to \$20 million in losses and quite an economic impact.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. David Shoemaker: If they are to safely return to this high level of professional tennis that comes to the GTA on an annual basis, the investment and added expense in personal protective equipment, the Plexiglas and other things—perhaps ripping out every second seat in the stadium, if you can imagine, and things of that nature—will be very much an important part of their viability going forward.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to pivot to Interactive Ontario. I really see a lot of job creation opportunities for the sector moving forward. How critical is the Ontario Creates fund, the media fund, to be able to help you leverage capital investment to grow your businesses and create jobs?

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: Thank you for your question.

It is critical and, in fact, Vikas who was there in the prior hour mentioned that. That's something that our start-up, early-stage companies—right now, they have a hard time raising capital because of the crisis, but even before the crisis. As Joel mentioned, we are a hit business, so we're not necessarily—we're risky. We are a creative industry, even if we're technology.

The answer is, absolutely, yes. If we can leverage, collateralize the IDM fund, the tax credits, and make sure that between ministries there's more communication, that will make a difference for our industry.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Jonathan Stanton-Humphreys: Case in point: I was in Helsinki not too long ago, just doing a dig on why they are such a successful game-producing nation, and one of the things which was so apparent—and this is a narrative which runs across our industry—is that the companies that have these massive, massive hits, with hundreds and hundreds of millions of downloads etc., always have about 10 or more flops before that. It takes time to bid in—it takes time to learn what a hit actually takes. So allowing those companies to have that time to learn is absolutely critical, and all of these initiatives from government enable companies to do that.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: You talked about Helsinki's success, but Avara Media was here in the last hour saying that Ontario could be a global leader with the right support—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Sorry, I guess I'm out of time. Anyway, I want Ontario to be a leader.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I will move to the government side for their second round. I'll start with MPP Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to all the presenters for coming today. I have a few questions for all of you.

First, I'll start with David. I'm a big sports fan, obviously, but specifically, Melissa Bishop—I'm a big fan. I'm a runner, so I follow her everywhere. We were supposed to do a run together at some point, but COVID-19 happened, so I'm looking forward to that one day.

Lindsey Park, one of our colleagues, announced electronic raffles a while back. MLSE Foundation, Jays Care Foundation, Ottawa Senators Foundation were all there, at Scotiabank. It really helps our industry—to be able to buy online raffles. However, when it comes to the Olympic sports, it's a bit different.

In terms of charitable contributions to our Olympians, how can more Canadians and more Ontarians support our athletes in that sense?

Mr. David Shoemaker: Thanks for the question.

We have the Canadian Olympic Foundation that's very much focused on assisting Canadian athletes and Ontario athletes, both the current crop and the next generation, those who are five to eight years out.

Part of our challenge is that there are 37 million people who don't necessarily think that the plight of a high-performance athlete is something to invest in, and so we have a communication challenge. We would very much like to take advantage of all fundraising activities, like the one you've just described that MLSE conducts, raffles. Our foundation would be very amenable to that. In our foundation, we have typically relied on major gifts from either family foundations or high-net-worth individuals who have given big to support athletes' Olympic dreams.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm just going to turn it briefly to Rebecca. I met with a lot of my local dance studios. I read the document that you referenced, and it's very detailed, so thank you. I would say it's a pathway to re-opening. From your perspective, would it be helpful if we write a letter or talk to the committee we have on economic recovery, as a government, to encourage them to really

look at your proposal that you did submit to several ministers, including the Premier?

Secondly, with the public health units: My local public health unit, Simcoe Muskoka, has allowed camps for dance studios. So all our dance studios are happy now because they can open with dance. You're saying that there's just not a commonality among the public health units?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: Correct. The public health units are interpreting what the government has put out there, and some health units are telling people that they can't open for camp. So we need clear guidelines given to the health units, because that's who we're going to get our information. We would like to know if our document is accepted or not, and we would like, in number 13, subsection (1), for dance studios being required to be closed—we want that removed. We would like to be considered under subsection (5), to allow amateur athletes—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: —to come back into our facilities.

1100

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: When you talk about the athletes coming back into your facilities, is it 10 plus the instructor, or is it a total of 10? What is the number you're looking at?

Ms. Rebecca Brettingham-Filice: In our guidelines that we are looking at, it's based on square footage. Every dance studio has different sizes. Some studios are quite small, and they wouldn't be able to have 10 kids with the instructor with social distancing. Some people have larger studios and can social distance. I created boxes of six feet with two feet in between. That's what the health unit told me to do; that's their interpretation. They had a meeting about it, and that's what they decided was the best course for dance studios.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: So, similar to the churches, it would be based on the percentage or square footage.

The last question I have before I pass it on to my colleague MPP Piccini is, in terms of getting young people involved in the video game industry and how that has a huge economic sector benefit, have you partnered with people like—locally, I have Code Ninjas. They provided 100 free lessons for students, knowing that parents have a need. That's their ability to bring in new clients and then help the next generation with some of the basic skills they're going to need to enter the industry.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: Great question.

We are looking at the partnerships that we want to develop, because we truly believe that teaching code early on is very important to both genders, so we would like to talk to you more about this.

One thing I didn't mention, as well, is that, we are working to increase—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Lucie Lalumière: —the number of under-represented talent in our industry. We are working, for example, with the Ministry of Children and Social Services to stimulate the transition from school to our industry for Black youth. We're also placing Black youth and under-

represented talent in our industry. So this is important. Coding is part of it.

As I said, coding and creativity—we're a techno-creative industry, and we're poised to be, as we have said, number one, if I may say, in the world, because we're diverse and we have the talent. So we need to make this happen, and we have an opportunity to do so now.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time. Thank you to all three presenters. We appreciate your presentations.

ONTARIO CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS FUND

UKEN GAMES

GATHERING OF ONTARIO DEVELOPERS

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Moving along to our next group of presenters: I will first start with the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: Good morning to the members of the committee and staff. My name is Kathleen Sharpe. I'm the executive director of the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, or OCAF, as it's called. Unlike most of the presentations you've heard so far, from tourism, arts and heritage organizations and sectoral service organizations, we are a funding program of the ministry. We felt it was important to present to you today to let you know of our experiences during COVID-19 and what we've observed from the organizations in which we invest.

OCAF started in 1999 under the Mike Harris government as an experimental investment program to support the cultural tourism sector through investing in new events, festivals or exhibitions or the expansions of existing events. OCAF supports the broad marketing programs of those events and organizations, and requires a portion to be repaid to the fund. In that way, we have taken the \$45-million investment by the government of Ontario over the past 20-plus years and turned it into a program that has approved almost \$80 million to support the sector through almost 80 projects.

Over the past few days of presentations, I'm sure you've been given data on the impact COVID-19 has had on the sector for the past 100 days or so. It is serious. You've seen the numbers from the latest Ipsos survey; they are, frankly, scary. You've heard from a number of OCAF-supported organizations like Ballet Jörgen—and Science North, earlier this morning—and what they are facing. You've heard from Minister MacLeod what the next 18 months might look like in our sector.

While areas of the sector, because of the nature of the art, can come back soon and slowly—like art galleries and museums—we know that the performing arts will take longer. We have just heard that Broadway doesn't anticipate opening until at least 2021, and we know the Mirvish theatres are closed until then as well. Stratford Festival hopes to mount something small over the holidays, but that's just a hope at the moment. Everyone has started to

program virtually; some organizations as early as a week after the March shutdown.

Our sector is resourceful, creative and is skilled at making things happen, and quickly. We have been working with our funding colleagues at the Ontario Arts Council, Celebrate Ontario, Destination Ontario and Trillium to ensure we get our approved funds out the door as quickly as possible. While we do our due diligence even in these difficult times, we are relaxing some of our benchmark rules in repayment timing to allow for organizations to postpone and remount their events in 2021. It's not new money, but at least they know they can count on OCAF when it's time to reopen.

In addition, we are looking at ways we can provide expertise on digital marketing to cultural tourism organizations.

We commend our colleagues at TIAO who have been working tirelessly with their tourism counterparts and members to help in any way they can, surveying members on impact and conveying that information quickly to the minister.

We thank our minister, the Honourable Lisa MacLeod, for her many town halls that keep us all in the loop and for her enthusiasm and optimism for the sector and, more recently, her on-the-road opening-up tour.

Because OCAF is an arm's-length organization with a small staff and outstanding board of volunteers, we are poised to help in the recovery immediately. It is simple for us to turn things around quickly because we have such a lean operation. We urge you to consider us as a possible conduit for helping to rebuild the sector. It is going to take an army of smart and resourceful individuals and organizations to turn this situation around over the next 18 months. We must all be working together in tandem on an achievable plan. Our artists, designers, creators and producers of arts, culture, heritage, events and festival organizations are counting on us, as are all the Ontarians who enjoy and support cultural events and activities year-round, and the many citizens who are employed in the sector. They need our help.

I'm happy to take questions, and a more detailed aspect of this presentation was provided through the Clerk to the committee earlier, so if any of you have had a chance to look at it or if any of you have questions about that, I'm happy to take any questions. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to our next presenter, Uken Games. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Chris Ye: My name is Chris Ye. I'm the CEO and co-founder of Uken Games. First, I'd like to thank you for the time today and for your continued support of the games industry over the years and through these challenging times.

Uken is one of the fastest-growing mobile game studios in Canada. We're fully Canadian owned and operated, and we're based in Toronto, Ontario. The company was founded in 2009, fresh off the tail of the previous financial crisis, starting with two people. We've grown the studio to over

100 employees now. This includes nine co-ops currently. We've built great relationships with the universities around, to make Uken a great place to train young talent, from developers to game designers, artists—and a lot of disciplines, really.

Our most notable titles include Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? and Jeopardy! World Tour, which have collectively been downloaded over 20 million times and are the top two most popular mobile trivia games out there. Our aspiration from the start is to become a significant global player in the mobile game space. We have ambitions over the next five years to grow our team to over 500 employees, and we've really built a strong foundation to be able to do that with the rest of our business.

Now I'll pass it over to our CFO Wilson Ng, who will outline our challenges and suggestions moving forward.

Mr. Wilson Ng: I'm Wilson Ng, CFO of Uken Games. Thank you to the Chair and committee for allowing us the opportunity to share.

I wanted to share a bit about how COVID-19 has impacted our company. We've seen quite a bit of increased engagement across all of our products. Our products are a great way for people to entertain themselves during the pandemic and social distancing. As well, it gives people the ability to connect with others without having to resort to physical contact.

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In addition, we're one of the few industries that is able to work remotely indefinitely. We went through some adjustments over the course of a couple of weeks, but now we're totally ready to continue working remotely, as we're 100% cloud-based and our content generation is not predicated on physical spaces like other industries, such as film or TV. Many of our team live outside of Toronto, and working from home is preferred for many on our team.

The key point here is that we represent one company in an industry that will continue to create original IP and drive job and wealth creation regardless of physical distancing measures. Our challenge has been that the current incentives are not well structured to help companies like ours. First off, we're required to incur expenditures prior to receiving funding. With the speed of delivery of the biggest tax credit, which is OIDMTC, which takes two to three years from application, it's really difficult for a company like ours to totally rely on that, and certainly smaller start-ups and earlier-stage companies may not benefit from that at all.

In addition, we've been speaking with banks—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Wilson Ng: —and the current banking system is not really structured to set up low-capital and transactional businesses like ours. So we are also looking at other provinces and how they've set themselves up. In Quebec and Nova Scotia, they deliver incentives much faster, some with service mandates within two to three months, and they're able to leverage future incentives for third-party debt.

Our three recommendations are to help accelerate the growth of our industry, which is a great industry to be in during social distancing measures. One is to speed up OIDMTC processing. Ideally, we can get to a three-to-six-

month delivery from application date, as opposed to the two-plus-years delivery time frame that we're currently experiencing. We'd love for an organization like Ontario Creates to work with banks to collateralize projected tax credits so that we can obtain them at near-bank rates, like in Quebec. In addition, we'd like to recommend an increase of funding to gaming to approach that of TV and film funding that we understand is happening.

We are a homegrown success story, and we will continue to contribute to Ontario's economic growth. We'd love for the government to help accelerate our growth, as well as the growth of our peers, by providing more access and faster access to capital.

We're happy to answer any questions that anyone might have.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We have one more presenter for 11 a.m., Gathering of Ontario Developers. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Denis Dyack: I'm Denis Dyack, and I represent Gathering of Ontario Developers, GOOD. I'm here with my colleague Matthew Walach. We're going to present to you, hopefully—I think the last for the video game developers—something that will give you a lasting impression.

Gathering of Ontario Developers is a group of developers who have very deep experience in Ontario. I've been doing video games for over 30 years now. We and many members within GOOD actually brought the Ontario tax credits into Ontario—helped bring them in, worked with the government—and our goal is to increase wealth and to make sure that we can help the economic climate within Ontario for game developers.

The video game industry—particularly our industry—is ready to help. We're not looking for handouts. We're looking to reduce red tape and make recommendations to help increase financing to employ people in Ontario and help us through this crisis.

To be clear, we're not sure how long this is going to last, but the latest things that we hear about COVID-19 are not good—with the latest strain, D614G, that has locked down many parts of China again. As leaders within our industry and the government, we think it's incumbent upon us to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. There is a chance that COVID-19 is going to last for many, many years. If this is the case, we want to take a realistic look at where things are going.

Video games is a unicorn industry; there's no question. We can work in 100% isolation. Many of the developers are cloud-based, which gives us a unique advantage in working in isolation. Video game business during COVID-19 has seen significant increases in both engagement and sales. The problem within Ontario is that the groups that are looking for financing are no longer seeing it. Essentially, all types of investments and all types of traditional means of financing video games have disappeared. Conferences have ended. Countries are becoming more nationalistic—specifically, even provinces—and people are being told to invest at home. Ontario and, particularly, Canada do not have a strong investment group

or school of investment. However, what we do have is a fantastic GDP-to-debt ratio, and we have strong banks, so we think that's where the government and all of us together can work towards really building this industry.

The video game industry is massive. The global gaming market is \$147 billion, as of 2019. If you look at the latest trends, free-to-play, which most if not all of our members are a part of, accounts for 90% of all global gaming revenues. The current climate for a lot of the incentives are based on an old model that we brought in back in 2006, which is called premium. That has all changed now. Free-to-play is definitely the way to go, cloud-based gaming—you're seeing massive upticks, and I think it's really important for everyone to realize these things.

More and more people are playing games during COVID-19, and there's an opportunity to really build employment, and we can engage people right now, and we can employ people right now.

Looking at the latest FAO report, it states that the province plans to spend \$700 million on cultural media, of which 80%—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Denis Dyack:—goes to the linear media tax credits, linear media forms, like film and television, and we're estimating probably around 10% of that total spend goes to video games. We're looking at all this and saying that given the proper funding and financing, we can start employing people today. We can work completely in isolation and start employing people all over the province. It doesn't matter what the location is; if they have an Internet connection, they can make video games with us, and we can start employing people immediately, as of tomorrow.

So we want to really focus on reducing the red tape. As our colleagues at Uken said, the amount of time that it takes to process some of these credits is way too long. It's not competitive with other provinces or other countries. We think refocusing and looking at what the best things are for our industry is really important in understanding how we can help get through this crisis if it does indeed last many, many years.

At this point, I'm going to pass it to my colleague Matthew, who's an expert on tax credits and does this for many, many game companies throughout Canada.

Mr. Matthew Walach: As Denis already mentioned, we're really not here looking for handouts. We're just looking for better access to financing and to remove the red tape and simplify current programs that are already in place.

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The Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit, the OIDMTC program, is administered by Ontario Creates and operates through the ministry of tourism and culture. With the elaborate eligibility requirements currently in place, many small, growing companies don't even qualify, and worse yet, they don't even realize this until it's too late. Even those that do qualify, depending on their size, have to wait anywhere from 18 to 30 months to receive their certificate, and although this time frame is getting

marginally better, it's still not even close to our primary competitor, Quebec.

In Quebec, there's a similar program called the Production of Multimedia Titles tax credit, and it's administered by a body called Invest Quebec. This program has none of these confusing requirements, yet it targets the same eligible companies. Companies can file annually for all of their Quebec labour, regardless of how much of the project was completed in Quebec, how much the staff, or when the staff, moved to Quebec, and regardless of whether or not the titles were released during the year. Moreover, Invest Quebec mandates that the claims are processed—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Matthew Walach: —within a mandatory three months.

Removing much of this red tape would go a long way to decreasing processing time and having the ability to implement service standards similar to Quebec. Ontario also has a unique determination on the interaction between SR&ED and OIDMTC, whereby in Quebec you can effectively stack both SR&ED and their multimedia tax credit program, thereby receiving a maximum recoupment rate of 92% versus our 62%.

The other—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Your time has come up.

We'll go to questions now, and we will start with the independent members. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for coming in today and providing such valuable and timely information.

I'm going to direct my first question to the Gathering of Ontario Developers, and it's partly going to be to allow you to finish your presentation, but can you do it in the context of—Avara Media and Interactive Ontario, as you probably know, were here and I asked them a question about how we can make Ontario the global leader in gaming, and we ran out of time. So maybe you could finish your presentation and then answer my question about how we're going to make Ontario the global leader. You have about six minutes. You can use all of it if you want.

Mr. Matthew Walach: I'll just use a couple of those minutes because, actually, the final part of the presentation is in that context, and that is to do with financing.

Within Ontario we don't have an official, direct mechanism of financing this industry by any sort of government-backed financing, whereas in Quebec, directly through Invest Quebec, they will actually loan both directly and indirectly against not only the multimedia tax credits that they administer, but also the SR&ED tax credits on a federal and provincial level—although more often it is the case in our industry whereby you're revoking those provincial SR&ED tax credits and instead getting the multimedia tax credits. This is where you see that difference of 92% in Quebec, 62% in Ontario.

The fact that Invest Quebec will directly, in some cases, loan up to 100% loan to value against both multimedia and SR&ED tax credits for up to two years, and if they're backing it, they'll back up to 80% of both those tax credits

as well—you can see that that quickly grows and allows companies to leverage that capital on a very quick time frame. Keep in mind too that they're already getting those tax credits back between three and six months. It's a very short-bridge term, but they're immediately able to get that money into companies' hands at a very low interest rate.

Denis, perhaps you want to elaborate there.

Mr. Denis Dyack: The whole idea of GOOD is to really talk about how we can build the industry in Ontario and how we can build wealth. Here is the bottom line: Companies that create original IP and are Canadian-owned require funding, and by giving us access to capital, this is where true wealth is created for Ontario. We will employ people—and you really need to look at the following: The groups that are making games, do they own the IP? Are they creating original IP? Are they based in Ontario and are they Canadian-owned? By focusing on these types of companies, we will absolutely build the industry.

Our goal is to really talk about how the industry has changed and how we can, essentially, employ people in Ontario and empower them.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Denis Dyack: When we originally brought the tax credits in, back in 2006, the idea was to stop the brain drain from people leaving Ontario and getting jobs in the US. Now the goal is, how can we actually increase wealth in Ontario? By focusing on what we're talking about, opening up capital, working in an industry that can completely run in the cloud—we don't have to wait for COVID-19 to go away; we can have hundreds of people working on games because we can work in complete isolation—we can increase wealth in Ontario. So that's our goal.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm part of the reverse brain drain. I came from the States to Canada.

Given what's going on in the States right now, especially around visa applications, I'm just wondering if there's an opportunity for us to not only create wealth in Ontario, but also attract more high-quality talent. I'm not saying that I'm very talented, but others are.

Mr. Denis Dyack: Absolutely. I can say this without question: If we're given capital, we will not only hire people in Ontario—we have several people all over the world who want to immigrate to Ontario to get a job working at our company. I'm sure other developers, our colleagues at Uken and others, will be the same way. It's all about capital. It's all about financing. At the end of the day, most of our costs go into hiring and employing people.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm almost out of time, so I'm going to give Wilson or Chris an opportunity to talk about the implications of these changes for your company and companies like yours.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Chris Ye: I think removing the red tape would go a long way. We are one of the few companies that were really fortunate, through our growth, to make it to the stage we are at. We have a lot of peers that were underfunded or otherwise couldn't get to this point. We've certainly benefited from the tax credit environment, but as noted in the presentation, Ontario has fallen behind in competitiveness

relative to the other provinces. I think we would have a more thriving industry, in particular, if we were able to remove some of the red tape. Those are things where expenditures have already happened but they're not helping any of the new companies, because it's coming way too late in the cycle. It's already commitments that are given. In some cases, you might have a company that applied for credit, waited, and then—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

We'll have to move to the government side now for their time of questioning. I'll start with MPP Crawford.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to all the presenters. I have a couple of questions. I'm going to start off with the gamers, and then I'm going to move to the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund.

I just wanted to finish up with the two people representing the gaming industry. You talked about financing and I just wanted to get a bit more detail on that. Given that your industry is a huge growth industry, and I think it's probably one of the few industries that's actually not as dramatically affected by COVID-19—correct me if I'm wrong, but that's the sense I'm getting and that's what I'm hearing—what is it with financing particularly? I know you mentioned the tax credit, but in terms of financing rules, are there things that we can do as a government in terms of securities regulation, crowdfunding, anything along that line that can make access to capital to your organizations easier? Or is it that you're looking at it from a government tax credit perspective only?

Mr. Denis Dyack: Chris, I'll jump in first if that's okay.

To be clear, most video game companies who get investment—investment typically happens within a 100-mile radius of where the investors are. So you typically get a lot of investment in Silicon Valley or in China, where all the big investment firms are, and investment in our industry really drives it quite a bit. Now, since COVID-19, all of that has disappeared and people are really starting to focus even more on their local areas, and so companies that are pre-revenue, like our company and other companies that are looking for investment—it's really unlikely to happen now until COVID-19 disappears, because investors like to come to meet the company.

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So what we're saying for, to help growth—and this can now also happen with companies that aren't pre-revenue—is to get a loan and have financing go through banks. Right now, it's very difficult to get anything through banks. Though we do have a great debt ratio within Canada, the banks just aren't lending to video games because we're so new. So what we're saying is, look at collateralization of some of the tax credits, and look at working with the banks, like Quebec does. In Quebec, the government will help facilitate things with the banks and get projections three years in advance on SR&ED. These are very, very big things that would help all of our companies. If we get more financing, we will hire more people.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Did anyone else want to respond to that?

Mr. Chris Ye: Yes. The only comment I could add is about the pace of things. The purpose of financing is really just so that we can get back and focus on building. We're talking about financing in sustainable situations where there's already either a proven economic model or otherwise. Getting that money in fast is really what's important, as opposed to having to wait three years after the expenditure is spent.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: That's loud and clear. We've heard that.

In terms of talent here in Ontario, we have some great colleges and universities that are training people. Do we have sufficient quality of education and number of openings? Are there different partnerships we can do with colleges and universities to train people—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: —for this growing occupation?

Mr. Chris Ye: We have great relationships with the universities. The universities are fantastic for entry-level and junior talent. I think the challenge is really with more senior talent and attracting that to our province. We don't have the quality of alumni yet, but we're slowly building that. As more studios get funded and as more studios progress to the next milestones, that's what will drive those things. But in order to attract bigger companies—having big investment firms or otherwise is what creates a bit more of a halo effect in branding, and that's what's lacking in Ontario.

Mr. Denis Dyack: Matthew can probably speak to this, but the average salaries in Ontario are much lower than Quebec and other places around the world. So by getting this financing, the more experienced people are going to go to—when people join video game companies, they look at the games that they are making and how their career is going to grow. A lot of the talent that we originally lost over the last 15 or 20 years, when they go to the west coast and work at some of the biggest video game companies in the world—there's a great reason to bringing them back into Ontario, but it's financing and it's getting those salaries here. Ontario is way below the average.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Yes, and personal tax rates are high, too. I know a lot of people have been going to the States for that.

I wanted to ask the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund—great organization. I'm glad you've been involved in the huge number of town halls we've been doing with Minister MacLeod. I just want to get a bit more of a sense from you in terms of what we can do together to get these cultural attractions back on track. I know you only spoke for a short time. What is it that we can do together to get the province back on track, from a cultural perspective?

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: This is already going on, as you know. The minister has, I think, 14 advisory committees that are working feverishly in various areas, including sport but also culture—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: —and heritage, to look at ways that we can work together, to look at new ways of supporting the sector and so on. So that activity is happening. I haven't seen the results of that yet, but it is going on.

On the funding side, there's our organization, and obviously Ontario Creates, to a certain extent—although we're not that involved on the industry side—Trillium, the Ontario Arts Council and so on. We're in contact with one another to look at ways that we can assist one another to make the same amount of money—because there's no new money, at least not yet—go further and to potentially re-target.

I'll give you an example. Something like the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund is all about cultural tourism, all about attendance, all about increased numbers. We're going to have to shift that focus in the shorter term because it's really all about getting—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We'll have to go to the opposition side now for their time of questioning.

MPP Glover, can you confirm your attendance first, please?

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm Chris Glover, and I'm in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Please go ahead.

Mr. Chris Glover: Actually, Kathleen, I'll give you a chance to finish your statement.

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: Thank you. Sorry; I got a bit passionate there and completely forgot about the muting.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's okay.

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: I think it's really about the funding world starting to rethink how we're supporting, what we're supporting, why we're supporting, and to give organizations an opportunity, in some cases, to completely reorganize depending on what level of attendance they can actually potentially enjoy. At the moment, it's such a small number of people. How do we think about the longer term? How do we keep people employed? Those are the big issues. When you're an actor, for example—we'll use Toronto as an example—there's a good chance you're making your money out of the gig economy, which is restaurants and ushering and a whole range of things, none of which are happening. Not only are you out of the mix as an actor, but it's very difficult to make money in other areas, because those things are shut down too.

Our program is all about getting more people, getting more money into the province of Ontario through visitation and so on, but I think we're going to have to refocus, all of us, on, "Let's get people working," whether it happens to be in the arts, heritage and culture sector or some other sector.

Mr. Chris Glover: I appreciate that. I have many friends who are in the film industry—actors and behind the scenes—and it's really shocking what's happening right now, so thank you for that.

I want to address some questions to the computer and video game industry. I was preparing a graduation speech for grade 8 students, and I phoned a grade 8 student who's the son of a friend. He said, "The pandemic actually hasn't changed things a whole lot for me. I would go home and log on to this game with my friends, and we'd be on the game." It seems that the video game industry is one of the few—that and pure animation, not VFX, are two areas

where there's actually potential for growth through the pandemic.

What you're talking about is that this financing seems to be the stumbling block. Give it to me in layman's terms: If the government, say, set up a fund of \$10 million or \$100 million that was to spur the growth of the gaming industry, how would you as an industry and you as an individual company utilize that money, minimizing the risk to the government's fund as well, so that it could be a regeneration fund?

Denis, do you want to start?

Mr. Denis Dyack: Sure. That is exactly what we're looking for. The video game industry, I think in general—I know all the members of GOOD are not looking for more grants; we're looking for loans and access to capital.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Denis Dyack: If you were to give us \$5 million, I would hire 30 people right away. If you were to give me \$25 million, we would probably hire 100 people right away, and over a period of three to four years, we could be up to 1,000 people. At the end of the day, what Ontario lacks is essentially financing for video games, and these types of loans—as an example, if you look at the co-lending facilities that you get from BDC and also a leading bank, we don't qualify, because we're a pre-revenue company. Meanwhile, the government is giving loans to other groups that are backed by 80%. What we're saying is, give us access to this. We will hire people.

Mr. Chris Glover: You said you were a pre-revenue company, and I understand.

My riding is the downtown core, and the industry is centred here. I've been doing a tour of IT companies in the riding.

How does the government know that yours is one of the legitimate companies that's actually going to generate revenue in the future versus somebody who's just starting up and trying to take advantage of that fund?

1140

Mr. Denis Dyack: If you look at the members of GOOD, they're all people who've been in the industry for a long time. As an example, I'm in the video game hall of fame. I've had several hits, worked with Nintendo, Sony, Microsoft. If you look at all of our members, we've all had successful titles before, and we've seen growth.

The other thing that I would strongly have everyone think about, if these loans are given—we're in a crazy pandemic; the world has never seen anything like this before—even if some of these loans fail, isn't it better to have people employed? Most of this money is going to go directly to employment—you can set up things, too, that you can see this happening. Isn't it better to employ people, even if it fails, rather than put people on unemployment, CERB or anything like that?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to give Chris and Wilson a chance to respond to that, as well.

Mr. Chris Ye: Wilson actually gave me a good point, which is, there's a stat in a Nordicity report in 2019 about the Ontario IDM sector, which is that every \$100,000 of

tax credits to the IDM industry in Ontario has contributed to about \$1.5 million in direct GDP impact.

You're looking at track record—it's along the lines of what Denis had said. Even in our case, in particular, BDC and RBC have come to the table. It's just very restrictive. So even though we're a revenue-generating company, \$30 million over a long term, they're only willing to give us, let's say \$5 million in lending, even under those conditions. So the restrictions are great—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to the government side now for their second round. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to start with Uken Games. I have played your Age of Legends on my BlackBerry PlayBook, and enjoyed the game thoroughly.

Mr. Chris Ye: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dave Smith: I hate to admit that I was probably one of the two or three people in the entire world who bought a PlayBook.

I came from the software industry myself. We did application-based software for school boards, and one of the challenges that we found with it was—it wasn't necessarily the salaries it was that every time we brought somebody in from university who looked like they were going to be a dynamo, they left us shortly afterwards to go to the gaming industry, like you. So it's one of those challenges that we all face with it.

There is no real restriction on what you can pay a developer other than what you can get in return for your product. I've heard from a couple of you in the last 45 minutes that if we were to provide an avenue for financing for loans, that would allow to you pay more to your staff. Having a loan doesn't change your business strategy. It doesn't change your business model. So how do you reconcile that?

Mr. Chris Ye: I think in our case it's really just about—we're constantly improving all of the metrics. Yes, staff are always getting promotions. We've got a strict pay policy that we've developed over time. I think with additional financing, it's really just about the ability to hire more rather than necessarily pay people more. We're always trying to increase, to be competitive with the rest of the world, but it's really about generating that next level of output and building bigger products. Our products scale very, very well globally. So a software engineer can create 10x impact, and that's really the end of it.

Mr. Wilson Ng: Some of it is also to remain competitive with some of our peers who reside in different jurisdictions where they might pay double the salary that we're offering, in US dollars. We've seen some of that. We've heard it. We've lost some good people to that, as well. It is really tough when they say, "I can go down to Silicon Valley and they'll pay me in US dollars." Then we talk about the cost of living in those areas, so there's some mitigation there. But as Chris said, it's not like we would think about giving everyone raises as soon as we get new financing. I think we would just look at how many more opportunities we could create, how many more projects we could start, because of this increased financing.

Mr. Dave Smith: Having lived through the dot-com era myself and experienced a lot of what you're talking about—a couple of our lead developers ended up leaving us and going to a company in the US called Net Acumen. They were very, very forward-thinking. They did a lot of great things.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Dave Smith: They did the typical dot-com thing: bought all new furniture, brought in a whole bunch of people, bought Porsches and then declared bankruptcy. So "once bitten, twice shy" really comes to me on all of this.

I don't want to sound like I'm being too negative towards your industry, whatsoever. It provided me with an excellent living for 20 years, being in software.

The challenge that I see with it, though, is that we have a lot of really, really good ideas that come from game development, that come from software development in general—the biggest challenge is monetizing it and getting to that revenue side where you can make back a lot of what that initial investment is. That is quite possibly the biggest fear that the banks have.

I completely understand that we can develop the industry more here, that we can have more of these companies, and they will pay good salaries for people. But the challenge is, so many of them go out of business before they get to the point where they're able to monetize or capitalize that product they have.

How do we get past those concerns? What can we do to alleviate some of those challenges?

Mr. Chris Ye: I think you have to really look at an experienced track record for that. That is what we've built our company on, and that's what we rely on for any level of credibility that we have. Like I said in one of the previous questions, I've had many peers who have fallen to the wayside because they weren't able to access the financing. We were one of the few companies that were able to break through off of—we raised \$250,000 when we started—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Chris Ye: —and that's the total capital we've raised throughout the entire company. So I can't speak for anyone else, but I think speaking to the track record of the management team and how they're thinking about operating business is really important. Having a mindset of operating profitably from the get-go is what allowed us to get to where we are today.

Mr. Dave Smith: Building on that a little bit: Governments typically have been willing to put money into start-ups and to get companies going. What you're suggesting is a paradigm shift where those already established, who have the track record, would have access to it. Am I correct in that?

Mr. Chris Ye: More focus on scale-ups as well, yes. That would be helpful for us.

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate that.

Denis, did you want to jump in?

Mr. Denis Dyack: Yes. This is really what GOOD is focusing completely on. We are experienced people who have been in Ontario for 30 years. We're here to stay. We

want to see Ontario grow. We are not the companies that are going to buy the Porsches and then leave.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the opposition side now, for their second round. MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm going to start with Uken.

I'm the MPP in Kitchener Centre. We've got a big tech hub here. We also have a number of universities and colleges that have started to put in these post-secondary programs on gaming, game design. They realize that that is an opportunity to push social innovation, social enterprise, all things that are super important when we are all gathered here today—which made me think of Prince, which is not what we're talking about—to talk about how we can build and rebuild the economy post-COVID-19.

I'm wondering if you can spend a little bit of time, based on that as the backdrop, talking about why it is so important to invest in the industry now. I note that you said you need funding for gaming to approach TV and film, and we're very clear about doing that linear stuff. It's this more imaginative, innovative space that I think the government—it's really important for the government to hear how the return on investment can look and how that can start to build innovation within our economy, as well.

Mr. Chris Ye: Gaming is a really mature industry now, in the sense that 10 years ago it was fairly new on mobile, but now, and today, it has been built up. Global revenues from games topped all three other mediums this last year: music, movies, television. So in order to compete, you really have to understand how the industry has matured and that there have been sustainable barriers that have built up.

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I think there's a common misunderstanding that the gaming industry is purely hit-driven, and I can assure you that that's not the case when it comes to mobile and free-to-play. There are certainly learnings that we've built on as a company that reinforce our ability to re-create hits or re-create the titles that people love, and we've been able to do that successfully. I think a lot of other companies that have the experience have also done that and demonstrated that, and you can see it in the track record of the years of experience that they have and the growth that they've sustained through those years.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm going to shift over to GOOD for a similar question—but expanding it in a bit of a different way.

I love that you called yourself a unicorn industry. It makes me want to become a game designer, because it's so simple—just teasing; that was me joking.

We talk a lot about the need to invest in small and medium-sized businesses, but sometimes when it comes to the tech side of our lives—the gaming, the multimedia, interactive media, all of that—we forget the importance of investing in the talent. I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about the importance of investing in talent, and especially—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: —local talent, so that we can, again, use this as a way to catapult the economy, even when

we have such uncertainty about whether we're going to be able to be outside, inside, whatever is going to happen to us.

Mr. Denis Dyack: To your point on the Kitchener-Waterloo area: Our company, as an example, Apocalypse Studios, which is part of GOOD, is partnered with the University of Waterloo, and we're working on cloud-first gaming and working on the Holy Grail of narrative, where we allow a living, breathing, persistent universe, where we combine procedural generations and also entertainment for people who are stuck at home. As a start-up—and many other groups like Uken and other groups within Ontario—we are giving shares away to the people who are within our company, so as our company grows within wealth, so are they.

So we're absolutely investing in the talent. We are only as good as our people. By investing financing into our companies, that helps us employ more people, which has a direct effect on our economy. We're partnered with several universities—McMaster, Waterloo, Niagara College, Brock University, Sheridan College. All throughout Ontario, many of our companies directly work and help build the programs to teach people. Throughout this pandemic that has changed everything, people can play video games, we can go—and we have 100% production efficiency in the cloud. We're partnered with Amazon. We have all of these things we can do to help bring to the table, to help people learn and grow, even if this pandemic goes on. So I think it's absolutely important—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Denis Dyack: —that people realize that, as the industry that we have and the opportunities that we have, this is something positive we can invest in.

Mr. Matthew Walach: I would just add to that: The idea of investing in senior talent, something that Chris alluded to earlier—you talk about the brain drain; that's not exclusive to the States. That same Nordicity report that Wilson pointed out also points to, I believe, a \$20,000 or \$30,000 discrepancy between senior-level average salaries in Quebec compared to here in Ontario. Again, that comes down to access to capital and speed of tax credits. If this money can be turned around quicker, it can allow for us to directly invest that back into these senior-level staff—because they can immediately just jump ship, go over to AAA or even some large indies in Quebec and have a much higher earning potential and a much lower cost of living.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move to the independent members now for the final round. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Kathleen, I'm going to give you an opportunity to answer a few questions. In your presentation, you talked about how we need to rethink the funding model for cultural attractions, the arts etc. Can you expand a bit on how we need to rethink that funding model?

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: Well, one of the things I think I said was that the funding model for OCAF is pretty unique. In fact, in listening to my colleagues from the gaming industry, I thought they need an OCAF-like program to support what they're talking about. What makes it

really interesting is that it is a combination loan and grant, it is about capital enhancement, and it allows new projects and new ideas to get off the ground, particularly if you were able to invest longer than one year. If you can invest over two or three years, it would be that much better. So think about that for the gaming industry.

On the arts side of the equation and the not-for-profit side of the equation: I know that all of my colleagues and people who are actually artists and work in arts organizations are looking at new kinds of funding models, because the way we consume art may change dramatically. As Denis was saying earlier, if this pandemic continues on—not just for 18 months, but if there's no vaccine and we're reluctant to go into large groups for the next two or three years—how we consume art is going to change dramatically. As funders and as arts organizations, we're going to have to try to get ahead of the curve and figure out what that is.

At the moment, people are mostly trying to figure out where they get money, to be honest. How do they continue to produce? How do they continue to create? What do they do now that they've been laid off or they don't have jobs or whatever? I'll give you an example: TO Live, which is the entity under the city of Toronto that manages three major venues with seven auditoriums in them, is losing \$1 million a month and has gone from 600 people to 30. This is happening at Stratford and Shaw and many, many organizations large and small across the province. Many of the live arts don't have the advantage or the unicornness that the gaming industry has to be able for their consumers to stay inside and so on.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I really appreciate you focusing a bit on artists themselves as people, as individuals. I've had a number of artists across the arts talk about the possibility that we might lose a generation of artists, because they are gig workers, as you say. They can't earn revenue from their art, and for most of them, their part-time jobs to support their art are all closed down as well. It's like every avenue has been closed off, except for CERB funding. I think most would prefer to work than—but thank goodness we have CERB funding.

Do you have thoughts on how we prevent this potential loss of a generation of artists if they can't find ways to earn revenue doing their art?

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: We're talking about the arts world, so they're incredibly innovative and inventive. So you're already getting the drive-through Van Goghs and all those things—those are big operations.

I think you're going to see, ironically, that the small organizations—the more experimental dance companies, for example, or theatre companies—are the ones, in a way, who are better poised to deal with the audiences of 50 or 100 or 200 sitting in circles or whatever ends up happening, than the Canadian Opera Company and the ballet and so on.

I think it's going to have to start slowly, but I also believe that unless we're willing to risk losing those major

large-attendance organizations, we're probably going to have to find more money.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: That's not what you want to hear, I know.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would rather have you be honest about this, because then we have a decision to make as a society: Are we going to invest in the arts and what it's going to take or are we not? It's better for you to be honest with us and confront us with those kinds of decisions rather than hide it somewhere and not address it. So I really appreciate you being very frank in that regard.

I'm just wondering about the importance of extending CERB or having some sort of basic income, especially for people in the arts, to help weather this storm. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. Kathleen Sharpe: Yes. I'm not in close touch with the federal government, but it seems like they're kind of taking every couple of months—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Sorry to cut you off. That concludes our time. Thank you to all the presenters for your time and for your presentations.

This committee stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The committee recessed from 1200 to 1301.

ALLIANCE DES PRODUCTEURS
FRANCOPHONES DU CANADA
BUREAU OF POWER AND LIGHT
ART GALLERY OF SUDBURY / GALERIE
D'ART DE SUDBURY

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back. We're meeting for hearings on the culture and heritage sector, as part of the study of the recommendations relating to the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020, and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy.

Our first presenter for this afternoon is Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada. If you could please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Bonjour, membres du comité, et merci de cette invitation. Je me nomme Carol Ann Pilon et je dirige l'Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada, organisme national important de l'industrie francophone de la télévision, des médias numériques et du film à l'échelle canadienne depuis 1999.

L'alliance regroupe la grande majorité des entreprises franco-canadiennes de production indépendante établies d'est en ouest au Canada, dont plus d'un tiers sont basées en Ontario et sont responsables de plus de 50 % du volume de production francophone nationale en milieu minoritaire.

L'APFC déploie de nombreux efforts pour s'assurer que la réalité des francophones vivant en milieu minoritaire soit présentée à l'écran et accessible aux citoyens. Nos producteurs sont des créateurs de contenu que nul autre producteur canadien ne peut offrir. Leurs œuvres contribuent à la diversité du contenu canadien et stimulent

le développement économique, social et culturel des communautés qui les voient naître. Elles contribuent aussi à retenir les artisans, les artistes et les créateurs dans leur milieu respectif, voire même à attirer des talents venus d'ailleurs. Elles donnent une voix à leurs communautés et leurs fournissent un miroir dans lequel elles se reconnaissent et qui les représente dans un paysage audiovisuel non seulement complexe et sursaturé, mais paradoxalement de plus en plus uniformisé. Cette diversité à l'écran contribue à freiner l'assimilation des jeunes à la culture anglophone si dominante sur les médias numériques.

La ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture, l'honorable Lisa MacLeod, m'a invitée à siéger au comité consultatif pour la production cinématographique et télévisuelle de l'Ontario en février. J'aimerais saluer le leadership dont la ministre a fait preuve dès les premiers jours de la crise à mobiliser les acteurs de notre secteur en vue de cerner les possibilités de collaboration en réponse aux défis économiques engendrés par la pandémie du coronavirus. Comme la ministre l'a déjà souligné, le secteur de la culture est l'un de ceux qui a été frappé le plus durement dès le début de la pandémie et sera l'un des derniers à s'en sortir.

Il importe au plus haut niveau que le gouvernement de l'Ontario prenne conscience de deux problèmes fondamentaux pouvant entraver la reprise des activités du secteur de la production indépendante : d'une part, les coûts supplémentaires pour permettre d'avoir des milieux de travail sains et sécuritaires; et d'autre part, l'absence d'assurances de production pour couvrir les demandes d'indemnisation en lien avec la COVID-19.

La mise en place des mesures pour la reprise des tournages recommandées par le comité consultatif en vertu de l'article 21 de l'industrie du cinéma et de la télévision de l'Ontario engendrera nécessairement de nouveaux coûts pour les producteurs. Ceux-ci sont estimés à environ 10 % du budget de production et, dans certains cas, peuvent aller jusqu'à 25 % du budget—des coûts qui, jusqu'à maintenant, sont non prévus pour les nouvelles productions et que les entreprises devront absorber.

La pandémie a provoqué une pause de tournage depuis la mi-mars. Si la presque totalité de la province peut maintenant reprendre les tournages en raison de l'amélioration de la situation sanitaire, il reste que la majorité de la production est toujours en arrêt. Le problème : le manque d'assurances.

Les tournages de films et de séries sont couverts par des assurances—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: —notamment pour compenser le coût d'un retard lorsqu'un acteur ou une actrice tombe malade, par exemple, ou qu'une épidémie de grippe se propage dans l'équipe. Désormais, les compagnies d'assurances refusent non seulement de couvrir les productions pour les risques liés à la COVID-19, mais aussi toutes les maladies infectieuses. Les productions qui n'avaient pas de police d'assurance en place, de même que celles qui n'avaient pas commencé, ne seront pas couvertes pour la COVID-19. Seules les productions qui avaient déjà contracté une assurance de production avant la pandémie

continueront de bénéficier d'une protection. De plus, les subventionnaires publics ainsi que les banques exigent que les productions soient assurées sans exclusion pour leurs accorder du financement. Cette situation entraînera un gel complet du tournage de toute nouvelle production et représente le plus grand frein à la reprise dans le secteur audiovisuel.

Les producteurs indépendants francophones de la province de l'Ontario sont particulièrement touchés par cette situation en raison de leur cycle de financement et de production. Étant principalement des producteurs de contenu audiovisuel pour la télévision, ils dépendent fortement sur le soutien du Fonds des médias du Canada et, plus spécifiquement, du Programme de production de langue française en milieu minoritaire. Les résultats de cette plus récente ronde de financement—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: —pour ce programme ont été annoncés justement vendredi. Un moment normalement de réjouissance pour plusieurs producteurs se voit substitué par une grande incertitude quant à l'avenir des projets. La nécessité de trouver une solution à ce problème n'est pas seulement essentielle; c'est un besoin urgent.

Le Canada n'est pas le seul pays à vivre cette situation. Partout dans le monde, l'industrie de l'audiovisuel cherche des solutions pour combler le manque d'assurances. Le Canada et l'Ontario peuvent prendre leur inspiration de solutions semblables à celles prises par la France et la Belgique. Ces deux pays ont annoncé la mise en place d'un fonds de garantie destiné à pallier l'absence de couverture assurantielle pour les tournages. Le 20 juin, Bruxelles s'engageait à investir 5 millions d'euros dans un tel fonds. Deux jours plus tard, la France doublait son fonds d'indemnisation public annoncé en début mai.

Nous encourageons vivement le gouvernement de l'Ontario à étudier comment ils peuvent travailler avec le secteur pour solutionner ce problème, que ce soit en apportant un financement initial pour créer un fonds de compensation ou en collaborant avec le gouvernement fédéral pour examiner des options alternatives d'assurances ou encore en travaillant directement avec l'industrie dans ce sens. Nous sommes face à un moment charnière où il faut trouver—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Your time has come up now. We'll have to move to our next presenter: Bureau of Power and Light art collective. If you could please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Andrea Battersby: Hello. Thank you to the Chair and committee for providing this opportunity to tell our story. My name is Andrea Battersby, and this is my partner, Geoff Doner. We are artist-producers embedded in Toronto's arts and culture sector for over 30 years and are co-founders of Bureau of Power and Light art collective, dedicated to positive social impact.

We have all been turning to the arts to get through this pandemic. It has been our medicine, our escape and continues to provide means for us to process and digest the world in these uncertain times. When the world shut down because of COVID, we were all advised by experts at all

levels to turn to creative activities for our mental and physical well-being. Those of us who are privileged to have access have been able to take the advice successfully. The elevation and distraction that engaging with creativity makes possible reverberates out to positively impact families and communities.

These creatives, who enrich our daily lives and help us process crises, need to live somewhere, to experiment and build somewhere. Artists need support to pursue their discipline optimally so that we can all benefit from the rich cultural landscape we create.

But creatives face a paradox, of society needing art but not valuing the human makers of art. We have historically faced illegitimacy, accepting unsafe conditions in order to access affordable, appropriate workspaces. The communities that artists build are being dismantled without considering the value of the people and the successful cultural activities at work there. Creatives and other low-income folks are left behind when neighbourhoods are redeveloped without considering our needs or return, and we all lose out on the cultural heritage appreciated over years of successful relationships.

My own journey as an artist in Ontario includes three renovations. Hundreds of good neighbours are displaced in each instance of gentrification. Lines of inquiry, development of careers and new technologies are disrupted. The fruits of our labours are appropriated by others for profit while we have to start again.

Now, the abrupt isolation and energetic pivot made necessary by the global pandemic of COVID-19 directly affect all aspects of our art practice and livelihood now and into the foreseeable future. The theatre, film, art exhibitions, mindfulness-based art workshops that comprise our professional practice are currently cancelled. The global shutdown has revealed and amplified the fragility and biases of many social systems, and we need artists to re-imagine the possible future because that is what artists do.

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Our response as artists is to draw upon the unique tool kits to envision the most equitable, accessible means to honour communities historically neglected in Ontario. Informed by our lived experience of illegitimacy and precarity and fueled by our desire and duty to leverage our inherent privilege as white Canadians to promote equity, ArtHouse provides visual focus for new dialogues about how we collectively take care of each other.

What we are proposing is piloting a convergent model of housing as a human right within a creative environment that provides culturally appropriate, arts-based health and well-being. Integrating expertise in arts and culture, health care, research education and affordable housing is core to this aspirational art project.

Mr. Geoff Doner: Thank you for allowing us this time. I'd like to share our screen with some visuals that we've been working on for this project: creative convergence hubs cultivating community health. So what I'm going to be showing you here are plan view designs, imagining architectural floor plans of an ideal place. Each colour represents a different facet of ArtHouse. For example, as you can see on this plan view of the ground floor, dark red

represents art studio spaces and the residential portion; light blue—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Geoff Doner: —represents health care orgs; yellow represents programming spaces. The second floor we imagine with more live-work studios and arts-related orgs etc. The process of developing these conceptual designs for ArtHouse has been very therapeutic for me and has allowed me to focus my scattered energies.

After building this web page and to illustrate the concept, we then began an Instagram account to intentionally engage artists, health care practitioners, galleries, educators, scientists, social equity orgs and more to inform the project, to create a groundswell of support for the idea. We are almost at 500 followers after a month, and we look forward to continuing partnerships and moving this forward.

Ms. Andrea Battersby: So there are examples of creative convergence hubs to look to, notably Artscape and MaRS in Toronto and the Cotton Factory in Hamilton. These clusters have proven to be successful in many ways by providing opportunities for cross-pollination and innovation, demonstrating the strength of intersections as opposed to silos. However, despite the amazing work of these organizations, they're not able to meet the needs of Ontario's creatives, and going forward, we must also prioritize voices from Black and Indigenous communities, people of colour and those who identify with marginalized communities.

To summarize, we need creative convergence hubs for community health that centre on housing as a human right. Supporting the arts must be a priority in order for us to cultivate thriving communities, and equity in healing must become our priority.

We have a few recommendations:

(1) Proactive support for convergence between health care, education and the arts that centres on housing as a human right;

(2) Embrace a visionary future and support artists and creative orgs to meet the demands of new digital platforms and create the new society going forward;

(3) Ensure Black and Indigenous voices are represented in every way possible—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Andrea Battersby: (4) Restore all funding to the OAC and reinstate the Indigenous Culture Fund.

Thank you for giving us this platform, and we look forward to seeing how you address these recommendations.

Mr. Geoff Doner: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Our next presenter is the Art Gallery of Sudbury. If you could please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Good afternoon. My name is Demetra Christakos. I'm the director/curator.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Ms. Demetra Christakos: We need Janik Guy.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Can you unmute yourself?

Ms. Paula Gouveia: The host was unmuting us. Our apologies. We've now been unmuted.

Janik? Not yet? So in the interim—

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Sorry. We're having audio issues.

Ms. Janik Guy: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Just a moment.

Ms. Demetra Christakos: There we go.

Ms. Janik Guy: Thank you. Good afternoon, dear members of the Ontario Legislature's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Bon après-midi à tous. Je m'appelle Janik Guy. Je suis co-présidente à la Galerie d'art de Sudbury, et je suis ici en présence de mes collègues. With me today is my fellow co-chair of the board, Paula Gouveia, and current director/curator of the gallery, Demetra Christakos.

To begin, the Art Gallery of Sudbury, la Galerie d'art de Sudbury, sincerely appreciates that the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, and this committee have been providing and collecting information on a consistent basis during the unprecedented times of COVID-19, which includes March to June 2020, and is ongoing.

Nous souhaitons aussi vous remercier de nous donner l'occasion de faire cette présentation devant vous aujourd'hui.

It is also important to recognize that the gallery respectfully acknowledges that we are located in Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land on which we gather is a traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg.

Avant de présenter les impacts de la COVID-19, et pour vous donner un bref aperçu, nous souhaitons souligner que la galerie est un organisme dynamique de nature bilingue et triculturelle.

We're also the only public visual art gallery and art museum that is located in an area of 38,000 kilometres. Before COVID-19 and as per our 2018-19 community report, our attendance included 41,520 attendees.

C'est là que j'aimerais passer la parole à ma co-présidente, Paula Gouveia. Over to you, Paula.

Ms. Paula Gouveia: Merci, Janik. Thank you. Just to touch upon the impacts of COVID-19 on the gallery: The gallery was officially closed on March 17, 2020. It was the first time that the gallery had been closed in its 52 years of existence. We are now working through the process of reopening the gallery with the goal of welcoming public visitation in August 2020, with our staff having returned in mid-June to prepare that work. So between March 17 and August 31, what we will realize is a loss of approximately \$82,000 in earned revenue.

This is a substantial loss for a gallery of our size, and it can be attributed most to the fact that we're no longer able to provide in person our education programs, programs that would have run over March break, arts workshops that would have run on weekends and classes for adults, and also community-based programming such as workshops that we would deliver in long-term-care facilities and retirement facilities in our community. We also saw the loss of 900 registrations for our 2020 summer art camps, 53 different school groups and community bookings that were no longer to be part of the gallery space. As I said, this had a significant impact.

But there were several initiatives at the provincial level that helped to stabilize us financially during the COVID-19 closure, and I'd like to take some time to enumerate them for you, because they really contributed to the gallery's stability and resilience during this time.

First and foremost is recognizing the Ontario Arts Council and the ongoing operating funding that we have received. What we received on June 14 was 50% of our payout for the year. That totalled approximately \$27,000 and we thank the province of Ontario for that funding and helping us to be stable during this time. That early payout, again, received in June would have come in October, but what it really did allow us to do was fund initiatives to move from an in-person delivery model, which is our specialty—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Paula Gouveia: —to really providing online and innovative new delivery.

We also want to recognize the importance of the Northern Ontario Heritage Foundation internship program, where again we have been able to realize internship opportunities in the community, contributing to economic development in the north. Having that funding through the period of May 1 to June 30 allowed us to maintain our intern who played a key role in allowing us to pivot with online offerings.

We would be hoping to see the government commit to the NOHFC internship program because of the fact that it contributes to economic development, and we would like to ask that we see an expansion to that opportunity, not just for one year of funding, but for two years of funding, for candidates Black, Indigenous or persons of colour. We would also like to encourage the province of Ontario to look at developing a process to expand the NOHFC internship program to international students who complete their education in northern Ontario at northern Ontario post-secondary institutions, because they are looking for their first full-time employment in the north and they want to actually take up residence in the north.

The last item of note is to really think about how we celebrate and encourage philanthropy together. Again, looking at encouraging how we can open up a new three-year investment phase for the Ontario arts challenge fund to help rebuild arts endowments, looking to the government of Ontario to increase the Ontario non-refundable tax credit benefits for donation and gifts of arts and heritage charities, and also looking to partner very strategically to help celebrate and encourage the principle and practice of volunteerism in the charitable sector.

Moving forward, not only do we want to thank the government for all of the support, especially in regard to the funding that we have received through the Ontario Arts Council, but we want to ask the government of Ontario to build on these key investments with limited-term strategic resilience funding to further off-set the COVID-19 impact.

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We also want to look to the government to implement strategies to promote and market Ontario's regional, cultural and heritage attractions to realize their full economic potential.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Paula Gouveia: As my colleague noted, we are the only gallery within a 38,000-kilometre radius, so the potential for the gallery to play a critical role is evident and apparent. But also apparent is the need for support from our members in Parliament and the government.

Lastly, we want to end the presentation by thanking you very much for taking the time to consult, for allowing us to be here today this afternoon, for your attention, and we would be happy to take any questions that you have.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Before we move on to questions, I would like to do an attendance check. MPP Harden, if you could please confirm your attendance?

M. Joel Harden: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Je suis ici au bureau de circonscription d'Ottawa-Centre.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. MPP Bourgouin?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Guy Bourgouin, à Kapuskasing en Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start the first turn of questions with the opposition. MPP Bourgouin?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, monsieur le Président. Merci à tous ceux qui ont présenté aujourd'hui.

Ma première question est pour l'Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada, M^{me} Pilon : Je vous ai entendu parler des problèmes d'assurance. J'aimerais que, si possible, vous élaboreriez. Vous avez parlé de la France, de la Belgique, de ce qu'ils ont fait, mais aussi peut-être s'il y a d'autres pays, de ce qu'ils ont fait pour essayer de remédier à la situation et, si le gouvernement n'aide pas la situation d'assurance, de décrire aussi quels sont les impacts qui peuvent arriver avec ce problème d'assurance-là, ce qui veut dire peut-être des pertes d'emplois, ce qui veut dire autre chose. J'aimerais vous entendre sur ce point-là, s'il vous plaît. Merci.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Il y a un ensemble de diverses approches qui ont été prises à travers le monde, parfois en collaboration avec les assureurs; d'autres fois, ce sont les gouvernements qui mettent en place des fonds d'urgence. Dans certains cas, les producteurs sont appelés à mettre une contribution aussi dans le fonds. Donc les modèles varient énormément d'un pays à l'autre, mais une constante c'est que le gouvernement contribue financièrement à établir un fonds pour aider les producteurs dans le cas où il y aurait des réclamations faites pour la cause en lien avec la COVID-19.

Ce qui risque d'arriver c'est que, bon, les producteurs qui sont peut-être plus nantis, ou encore la production de services avec les productions américaines qui ont, disons, les poches creuses, pourront sans doute prendre à même, eux, le risque de financer le potentiel d'un arrêt de tournage. Mais, par exemple, si on doit arrêter un tournage pendant une longue période de temps, tous les coûts associés à ce tournage-là deviennent importants pour nos plus petits producteurs, entre autres. La grande majorité des producteurs francophones en Ontario, qui sont des PME, ne seront pas en mesure de [inaudible]. Dans

certain cas, ils pourront mitiger les coûts vis-à-vis le documentaire, mais encore là, c'est un grand risque à prendre et c'est porté uniquement par le producteur.

L'autre problème avec tout ça c'est puisque la production en milieu minoritaire francophone est beaucoup soutenue par les institutions publiques de financement. Ces institutions-là exigent des preuves d'assurance sans exclusion pour pouvoir octroyer les fonds nécessaires. Du même côté, au niveau des banques, pour financer ce qu'on appelle du financement intérimaire pour assurer la production jusqu'à temps que les crédits d'impôts provinciaux soient remboursés, là aussi les banques exigent des assurances. Alors, si on n'a pas l'assurance, on n'arrive pas à se financer, donc [inaudible] longtemps. Encore là, il y a des maisons de production qui vont pouvoir—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: —absorber ce coût-là, mais plus longtemps, ça risque d'être assez dévastateur.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Monsieur le Président, j'avais oublié de mentionner que je partage le temps avec MPP Harden puis MPP Glover.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. MPP Harden?

Mr. Joel Harden: Merci, monsieur le Président. I'm actually going to send the mike over to Mr. Glover.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to all the presenters for being here.

My question is about ArtHouse. I would like you to talk about the Indigenous and Black artists and how they would be incorporated into this project.

Ms. Andrea Battersby: We think that Black and Indigenous artists need to be right at the base of every project that we do going forward. We have colleagues, artists who identify as Black and Indigenous, who are interested in our idea. We actually want to co-create with people. We actually want to open up—oh, sorry; I got distracted.

Geoff, you take it.

Mr. Geoff Doner: Just to follow up on what Andrea was saying: We have been working with marginalized communities with our art collective, particularly with the Tibetan community, and we realized our privilege here on this land and that there are reparations to be made. The only way for us to move forward authentically, to amplify voices that need to be—is to authentically engage with Indigenous and Black communities, especially in this time.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Chris Glover: I would like to continue this discussion, but I want to give my colleagues an opportunity to ask questions, so if you want to reach out to my office, that would be great.

I'll pass it to one of my colleagues.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We only have 25 seconds left, if any of the opposition members want to add something.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je vais commencer par dire merci beaucoup à tous ceux qui ont présenté.

Thank you so much for your presentations. Arts and culture is very important to our economy.

My first question will be to the Art Gallery of Sudbury. Are you facing the same issue with the insurance as the performers are facing?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll come back to that question in a second round.

Now we'll move to the independent members. MPP Simard.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Merci à tous ceux qui ont présenté. C'est vraiment intéressant. J'ai plusieurs questions pour l'alliance des producteurs francophones. Je pense qu'on pourrait jaser toute la journée, parce que ce sont deux secteurs qui m'intéressent vraiment, donc l'industrie du film, les médias numériques et la télévision—et aussi la francophonie.

Vous avez touché plusieurs points dans votre présentation, dont l'assimilation lorsqu'on parle de l'aire numérique. Personnellement, en tant que présidente du réseau des jeunes parlementaires à l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, c'est un des sujets qui m'intéresse le plus parce que, pour moi, je pense que c'est l'un des plus grands dangers pour l'assimilation des francophones. C'est justement la transition vers l'aire numérique puisque les gens sont vraiment plus portés à aller sur des plateformes en anglais. C'est déjà disponible. Le public change. On parle d'un public mondial. Alors, il y a une tendance à aller vers l'anglais.

Alors premièrement, je voudrais parler de ça, s'il y avait des stratégies ou des suggestions d'outils dont vous auriez besoin. Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement pourrait faire ici en Ontario pour aider justement à prendre notre place dans l'aire numérique pour les producteurs de télé, de film dans l'aire numérique? Mais je voulais aussi vous laisser la chance de finir votre présentation, parce qu'on vous a coupée. Aussi, si vous voulez, je serais certainement ouverte que vous répondiez à la question de ma collègue France Gélinas, la députée de Nickel Belt. Donc, je vous laisse le temps de répondre à ces questions.

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M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Donc, du côté de la jeunesse, effectivement la meilleure façon de pouvoir continuer à offrir des contenus qui intéressent nos jeunes en français, c'est de continuer à produire des contenus pour ces jeunes-là. Alors, il faut mettre les conditions en place pour encourager la production, et aussi encourager la relève pour que d'autres nouveaux talents puissent voir le jour. L'APFC est très active sur ce dossier-là, mais le milieu de la production audiovisuelle, étant donné qu'il est très complexe mais qu'il dépend d'un financement public—nous sommes très dépendants du financement public en production audiovisuelle en milieu minoritaire. En fait, près de 90 % de toute la production qui se fait en milieu minoritaire a pris un financement des institutions publiques, alors soit du Fonds des médias du Canada ou de Téléfilm Canada.

Ensuite, l'autre mécanisme est d'encourager les diffuseurs à offrir du contenu sur les plateformes traditionnelles, comme la télévision, mais aussi sur les nouvelles

plateformes numériques, alors de faire une place à la production faite en milieu minoritaire et de ne pas nécessairement—autant qu'on veut notre place sur les réseaux traditionnels, parce qu'en famille, on sait que, avec les parents et les enfants, ça se fait encore beaucoup à la télévision traditionnelle—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: —tandis que le numérique est beaucoup plus un contenu ou un produit qu'on consomme de façon plus individuelle. Alors, c'est de mettre les mécanismes en place pour permettre à la production de continuer à exister.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Juste pour dire, un bon exemple de ça serait avec Netflix et le gouvernement fédéral, quand ils ont demandé d'avoir un certain pourcentage de contenu en français. Ça, c'est un exemple, peut-être?

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Bien, vous voyez dans le cas de Netflix, ils se sont engagés à investir 25 millions de dollars dans le développement du contenu canadien, alors autre que de commander du contenu pour leur service. Nous, on a réussi à aller chercher des fonds de Netflix pour mettre en place un programme qui aide les scénaristes à développer leurs scénarios de long métrage et, également, les producteurs à développer des contenus, des séries, qui auraient un potentiel d'exportation à l'international pour qu'on fasse connaître les contenus de nos membres et de notre production à l'étranger.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: C'est bon. C'est fantastique, ça. Ça fait que c'est vraiment d'encourager les diffuseurs et d'encourager la production pour justement avoir le contenu que les gens veulent consommer, donc de continuer ça. Ça, c'est vraiment important.

Dans ma deuxième ronde, je vais—oui? Vas-y.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: J'allais juste vous dire que ça passe vraiment par la réglementation. Alors, on est en train de revoir la Loi sur la radiodiffusion en ce moment. On devait déposer un projet de loi en juin à la Chambre, et heureusement, ce sera reporté à l'automne. Mais il y a beaucoup de travail qui a été fait en ce sens pour assurer une place pour les contenus francophones produits à l'extérieur du Québec dans ce système-là, y compris d'offrir ces contenus sur les nouvelles plateformes—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: —qui voient le jour.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Oui, c'est très, très important. Alors, on parle de financement, mais on parle aussi de réglementation, donc c'est vraiment les deux [*inaudible*]. C'est très important. Les gens pensent que c'est juste les financements. C'est très important, oui, mais on peut faire autres choses pour aider. C'est ça qu'on veut savoir : comment on peut travailler ensemble.

Dans ma deuxième ronde, je vais parler du fédéral, coordination et tout ça. On aura la chance de jaser de ça à la deuxième ronde. Merci beaucoup.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go to the government side now. I'll start with MPP Roberts.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Ma question est pour l'alliance des producteurs francophones. Madame Pilon, merci

beaucoup d'être ici aujourd'hui et pour votre présentation. Ma question aujourd'hui : nous avons eu la chance d'écouter quelques représentants de l'industrie du film et de la télévision qui nous ont dit que l'industrie a besoin de plus de clarté sur les règles autour de l'équipement de protection individuelle dans un studio de tournage. Est-ce que cela est un des problèmes que vos membres ont, que vous avez besoin de plus de clarté sur les règles autour de l'équipement de protection individuelle?

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Donc, le comité constitué en vertu de l'article 21 vient tout juste d'émettre ses consignes pour l'Ontario la semaine dernière. C'est sûr que c'est un guide sur lequel il faut que les producteurs développent leurs propres protocoles sur les tournages. Les tournages sont très variés selon le genre et selon les équipes.

On a quand même l'avantage dans la production francophone en milieu minoritaire; on a des petites équipes. Donc, vu d'une certaine manière, on peut être plus agiles pour mettre en place ces nouvelles consignes. Mais il reste que c'est complètement nouveau. On parle de nouvelles façons de faire les choses, et on aura besoin, forcément, de formation et de former nos équipes pour s'assurer que tout le monde suit bien les consignes, parce que ce n'est pas juste la responsabilité du producteur de s'assurer que les consignes sont bel et bien respectées. Tous les membres de l'équipe doivent s'engager à respecter ces consignes pour se protéger eux-mêmes et protéger les autres personnes sur l'équipe.

Lorsqu'on parle de tournages de fiction, on peut parler d'équipes qui vont de 30 à 40 à 50 personnes dans le milieu. On a rarement des équipes de 150 personnes, parce qu'on n'a pas les moyens de se payer ce genre de production. Mais même au niveau de l'écriture des scénarios et de la réalisation du projet, il va falloir prendre en considération cette distanciation sociale qui est encore en place.

Mais je vous dirais que, avant de se poser la question à savoir si on va bien implanter et bien mettre en place les nouvelles mesures, il faut être capable de reprendre les tournages. Et tant qu'il n'y aura pas l'assurance pour couvrir ces productions-là, les tournages ne vont pas reprendre. Les producteurs ne sont pas en mesure d'assumer le risque financier que ça peut représenter. Ça fait des milliers de dollars pour arrêter une production, et si jamais il y a des poursuites vis-à-vis la responsabilité que le producteur aurait, ça peut être des millions. Alors, jusqu'à ce qu'il y ait une solution vis-à-vis l'assurance, je ne vois pas comment les producteurs de l'Ontario vont pouvoir reprendre les tournages.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Merci. J'apprécie vos commentaires sur l'assurance aussi. Quand on parle des coûts pour acheter les équipements de protection etc.—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

M. Jeremy Roberts: —est-ce que l'Alliance pense ou explore l'idée de faire des achats en gros pour les différents producteurs, pour avoir de plus bons coûts, et est-ce que cela est quelque chose que le gouvernement, peut-être, peut vous aider avec?

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: C'est certainement une approche intéressante. Il reste que l'APFC a des membres partout au

Canada. On a à peu près un peu plus d'un tiers de nos membres qui travaillent en Ontario, partout en Ontario : Toronto, Sudbury, Ottawa. Le reste de nos membres sont basés dans les autres provinces du Canada. Donc, c'est sûr que l'APFC agit, premièrement, au niveau fédéral pour essayer de fédérer les ressources qui peuvent être disponibles pour ses membres.

Du côté des achats en groupe, je pense qu'encore là, ça peut être difficile de gérer en fonction des besoins de chaque producteur. Je ne sais pas si l'APFC aurait vraiment le pouvoir d'achat pour vraiment contrer ça. S'il y avait une aide disponible, elle serait beaucoup plus efficace si elle était liée directement aux producteurs, pour que eux puissent appliquer et avoir accès à l'aide dont ils ont besoin selon le type de tournages qui sont à mettre en place.

M. Jeremy Roberts: Merci beaucoup.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Est-ce que j'ai répondu à toute votre question?

M. Jeremy Roberts: Oui. Merci.

Mr. Chair, how long do I have left?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Okay. I'll turn to the Art Gallery of Sudbury now. Thank you so much for your presentation.

I'm wondering whether or not the art gallery has thought at all about financial incentives—I'm thinking of tax incentives—that the government might be able to look into to encourage people to visit the art gallery, to visit places in northern Ontario. Is that something you've explored at all—or know of other art galleries across Ontario are thinking about?

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Ms. Demetra Christakos: Thank you very much for the question. We have benefited in the past from tax incentives to parents for art education opportunities for children. Just as parents had benefited from opportunities for \$500 tax credits—I think this was at the federal level—for sports. This had a very positive effect on our enrolment. In fact, when the tax credit was removed, our enrolment was reduced—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We will now start the second round, and we will start with independent members this time. MPP Simard.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai vraiment apprécié les questions de tous mes collègues. C'était très éclairant.

Alors, c'est encore à l'alliance des producteurs. Moi, je voulais savoir—je pense que je vais changer ma question. On a entendu de plusieurs secteurs qu'ils n'ont pas eu assez d'avis avant d'être autorisés à reprendre les activités. Donc, pour vous, comment sentez-vous la préparation? Y a-t-il des choses que vous êtes capables de faire ou que vous avez été capables de faire dans les derniers mois, des pratiques, qui ont quand même aidé à continuer—où, vraiment, pour la grande majorité, c'est zéro; il faut vraiment avoir le « go » pour commencer.

Aussi, je voulais savoir, durant ces mois-là, quelles pratiques vous avez adoptées que vous pensez continuer à long terme même après, donc changer un peu. Je sais

qu'on s'adapte tous, mais il y a peut-être des choses qui vont changer [*inaudible*] quand même un changement de pratiques en général dans l'industrie pour le mieux, peut-être des nouvelles positives.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Donc, pour la première question, au moment où on a déclaré la pandémie et que les mesures de confinement ont été mises en place, je pense que tout le monde s'est activé assez rapidement pour suivre ces consignes-là.

Alors, la production en milieu minoritaire suit un cycle de production et de financement qui est beaucoup lié aux Fonds des médias du Canada, comme je le disais tantôt. Le programme spécifique a normalement deux dates de dépôt. Donc, il y a une date de dépôt qui vient de clore au printemps, et les décisions ont été annoncées vendredi dernier.

Entre-temps, ce qu'on a réussi à faire—bon, les équipes ont réussi, quand même, en étant très innovantes, à s'installer, chacun chez soi, et à continuer à travailler soit au niveau de la préproduction, pour les projets qui étaient prévus d'aller en tournage cet été, ou encore d'essayer de terminer la postproduction des projets à distance, alors de bouger un peu les équipements nécessaires pour faire le montage des séries et de faire la postproduction. Et ça, ça a quand même suivi son cours. Il y en a qui ont été innovateurs et qui ont réussi à finir certains tournages, sinon c'était vraiment plutôt qu'on attend ou qu'on développe de nouveaux projets.

Et puis, là que le cycle de financement est réparti et que les décisions sont prises, malheureusement, la grande majorité des productions peuvent—bien, d'une part, ils peuvent commencer en préproduction, si on le veut, pour les tournages. Mais ne sachant pas exactement quand ils vont être en mesure d'accéder à l'assurance, c'est très difficile de commencer à organiser des tournages et de graver ça dans les calendriers, des échéanciers, et même de négocier des contrats avec les gens quand on ne sait pas quand la production va reprendre.

En ce qui concerne les activités, bien, c'est sûr que, par exemple, l'APFC fait de grandes avancées depuis quelques années, avec l'appui d'Ontario Créatif, à développer le marché international pour les producteurs qui sont membres de l'association. Alors, toutes ces activités-là qu'on avait prévues pour lesquelles on avait du financement où on avait prévu d'organiser des délégations à l'étranger ont été mises en arrêt. Certains de ces marchés-là ont été transformés en version numérique. On a tenté un petit peu l'exercice d'y participer. Et, en fait, on a réussi à avoir une subvention d'Ontario Créatif pour étudier l'impact de ces nouvelles versions de marchés et de festivals en ligne pour voir comment on va arriver à continuer à développer des relations à l'international malgré le fait qu'on ne peut plus se voir et qu'on ne peut plus se rencontrer en personne.

Alors, on suit l'évolution de ça de près. On estime et on imagine que, avant qu'on ne retrouve des grands marchés comme le Netcom en France qui recueille 50 000 délégués, il y aura un temps encore qu'il faudra attendre avant de pouvoir reprendre ce type d'activité, si même ce type d'activité est envisageable à l'avenir.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Merci pour cette excellente réponse détaillée. Ça nous éclaire un peu. Je voulais savoir combien de temps vous pensez que ça va prendre pour les producteurs de se remettre à jour, de vraiment prendre le temps, tout ce qui a été—je ne veux pas dire « tout perdu », parce qu'il y a quand même, comme vous dites, du travail qui a pu être fait pour certains, qui ont pu faire pré-production, planification, etc. Mais est-ce que vous pouvez peut-être nous donner une idée de c'est quoi un peu le « time frame », le temps que ça va prendre? Est-ce que c'est une question d'années, une question de mois pour les producteurs?

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Moi, je pense qu'on parle d'années. On parle d'années avant qu'on revienne à un nouveau normal, parce que je ne pense pas qu'on va jamais revenir à l'ancien normal. Les mesures sanitaires qu'on va développer et qu'on va mettre en place, elles vont être avec nous pour longtemps.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

M^{me} Carol Ann Pilon: Finalement, je veux dire que ça va nous aider à nous protéger contre d'autres pandémies potentielles à l'avenir. Cela dit, je sais que je répète beaucoup la cassette, mais, vraiment, jusqu'à ce qu'il y ait une solution vis-à-vis les assurances, la production ne va pas reprendre. Les productions en ce moment—ou qu'il y ait un vaccin et que, là, les assureurs décident qu'ils n'ont plus besoin de mettre cette exclusion, ou ça change un peu et on peut prendre un risque plus grand parce qu'il y a un vaccin. Sinon, il y a plusieurs producteurs qui ont décidé, et choisi déjà, de remettre leurs projets à l'an prochain.

Alors, on souhaite qu'il y ait une solution qui s'installe très rapidement. Il faut y travailler, les gouvernements—puis le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements provinciaux aussi.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Merci beaucoup. Très apprécié—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to the government side now. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Art Gallery of Sudbury. You made an interesting comment about the NOHFC internship program and potentially opening it up to foreign students or international students. Are you having difficulty finding domestic students to take part in this program and who are willing to stay in northern Ontario?

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Thank you for the question.

We do have some challenges filling internships in northern Ontario only because people would prefer to take summer employment in their home communities. Many students—and Paula Gouveia is an expert in post-secondary education in Sudbury.

We have very diverse post-secondary student bodies. Many of them are from other parts of Ontario, including the GTA, and they would prefer to go home, because it's cheaper, and stay at home during the summer.

So we have been able to fill our positions—it is one of the situations of having a very diverse and vibrant student body, which has made a huge change. Over 30,000 post-secondary students in Sudbury for six to seven months of the year—they come to love Sudbury and would like stay here, but we do not have the means to employ them through current summer student programs at the federal or at the

provincial levels because all have to be Canadian citizens. They usually have student visas, and it does take some time for them to get work visas.

It's an extension of the program. It's not to exclude anyone; it's basically to open up inclusion.

Mr. Dave Smith: That would likely require a change, then, to how the federal government is dealing with those visas themselves—not necessarily something that we could change at the provincial level, but more likely something that would have to be changed at the federal level in order to accommodate that.

The reason I'm asking that type of question is that the NOHFC internship program offers two specific benefits for us. First, for you as an employer, it helps find potential employees for you, it creates an opportunity for us to add on to the education for those students. And it provides summer employment opportunities for our domestic students. Both of those are very noble causes. If we're not able to fulfill the need, though, of the first portion of that, and that is getting meaningful employees for you, then perhaps it is something we should be taking a look at. But again, with the restrictions around the types of visas that the students would have, that may create some of the other challenges, and it would be a federal jurisdiction, not a provincial jurisdiction.

I'm going to pass it over to my colleague MPP Piccini.

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The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: I apologize for joining a few minutes late. There was an urgent constituency matter that came up.

Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations today.

My question is for the Art Gallery of Sudbury, about a safe and gradual reopening.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. David Piccini: Do you feel, to date, the guidelines have been clear in terms of what a safe and gradual reopening looks like for you?

Ms. Demetra Christakos: The guidelines have been very clear.

We have had some issues getting supplies of personal protective equipment. That has improved during the course of June. We have other supply issues, though. These are really the issues that are preventing us from moving right back into public opening. For example, we need Plexiglas, both to shield our front desk and also to art-conservation-frame an exhibition that we were to open this summer—an exhibition of works by Group of Seven artist Franklin Carmichael. These are very high-value works of art, and we don't have the supply yet of conservation Plexiglas, so we've had to jiggle our exhibition schedule.

Other than that, I think the protocols have been very clear. We were able to move back into the workplace. We've been doing it with respect to social distancing, accommodating ourselves back into a very small footprint. Our current gallery is not very big, so we've had to have half the team in the gallery space and half the team working at home on alternate days, depending on the task at hand.

So we're moving ahead, but it's a little more slowly than we're used to working.

Thank you for that question.

Mr. David Piccini: My next question to you is on re-opening with an eye to marketing. The minister has spoken about a potential "travel and enjoy Ontario," as we move into stage 3 and as we look at a gradual and safe reopening of the economy—to promote people to travel, to explore art galleries, arts and culture, to support our industry. If you can give me some guidance—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. David Piccini: —as to what you'd like to see marketing-wise—maybe a tax credit.

I'm an avid hiker in Killarney. I love the Group of Seven, and I know that they were no strangers to Killarney either.

Could you give us three concrete ideas?

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Certainly. First of all, I think that's a—marketing visiting in Ontario is a tremendous advantage to us in the short term, medium term and long term.

During periods of COVID-19, families were out hiking. The value of the experience in the bush, when you couldn't be with other people, really escalated, and we saw lots of that on social media—people spending time in the bush and doing hiking, enjoying nature as much as they could. It was a very healing experience for them.

Our story around Franklin Carmichael is very much tied to his practice, as an artist, of painting en plein air, out in the bush, in La Cloche and in Killarney with other—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off.

We have to move to the opposition side for their second round now. I'll start with MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: I'll start, and then I'll hand it off to MPP Gélinas after this.

I want to thank all the presenters. I do wish we had more time, because I have many questions for all of the presenters.

My questions are to the Art Gallery of Sudbury. There are two areas in your presentation that you talked about specifically that caught my eye. One was the importance of investment in the arts through the Ontario Arts Council, and the second was the Northern Ontario Internship Program. I just want to give you the opportunity to expand on why these are so important to your organization or organizations like the Art Gallery of Sudbury.

Ms. Demetra Christakos: I'll ask Paula or Janik if they'd like to take this question.

Ms. Paula Gouveia: Demetra, I'll start. Paula Gouveia speaking. As you've mentioned, the ongoing operating funding that we receive from the Ontario Arts Council is a significant part of our annual budget. To have had that be received, that 50%, several months in advance, brought that stabilization factor to the cash flow that the gallery, at the time, desperately needed in order to allow us to pivot.

I didn't have the chance to mention it previously, but looking at innovative online delivery of programs, art education programs, delivered online—having that funding come through the Ontario Arts Council was significant

in allowing us to leverage the talent of the team in order to be able to do that. So, again, I wanted to thank the Ontario Arts Council and the province of Ontario for that funding, and for the 50% payment in advance of when we would have expected it.

So it is significant, which is why we would look to a commitment from the province to continue to fund the Ontario Arts Council, as our colleagues did as well, from ArtHouse. It's a significant way in which to invest in the arts, arts education, culture and society as a whole.

From the NOHFC perspective and the internships, again, it's about attracting talent to the north. At a time where we've seen, at the federal level, the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot come to Sudbury, where we are located, having talent in the community stay in the community, build their careers in a way that's meaningful, contributing to organizations like the Sudbury art gallery—those are phenomenal opportunities and make a big difference. Having received funding through COVID-19, through NOHFC internship programs, allowed us to actually keep those individuals on site and working and allow us to pivot as a whole. So seeing that, potentially, expanded to help us work with more diverse communities, working at our recommendation around expanding from one year to two years, will not only allow us to attract additional talent but also allow us to attract other talent to our community and help that talent to imagine themselves staying in Sudbury for the long term. Thank you for the question.

Ms. Janik Guy: Thank you, Paula and Demetra. I've nothing else to add.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions? MPP Gélinas.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sudbury art gallery, I had the opportunity to put out the question: Are you facing the same challenges with your insurance? Did you have to renew your insurance? Are you still covered for infectious diseases?

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Thank you for the question. It's Demetra Christakos. We were able to renew our insurance at the end of June, so we have not suffered the precarity that has been described in terms of film production, although, we know it affects our film producer partners in Greater Sudbury. Sudbury has become much more of a film production hub, both in anglophone and franco-phone film production. So we're feeling very lucky about that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You've talked about the NOHFC and how you get internship programs. Do you see a role for the NOHFC to also have a post-COVID type of fund that you could apply to?

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Well, we are looking to NOHFC for a much bigger ask in the medium term and long term and that is, to help us purpose-build our new category-A public art gallery, in collaboration with the city of Greater Sudbury and the Greater Sudbury Public Library main branch. So we do see that, in terms of the building project, is about six months away from detailed drawings, so it's not 100% shovel in the ground, but we have a lot of positive energy, still, facing us in the future

and feel that the world will pivot in the next three to four years and allow us to undertake construction. NOHFC is a big part of that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Is your project more or less still on par? Are you where you are supposed to be with that project?

Ms. Demetra Christakos: We've been delayed by about six months. Obviously, we are partnering with the municipality of Greater Sudbury, so depending on government funding to them, but right now, it's still moving ahead as quickly as we can. We're about to announce the design and engineering team, I think, in the next six weeks. So we're still feeling very positive about that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: In your presentation, you showed us a huge decrease in your revenues. How are you going to make this up? You're going to have a substantial deficit budget, or what will happen?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Demetra Christakos: Well, we have benefited from the federal Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. That will help a great deal. Our business will just be considerably smaller. We'll be about 15% smaller as a business. We are still generously funded through the government in operating funding, about 48%, and we're hoping that that is going to help us get through the next year. This is a big advantage that independent artists and producers don't enjoy. So we really focus our expenditures on working with community artists and professional artists in the region.

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M^{me} France Gélinas: Guy Bourgouin has a quick question, Chair.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: How many seconds left, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thanks to all the presenters. Merci à tous ceux qui ont fait une présentation. Vous êtes bienvenus, tous vos commentaires, puis on va faire notre possible pour vous aider.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time. Thank you to all three presenters for your time and for your presentations.

FIRSTONTARIO
PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE
ELECTRIC CITY CULTURE COUNCIL
MULTICULTURAL HISTORY
SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move along to our next group of presenters for 2 p.m. First, I would like to call upon FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Please state your name for the record, and you will have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Colleen Smith: Colleen Smith.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): You may start.

Ms. Colleen Smith: "First to close, last to open": Our industry, the live music and performing arts, is in a critical stage right now. This phrase, "First to close, last to open,"

must be reversed for the benefit of an industry that generates \$2.5 billion in direct annual income and leverages more than \$12 billion in additional economic impact, and also must be addressed for the protection and sustainability of our province and our nation's artists, creators and creative workforce.

My name is Colleen Smith. I'm the executive director of the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre located here in downtown St. Catharines and serving the greater Niagara region. I began my work here on May 4, 2020—yes, in the middle of a global pandemic.

My request to you today is twofold.

Number one, I'm asking for the province's support for and prioritization of our live performance industry's safe return to work; in other words, a recommendation to review the last-to-open scenario and create funding mechanisms to recognize reduced capacities of our spaces and invest in our ability to exist with new, short-term revenue models.

The number two request is interim funding for content creation. It's critical for the province to invest in [inaudible] and programs that support the creation of artistic and cultural work to ensure that the talent pipeline can continue.

Thanks to everyone for this opportunity to speak today and to all parties for coming together to listen, to learn and, hopefully, to act together for our future.

The FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre is an anchor institution that was designed to build through the presentation of professional music, theatre, dance, film, comedy and community events. We are a key economic driver to both the downtown core and the region. We have 95,000 square feet that encompass our multi-purpose facility, with four very distinct venues in one location downtown.

We've been a major catalyst in revitalizing the downtown since we opened five years ago. Since then, 40 new businesses have appeared within our area. Also, since 2015, we've been open almost every night. It's incredible. In 2019 alone, we had over 1,000 events and over 900 ticketed performances, with our patrons frequenting local businesses and local restaurants downtown. We also have a partnership with the city and Brock University, brought specifically through the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, that helps bring students downtown, to our core.

What we're asking of the province today is to give us the chance again—help us help ourselves through the development of early reopening strategies and support. Very specifically, some of these strategies include:

- permission to reopen the public facilities that specialize in the live performing arts safely;

- financial support for live performance and our tourism businesses that require infrastructure upgrades and PPE to be in compliance with health and safety protocols;

- a mechanism to support revenue loss on reduced capacities of our spaces that's a part of a multi-phased strategy;

- additional support for the Ontario Arts Council and the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries through the 2021 and 2022 recovery periods; and

- government-guaranteed small business loans for the tourism and hospitality sector for the recovery stages.

That's all in regard to our first request.

The second one is interim support for content creation—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Colleen Smith: —and here are some points I would like to highlight.

With reduced capacities and limited performance opportunities come reduced employment and contracting opportunities for our creative content-makers, our artists. Without investing in this content creation and our artists, the sustainability of our gatherings, our spaces and our buildings is moot.

Speaking on behalf of our region and our artists—and we have partnerships with over 12 core local arts organizations here, many of whom employ or work with self-employed artists. It's likely the first time those artists have received government support through CERB because EI is not available to them in the gig economy.

In addition to the lack of earned revenue, which has come about as we have been closed, these organizations are concerned about time—the time it will take until they're allowed back into our venues, the time they have to generate revenue, and the time that they're away from their audiences.

Already, we're predicting between 12 months and five years for various stages of recovery for these organizations. Prominent companies here, like the Foster Festival and the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, amongst others, are desperately requiring some support. How can we do that? Specific support for those in the gig economy, whether it's CERB or other mechanisms, to help artists get through this time so that they can have the ability to live and sustain their livelihood; investment in content creation on an emergency and on a long-term basis; an investment in the ministry and the associations who support artists and content creation, both live and digital.

In closing, the pandemic shutdown was an immediate response to physical health risks. It was important, it was immediate and it was necessary.

Arts engagement and collaboration is a part of a healthy community, so sustaining creative work is both economically and societally necessary.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Colleen Smith: Continued support is needed for our industry that is deeply and sometimes unconsciously intertwined with everyone's lives. We need our creative spaces, we need our artists and we need cultural creators. We may have been the first to close, but let's not allow ourselves to be the last to open. Please help us to prioritize our industry's safe return to work and invest in creative content that will keep our province and communities whole. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our next presenter is Electric City Culture Council. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Su Ditta: My name is Su Ditta. I'm the executive director of the Electric City Culture Council. Thank you so much for welcoming me here today.

EC3, as we're known locally, is Peterborough's municipal arts, culture and heritage council. We provide programs and services that support the development of both individual artists and arts, culture and heritage organizations in our city and in the surrounding area, and that includes everything from professional development workshops, awards programs, mentorships, residencies, festivals and a number of other activities, including research and advocacy. Of course, during COVID-19, we've pivoted as fast as we could and rolled out a whole suite of services to arts organizations in our city called the Peterborough Arts Alive program.

Our sincere thanks go out to Minister Lisa MacLeod for her town hall meetings and for all the Ontario government has done to date to support arts, culture and heritage in this crucial time.

We're sure many people would say why support the arts at this time? It's such a serious health situation in our province. Homeless people, people with substance abuse and other problems, elders, seniors, all are at risk, but we want to talk to you about why the arts are essential, how the pandemic has shown us how essential they are and what the province might consider doing to help us rebound and come back robustly.

Although Peterborough has a population of only about 84,000 people, it is home to approximately 65 arts, culture and heritage organizations, and we represent thousands of citizens who are artists, arts, heritage and cultural professionals, audiences, volunteers, corporate and private sponsors. This sector contributes approximately \$10 million to the local economy and directly employs about 1,500 people.

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Over the past five years, part of EC3's mandate has included building tight relationships, collaborations and partnerships with a number of other institutions and organizations across different sectors in our community. We work regularly with Trent University, Fleming College, the New Canadians Centre, the chamber of commerce, the Peterborough DBIA, Peterborough and the Kawartha Economic Development, and probably 15 to 20 core arts organizations, where we try to be value-added to each other through partnership and collaboration on different projects.

Peterborough's municipal cultural plan, its community well-being plan, and reports from the Peterborough community foundation all highlight the impact this sector has on the economy—on economic development, tourism and employment—but also on community cohesion, community vitality and community well-being. It is core to who we are in Peterborough. While many people think of us as being significant as a tourism attraction for our green spaces and waterways, our arts, culture and heritage sectors are absolutely crucial.

The arts have played a critical role in our city during the pandemic, as even the smallest of arts organizations have managed to pivot really quickly, adapt and put different kinds of programming online so the community has access to the arts at the current time, when we can't get into public facilities and doing things outside is still very limited.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Su Ditta: The arts play a crucial role in our mental health and in our work with seniors.

We at EC3 have been fortunate to receive funding from the city of Peterborough, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the province of Ontario, through Trillium and through the Ontario Arts Council, and so do many, many of the arts organizations and the heritage organizations in our city. We're really grateful for that support. It has allowed us, with the skills and talents of the existing organizations, to produce a pretty remarkable cultural scene for a city so small.

I wanted to take this opportunity to draw your attention today to the specific situation for arts organizations in smaller regional cities and to the precarious and vulnerable circumstances in which they exist. These are all organizations that work miracles all the time, outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, to stay alive and to thrive. They're great fundraisers; they're great partnership builders; they work extremely well together. Our community includes a number of Indigenous artist professionals with a very low income, people with disabilities and others who are marginalized in many ways. I think that sometimes people forget that that's quite typical of small cities as well as large ones. But the cultural activity is here, it's rich, it's robust and it survives through remarkable innovation and the ability to be flexible and responsive.

Many artists in our city make additional income through the service sector here. That has been a really, really crucial piece and a difficult piece, as the service industry also shut down. So access to supplementary income was really limited and people became dependent on CERB. This has disrupted the fundamental economic model on which our sector functions.

As Minister MacLeod has noted—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Su Ditta: Thank you.

Knowing how important the arts are to our sector, we'd like to ask the government to consider the following things:

Provide funding to the Ontario Arts Council for a COVID-19 arts stabilization fund to support the development of digital skills, COVID-19-sensitive artistic programming, marketing campaigns and strategic initiatives to address diversity issues. Content creation now is a really serious need.

We'd like to encourage financial support, in collaboration with the federal government, to municipal governments to help them overcome their operating budget losses and maintain their support to this sector. As stable operating funding is absolutely key to resilience and recovery in the arts and heritage sector, we would encourage you to increase the base budget of the Ontario Arts Council in 2021.

Finally, we would really love to see a province-wide reopening and—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off. Your time has come up now.

We'll move to our next presenter, Multicultural History Society of Ontario. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Ms. Elizabeth Price: I'm Elizabeth Price. I worked in the OPS for over 35 years. Since I retired in 2014, I've served as a volunteer development manager for the MHSO.

The MHSO is a volunteer-run not-for-profit. Established in 1976, it has a dual mandate as steward of heritage resources and educator. It collects, preserves and makes available records documenting immigrant, ethnic and Indigenous histories, and it undertakes educational programming to illuminate these histories. The society's current focus is the establishment of an online repository. The repository will host multiple digital archives created by organizations and facilities, with ethnocultural and Indigenous archival holdings, with MHSO's digital archive serving as the anchor archive.

The MHSO has experienced significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Constraints on our activities have affected revenue streams, and our resources were already very, very limited. But I'm not here today to talk about the losses we've suffered. We're discussing how the province might recover from the pandemic and move forward. The MHSO would like to contribute to that discussion.

My colleagues and I at the MHSO are interested in digital cultural heritage. We believe that it has economic potential, especially given the increased need at present for us to connect and operate in virtual space. This potential can be realized.

Digital cultural heritage is the integration of cultural heritage, on the one hand, and information and communication technologies on the other. Given the huge number of collections in the hundreds of heritage facilities and organizations across the province, there's enormous scope for digital cultural heritage.

Work in digital cultural heritage includes a number of different types of activity:

- (1) Digital recording to preserve, document, manage and provide access to heritage resources;
- (2) Digital research to identify, map, monitor, analyze and reconstitute heritage resources; and
- (3) Digital creation to produce immersive multi-sensory cultural experiences.

It's the third type of activity, digital creation, that's so exciting. It's dependent on the essential first step of capturing and disseminating digital data, but it entails much more. It focuses on the creative processes of visualization, interpretation and presentation.

Digital creation intrigues many of us in the heritage sector because it will enable direct, active, collaborative engagements with our past, and it will lead to the emergence of bold, imaginative forms of expression and communication, some of which are inconceivable to us today.

It's an opportune time to pursue the economic potential of digital cultural heritage. There are a number of reasons:

First, advances in digital cultural heritage are dependent on expanded understandings of cultural heritage and changing practices in interpreting and presenting histories and heritage, as well as on intensifying innovation in digital technologies. All of this is happening now.

Second, large numbers of young people—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Elizabeth Price: —are pursuing studies in public history, digital history, digital humanities, digital media studies, digital design and computer animation in Ontario universities and community colleges. They are ready to apply this knowledge and skill.

Third, heritage facilities and organizations in Ontario, including the MHSO, are digitizing items in their collections for their preservation, documentation and management and access purposes. So heritage resources are already being converted into usable forms.

1420

The European Union has recognized that the use of digital cultural content presents opportunities for stimulating economic activity and creating jobs. It has established the best-practice network, Europeana Space, to promote creative, commercial reuses for extensive digital content in the Europeana collections repository, and the Europeana Labs provide an environment for developing and showcasing sustainable business projects.

It's relatively easy for us to imagine initiatives that creatively mine, reuse and remix digital data. There's economic potential in these types of initiatives, but initiatives that venture beyond these activities have even more potential. Digital media designers and entrepreneurs who utilize the historical knowledge and the research and interpretative skills of historians and heritage workers have the capacity to formulate new ideas and bring new products and services to the marketplace.

Tourism-oriented initiatives evidence the value of public and private sector collaborations in digital creation. Celebrated examples include the Old Summer Palace in China and Pompeii in Italy.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Elizabeth Price: Other types of products with commercial value include immersive site re-creations and serious games.

In the MHSO's view, producing rich, meaningful cultural heritage experiences through digital creation requires a number of things:

- (1) high-quality digitized heritage resources—ensuring suitability for use;
- (2) extensive, meticulous research—ensuring accuracy and authenticity;
- (3) content depth—conveying spatial and temporal contexts, including multiple voices and perspectives;
- (4) creativity and originality—devising imaginative, site- and/or subject-specific solutions, avoiding superficial products—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Sorry to cut you off. Your time has come up.

We have to go to the questions now, and this round of questions will start with the government side. MPP Rasheed.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you so much to all the presenters this afternoon.

My question is for FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. During your presentation and in visiting your website, I see that a lot of performances have moved online. Can you elaborate on the experience of the online performances so far? I want to understand it from a virtual perspective. I'm sure one can say it's not the same, but I've always felt that

when you are moving the performances online, you're opening to a bigger market than just people attending in person.

I just wanted to get your perspective on this new platform from a marketing and experience perspective.

Ms. Colleen Smith: Yes, we have moved some of our activity to an online format, and it's called #NiagaraPerforms.

So going back to what we are—we are a facility. We are a bricks-and-mortar entity here, and we produce a lot of work ourselves. We have a lot of people come into our spaces, and people get to experience this in person. It's a part of that live experience that's absolutely necessary for our business.

When COVID-19 hit, we looked at what is important to us. What's important to us is the sustainability of the industry, which means finding a way to continue to have artists working. That's really important. The second thing that's really important is to still remain visible to our audiences, to still remain relevant to society. If you think about how many people have turned to the arts when we've been locked up in our homes, it's a whole lot of households that have done that. So that was our way of contributing to society, both through the artists we have, as well as those experiences.

I will say that we're not in the business of live-streaming. We're not in the business of TV or film, but we employ the best professionals, who will basically take any challenge and make it happen. So when it was time for us to look at, "Okay, what do we do? Do we shut our doors and do we turn everything off?", the answer was an absolute no: "No, we stay relevant, we stay employing our artists, and we stay having content that people can enjoy."

So it has been good for us in terms of having those artists reach people who might not be able to come to the centre, perhaps family or friends who live across the country or internationally.

It has also given them a platform to stay connected to their audiences. If you watch some of these online performances, you see how happy and how relieved the artists are to even get feedback on a screen, because they've just not been able to have that.

It has been a necessary pivot for so many of us right now. We are not alone. There are a lot of organizations out there doing this. I know my friends at EC3 of Peterborough—so many of their artists are doing it too. It's what we have to do, and we're doing it the best we can.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Looking at your website, I know you rely heavily on donations, as well; I was just going over the list. Because of this whole exposure of your organization to the world outside your facility—how have the donations been during COVID-19? Have you seen an increase from people? When you are showing these performances online—I have spoken with a few organizations who have said that they have actually seen an increase, because now they are reaching out to a bigger market, and they're asking people to pitch in so their performances can continue. Do you care to elaborate on that?

Ms. Colleen Smith: I respect that some of the organizations you've spoken to have had that success. It hasn't been a part of our experience here yet.

As a performing arts entity, as a venue, what we are doing, through what we're doing online, is providing an opportunity to demonstrate our value to the community. So it's not an immediate-donation kind of circumstance that we're in right now. Over time we hope that our donations from the local and surrounding communities will grow because of this value, but to date we have not seen an influx in our support because of the online content.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Do you think your current donor base has dropped since COVID-19, or is just the same right now? You have a lot of corporate donors, as well.

Ms. Colleen Smith: We have corporate donors, community supporters—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Colleen Smith:—without having that activity, we don't have an opportunity for them to do that. It's our hope that we will go back to that and strengthen it over the next 12 months.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: MPP Crawford has a question.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Crawford.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I don't have much time, but I'll get a quick question in now and then one in the next section.

My first question is to the Electric City Culture Council. You were talking about some of the grants you needed. We understand all of the financial grants. What is there of a non-financial nature that you think would help your community?

Ms. Su Ditta: I think the last piece that I mentioned, and that is some sort of a province-wide relaunch and reopening strategy that takes regional needs into consideration and brings together the knowledge and understanding of public health, economic development, as well as art, culture and heritage—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll come back to that in the second round.

Now we'll go to the opposition side. I'll start with MPP Stevens, but before that, can you please confirm your attendance?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, I'm here.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Present in Ontario?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Present in St. Catharines, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Please go ahead.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to all our deputants today. It's a pleasure seeing you all. These have been absolutely unprecedented times, and I know that we could never foresee this.

I am going to direct my question, first of all, to Colleen Smith. You don't mind me calling you Colleen, I hope?

Interjection.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Great.

I know that you're from the performing arts centre in downtown St. Catharines. I was on city council back in the day, when we first decided to build the PAC downtown—

and how important it was to have a performing arts centre downtown so that we could get through a really tough economic time that we were in and stay resilient within the community.

1430

I want you to follow along with the questions from MPP Rasheed. I know that a lot of your corporate grants and a lot of your private donors are also still on the books to help pay back the performing arts centre for the rebuild. Am I correct in saying that? And can you elaborate on why those donors are so important to the performing arts centre?

Ms. Colleen Smith: I was going to refer to a tiny little thing that I mentioned in my speech. I started my job on May 4, 2020, so you know more than I do, I'm sure.

Here's what I do know: I know that this facility was built by the community. It was built because of the government here, it was built because of the people here, it was built because of the businesses here, and I firmly believe it will be rebuilt by those same people. So what we're doing right now, through our programming and through some other projects that we have within the next couple of months, is to reconnect with a lot of individuals to (a) thank them for what they've done, (b) show them how wonderful this facility is and the artists we've supported are, and then look to their support, perhaps, again in the future. That's where we sit right now from my perspective with those donors.

I hope that's helpful.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, it was. Just to carry on the conversation: Today I saw that unfortunately Friday the 13th in March wasn't a good day for the PAC. That's when you stopped proceeding with your traditional 2020-21 Hot Tickets season and Film House programs. Could you elaborate on what losing access to your venue has meant for the broader arts community, the symphony and musical and artist performance? You mentioned that you do work with 12 groups, but I know how many people there actually are in each individual group. Could you elaborate on what losing access to your venue has meant?

Ms. Colleen Smith: It has meant everything to us, and that's why our first recommendation is to please find a way for a reopening strategy. We are all professionals in this business. We have the best team, the best crew. If anyone can do it, we can do it well. We just want that opportunity, because what we are missing is an opportunity to employ people, so that they can contribute to the local economy. The businesses that I'm looking at across the street need people to frequent their shops, their restaurants—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Colleen Smith: We need to have the revenue that is generated from this activity go back into the community. We cannot have rehearsals right now. We cannot have performances. We're willing to look at it on a very reduced-capacity basis, but we don't have the ability to congregate in that way yet.

I can get a tattoo, I can probably go to a church with a small group of people, and I can buy some tires, but I can't go into a space or a building and listen to a musician play.

That's such a loss for so many of us right now, not just economically but societally.

Please, allow us the opportunity to come back. We will do it safely, we will make you proud and we will contribute back to our communities.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I know what the PAC is—similar to Ms. Ditta from Peterborough and the culture. I know that the PAC is the heartbeat of the Niagara region, actually. People come from out of town—and that's our downtown. Like you said, our community bars, our restaurants, have so much to lose if the government doesn't figure out a really good strategy for the PAC, as well as Peterborough—and I feel for you; I've been to your concerts out there in Peterborough on the water. I really feel that the arts and the culture are the heartbeat of a community.

How many minutes do I have, Chair? Do I have time for another question?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute and 30 seconds.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Okay. I hope my colleagues in the opposition don't mind, but I do have another question.

Some of the support that has come forward from all levels of government, be it loans or deferred taxes, push off expenses from now to later.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Is there a time in the future when you are worried that these mounting costs will become too much? And what do you need to stave that off?

Ms. Su Ditta: Jenny, are you addressing anyone in particular?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Anybody can answer that.

Ms. Su Ditta: One of the points I didn't have a chance to make was to try to encourage the province, in collaboration with the federal government, to provide funding specifically to municipalities with regard to their operating budgets. Rent deferrals have been very, very important in our community to help the larger performing arts organizations and anyone that pays municipal rent. But those are only deferrals, not waivers, so that is a huge concern.

I think another concern is the question of uncertainty—things that you may not think of, like the suspension of bingo and the funding that comes in from bingo. One of the things we have to keep in mind is a long-range recovery up to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We will have to move to the independent members now. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for your excellent and timely presentations today.

I just want to go to you, Su, for the Electric City Culture Council, because I think your point about supporting municipalities, and particularly as it relates to tax deferrals, is an important point. Do you want to finish your answer to MPP Stevens on that?

Ms. Su Ditta: I don't know what the situation is in other municipalities, but I know in Peterborough we are facing close to a \$7-million shortfall in revenue for the city. Of

course, city staff has to go and look at what the possible options and answers to that are. Increasing taxes is never a very palatable one, and controlling the amount of any increase is top priority. We haven't heard yet, and I know many mayors in the country are lobbying and advocating for this, but anything that provincial and federal government can do to come together to provide that support will allow things that are very strategic within particular communities.

While on the one hand an opening and relaunch strategy for the province would help on a broad level, very strategic interventions in specific communities are equally important to meet the needs of the performing arts, visual arts, media arts, writing, publishing—everything you can imagine—that is specific in those communities.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: And so is your concern around the municipal financial situation—I'm assuming it's that it then has knock-off effects on the cultural and arts organizations in terms of the kind of supports they receive locally or the ability, in some cases, to defer property taxes etc. Is that your primary focus when you talk about the municipal financial support as it relates to arts and culture?

Ms. Su Ditta: The specific interventions around rental deferrals from facilities or property tax deferrals have been important and COVID-19-related. But from everything I'm reading from reports from all across the world and all across Canada, from every kind of organization, it's that the basic sustainability of organizations depends on consistent base operating funding.

As a municipal arts council, our concern would be that as the municipality scrambles to make up the loss of revenue, where will they look to find it? Will the arts stand out as a good place to cut? We hope not, because our organizations run on razor-thin margins. Things like the service grants in Peterborough and the operating and project community investment grants are really crucial to the survival and continued stability of all of these 65 arts organizations in our city. That's the other big piece.

Thank you for asking that question.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: That makes sense to me.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Colleen, I'm going to ask you some questions, but I'm going to wait till the next round, mainly because Elizabeth was quickly trying to get her last few points out in her presentation, and I thought they were important points.

I wanted to give you an opportunity to finish that list you were providing us with.

Ms. Elizabeth Price: Thank you very much. I was going to end with suggestions about what the provincial government might do to start the process of realizing the economic potential of digital cultural heritage—of course, funding, especially in terms of providing support for high-quality digitization, but items beyond direct investment:

- assessing infrastructure and training needs, and commercialization potential—help with that;

- investigating copyright and intellectual property rights issues and challenges;

- hosting cross-sectoral knowledge exchanges as a first step in promoting new modalities and opportunities, and in facilitating co-design and co-production;

- creating best practice demonstrators and/or supporting pilots; and

- staging open innovation challenges.

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Longer term, we have infrastructure needs—“infrastructure” defined much more broadly than usual; infrastructure in virtual space.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Having additional supports to digitize and move online—I'm assuming some of the organizations associated with the Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario probably just don't have the resources or the capacity to deliver that in a way that you would feel is high-quality.

Ms. Elizabeth Price: We have the resources in terms of expertise, given the—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Elizabeth Price:—financial resources, no.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Colleen, you talked about moving online, but I'm assuming your experience with that was that it was hard to monetize that. It sounded more like it was just maintaining relationships with your patrons, supporters and donors.

Ms. Colleen Smith: It's really difficult to monetize online content for a lot of us who are used to the traditional method of having arts experiences, so I don't think it's unique to us in particular. Again, you have to think about, what business are you in? You're in the business of live entertainment and live performance, so that immediate connection between artists and audience is what people pay for. What people pay for online is Netflix, or perhaps there's something else that has a live-streaming service that they pay to connect to.

A lot of what we're doing right now is maintaining presence—it's maintaining our value within society, and it's maintaining connection. That's what's important. If we wanted to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. We have to go to the second round now.

I'll start with the opposition in the second round. MPP Stevens.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you again to the presenters.

I'm going to go back to Colleen. St. Catharines is the largest municipality within the Niagara region, and I know what the performing arts centre means to the economy—trying to bring the city of St. Catharines as well as all the smaller communities back, to have that heartbeat and that uplift in our downtown centre and our core, which is also on the wine route. It's so important that we come back from these hard economic times.

Colleen, I'm sure that you as well as the other deputants have had to lay off a lot of your staff since your closing on Friday, March 13. Once you become fully operational, are there any concerns about retention and recruitment, given that some of your staff and some of these performers might have moved on? What does that look like for you? Can you elaborate on that?

Ms. Colleen Smith: That's an excellent question.

We've had to lay off 91% of our current workforce within the performing arts centre right now. One of the reasons why we want to get back online and we want to have the permission to get back inside our venues is because it will take time. There will not be a switch that we flip and then all of a sudden we're back to having our beautiful Partridge Hall filled with people and artists again. It will take time. The sooner we can get in there and the sooner we can train our teams on how to safely welcome people and how to safely seat people and how to safely perform, the more likely we are to have more employment and to bring back people sooner and find ways that they can adjust their work responsibilities and their roles around our new reality.

Again, it's just really critical that we get in there and we start doing this safely as soon as we can, because we don't know what the future will be, and the longer we wait, the harder it's going to be. That, we do know.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Can you also elaborate for me on how important it is for the government to make sure that a strategic plan, individualized to the symphonies, the musical groups, the artist performance—to have a strategic plan on how to open those doors? How important is it to you, as well as any other performing arts centre, to have a specific, strategic plan on how to open your doors, and what that might look like?

Ms. Colleen Smith: It doesn't matter if you are in Peterborough, if you are in Toronto, if you are in Timmins or if you are in St. Catharines; all of our facilities, all our industries are run by professionals, and we have the ability to help the government help ourselves as well. There are major associations that exist in the province. In our world, we have Ontario Presents, which is a part of the large presenting network across the country. We can help you to understand what best practices are like.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Colleen Smith: We are so well connected, not only throughout North America, but globally. We have these connections to what other venues are doing. We want to be able to help you through advisory councils and groups, to be able to create these policies that will allow us to reopen. We have the ability, we have the professionals and we have the interest in doing that. I look for the opportunity to be a part of that.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: One last question, and then I might pass, if I have enough time. It's just straight out, and maybe I can ask this from—maybe split 30 seconds. It's a really easy question. We'll start off with Colleen and then move to Su.

What, if anything, is the most important thing to you that this government can do for the arts and the culture communities?

Ms. Colleen Smith: We can't be the first to close and the last to open. You have to allow us to open our doors and proceed safely and reasonably.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Su?

Ms. Su Ditta: I think from the Electric City Culture Council's point of view, the most important thing is to

keep arts, culture and heritage on the front burner, to support the ministry in doing that in any number of ways—and just to remember that the arts are essential to a successful recovery of all sectors in the province.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Elizabeth?

Ms. Elizabeth Price: Help us conceive and implement a new future with respect to heritage.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Chair, how many seconds?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Great. So I might pass it off, and not hog the limelight, to MPP Ian Arthur. He might have a quick question as well.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Arthur.

Mr. Ian Arthur: For the Electric City Culture Council: You mentioned that you had developed a suite of services to help the artists get through this together. Would you talk a little bit about what those actually look like?

Ms. Su Ditta: We've done a number of things. The first piece was information and resources on financial support, health issues and planning. I think we've put out 14 or 15 bulletins to our community now. They go to 1,500 people. We did a series of round tables to gather information. We put out some micro-grants to individual artists, particularly in the period between the two CERB programs, because one was not very helpful for individual artists; the second one was. We're rolling out a kind of arts awareness campaign called Essential. We have—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll have to go back to the independent members now for their time. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Back to the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre: Colleen, you've talked about the importance of reopening. I think we all want that. But how do we do that safely? You've talked about looking at examples from around the world that other performing arts centres have looked at. Can you share some of those best practices with us and how the government can facilitate those best practices for reopening?

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Ms. Colleen Smith: Some of the best practices that we are seeing is looking at spaces that really reduce capacity. We have very traditional spaces that have seats with rows in them that are not easily able to be removed. We can seat people according to necessary distances. We just need to be allowed to welcome people publicly into those spaces to experiment with those. Our centre here has a multi-purpose room that is a very wide open space that we can also experiment with how people enter, how people are seated and how people experience the artwork.

I think one of the things the government can help us to do is really look at the difference between what a normal revenue would look like for that particular performance and what the gaps are based on the restrictions in the size of space and how can we do that safely.

If we looked at a phased approach to how we welcome people back into our spaces, it would require more upfront support from the government or investment in order to experiment with those, and then as society progresses and

we are allowed to have larger gatherings, we have the experience of the smaller ones to ensure that we can do it safely and we know the proper logistics, the protocols and the operational parameters—so really looking at a way to support us in terms of having the right equipment, in terms of having the right safety measures, and also looking at the loss of revenue. Whether you are a small music venue or a larger opera house, you are still going to need to have experiences that will not allow you the maximum revenue possible. So support in that will be very much appreciated and necessary for us as we continue to experiment.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: In that regard, are you looking for funding support that would help you make the investment in the physical or structural changes to your space, as well as helping overcome some of the revenue shortfalls you will be experiencing?

Ms. Colleen Smith: One is really related to PPE, to ensure that we have the best and the proper ones that make people feel safe and make people safe. Both of those parameters are really important. It's not anything that any of us have budgeted for in the current year. Electrostatic machines take on a new meaning now and they're expensive, but they're also really important.

The other is looking at helping to bridge the gap on the loss of revenue when we get started. I think that's really important—to give us enough resources so that we have the right amount of people present, we have the right amount of protocols developed and we communicate that properly. It's twofold: It's the hard costs of the equipment, and it's also assisting with the gap in revenue because of the reduced capacity.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Su, I was just going to give you an opportunity. You were finishing a list of how we can support artists as individuals, and I'm deeply concerned because we are hearing increasingly that we might even lose a generation of artists because their arts revenue has dried up and a lot of the part-time jobs in the hospitality sector that a lot of artists would take to help supplement income are lost as well. How do we retain and support artists through this really challenging time?

Ms. Su Ditta: I think there are a couple of things. One can be support to municipal arts councils like EC3 so that we maintain our mentorship programs. It's really important right now for younger artists to be able to get support from more experienced elder individual artists, to keep our workshop programs going so people can make re-entry into the practice.

As I was saying, we've been really lucky in Peterborough to have private patrons approach us to raise funds, and we've developed a program called Peterborough Arts Alive. It's a granting program with the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough. Some of the things that Colleen was mentioning that performing arts needs—I have to be honest; visual arts spaces need them, as well, to ensure a safe and healthy and robust relaunch. That program will fund that, but we're hoping the city will contribute some money to that.

Absolutely, the retention of artists, particularly young artists, is really crucial, but we have to remember that lots

of senior artists in Canada who have great exposure on the national or international scene don't have big bank accounts, and they have to constantly be exhibiting, be at art fairs, all kinds of ways. Commissions, sales and all of that—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Su Ditta:—has disappeared for them, so we have to have support in supporting them.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the government side now. MPP Crawford.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have a question for Elizabeth from the Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

I didn't know much about your organization, so I'm glad you're here today. I certainly hope that my community of Oakville is well represented in your society, with our role that we played in the Underground Railroad. So I'll have to take a look at that.

You did touch on the negative revenue streams, obviously as a result of COVID-19. Our government has been very clear since we were elected that we want to help charities. In January 2019, for example, we made it easier to do online raffles. We had a lot of great support from stakeholders that are charities, in terms of online fundraising.

I'm wondering if you can suggest any initiatives for fundraising for organizations like yours that have been hit hard; in other words, any government initiatives that could help you to be able to fundraise, number one. And number two, I want you to expand a bit more on the virtual infrastructure. Were you referring to broadband access and wireless access?

Ms. Elizabeth Price: It's infrastructure much more broadly. I do not have much technical knowledge, which is ironic given the presentations I gave. It's just that infrastructure and [*inaudible*] significant funding that's available through the federal government administered by the province. It's a very conventional definition of infrastructure, so I was just urging that it be broadened into the virtual space as well.

In terms of fundraising, we haven't done things like raffles. Our thinking has been more in terms of how we can generate revenue from services, using the heritage assets we have to potentially use them for revenue generation. We don't charge a membership [*inaudible*] access to the archives [*inaudible*] when it was open. So I don't think we want to change that.

And we have done much more work in terms of donations from individuals and communities that have seen the work that we've done to record and promote their histories.

In terms of the Oakville Museum, I think an exhibit that we virtually created for a space in the ROM eventually found its way into the Oakville Museum. So there is a connection [*inaudible*].

Mr. Stephen Crawford: That's great. Thank you. If you can think of any initiatives that our government can help—making it easier for organizations like yours to fundraise or whatnot, please let us know.

I'll pass it over to MPP Piccini.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: My question is to Su.

Su, you spoke a lot about the role our municipalities can play and pressures that they face. I don't know if you'll recall, but my colleague MPP Smith and I both announced a significant portion of funding for municipal modernization funding which was heralded by local politicians like Andy Mitchell, which supported our approach to provide flexibility for municipalities to find online efficiencies—enterprise management systems etc.—to be able to prepare for a growing future that's pivoting online.

With challenges like COVID-19—we now find ourselves in a very serious pandemic here, and I know many of our municipalities are already steps ahead, thanks to the modernization funding, in working with organizations like yours.

You were concerned about the base operating funding. What steps has the municipality taken internally to support you to date and/or what challenges have they expressed they're facing?

Ms. Su Ditta: The primary challenge that we hear is that due to loss of revenue in transit and municipal facilities rentals, just to give two examples, they're facing a \$7-million deficit.

In terms of direct support to the arts, culture and heritage sector—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Ms. Su Ditta:—it's primarily been rental deferrals, primarily for the Market Hall, but the city of Peterborough funds the Electric City Culture Council. Therefore, we've delivered, as I said, a whole suite of programs to support the sector. We are very grateful to the city for keeping that funding going and allowing us to develop those programs and services.

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Mr. David Piccini: I think we want to create an environment where this can continue. Are you aware of the funding that the province has provided the municipality to assist with transit cleaning and additional transit supports for the most vulnerable through increased funding? They're transfer payment recipients, so we support them with additional funding to deliver through COVID-19 as a part of our \$17-billion action plan.

My question: Are you aware, in working collaboratively with the city, of what steps they have taken internally to address some of these shortfalls?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Su Ditta: My understanding is, the financial information and reporting that came forward this month was one of the first steps, and staff have now been directed to go back and look at steps they could take to make a particular tax hike target. To the best of my knowledge—and I may be wrong about this—we haven't been advised that any money from the two programs you talked about would have a flow through to the arts, culture and heritage sector, or at least it hasn't directly. I know it has been a tremendous help in providing particular and specific COVID-19 support to the homeless population, for one thing.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, and I think just relative to their budgets—giving them a bit of flexibility to continue to provide those supports.

I'm just curious on what some recommendations, working with the city—you talked about rent. What steps are they taking to support them?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I apologize; that concludes our time.

Thank you to all three presenters for your time and for your presentations.

MS. HANNAH BURGÉ LUVIANO
REGENT PARK ISLAMIC RESOURCE
CENTRE

ONTARIO BLACK HISTORY SOCIETY

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Calling up our next presenter, Hannah Burgé Luviano: Please state your name for the record, and you'll have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: My name is Hannah Burgé Luviano. Dear members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I am a musician and researcher living in the city of Toronto. I do not speak for all the diverse voices in my community; I speak to what I've observed living in a community with other artists and what I've heard in committee meetings as a member of the Toronto Music Advisory Committee. In my role as a research fellow for Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, I have worked closely with leaders in cultural organizations along the Bloor Street Culture Corridor and studied cultural diplomacy in governmental and non-governmental agencies. My research tracks the impact of musician kinship communities in Toronto at present and in Mexico City during the 1950s. I've taken a break from writing my qualifying exam for the completion of my doctoral degree in order to address you today. Thank you in advance for listening to these remarks.

There is cause for concern when considering the impact of COVID-19 on artists and cultural workers. The COVID-19 crisis highlights the precariousness of the music industry—not only the low wages that artists earn, but it reveals the dependency on our cultural production. This dependency includes businesses related to government agencies, booking agents, venue owners, cultural workers and technical support. Where being a musician used to afford a middle-class existence, it does so no longer. Lower wages, the rise of the gig economy, closure of venues and the rise of streaming platforms have decimated our earnings. As a mid-century cultural historian and ethnomusicologist, I estimate that the changes artists are experiencing take us to a climate not seen since World War II.

While the province opened some industries, our work, which depends on public presentation, is yet impossible. There is no knowledge if or when the music industry will recover and at what cost to everyday musicians. At this time, our earnings from artistic production are at a standstill. The work from concerts, theatre shows, live venues, summer patios and touring is irrevocably gone. Many

touring artists will have lost \$30,000 to \$50,000 of gross performance income between March and December 2020. We can't estimate how many artists will leave their respective art practices. I have heard stories of artists abandoning their commercial spaces with thousands of dollars of equipment inside, their livelihood evaporated because they could not meet their commercial rent obligation.

Artists in my community are food-insecure. Even artists who were nominated for and won Juno Awards last night experience food and housing insecurity. Visibility is no marker of sustained financial success for the majority of artists. At present, in the artist community where I live, organizations such as FoodShare are keeping us fed. The right to food is impacted by socio-economic conditions that include systemic racism and barriers faced on gender constructs, immigration status and poverty. As a group, artists face food and housing insecurity at higher rates, and there is a lacuna of information on this topic.

Artists are trying to find ways to make money through live-streaming concerts and videos, radio interviews and speaking engagements. They sell music on sites like Bandcamp or offer online lessons. However, there is a high cost to entry to acquire the technology required for such endeavours, and many cannot afford these upgrades. Likewise, uploading content to online platforms and building new audiences is very difficult. Not every artist can or would like to navigate this terrain.

Of course, we are yet in a health crisis on a global scale, and COVID-19 has touched our families, our friends and our communities. We cannot expect business as usual during this time, and we cannot overlook the toll on our physical and mental health. A variety of supports must be researched to meet the cultural industry in its damaged state.

However, the COVID-19 crisis has shown us that equitable access for everyone is possible to varying degrees. Websites—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano:—like sidedooraccess.com enable artists to live-stream concerts and art installations with built-in audiences. This is a revelation to the music industry—because artists earn, on average, \$1,200 per concert, and ticket prices can be as low as \$7. This business represents innovative thinking around difficult problems. Artists can participate from their home with the technology they own and an Internet connection. Of course, such requirements still hold barriers for those with no phone and no Internet connection. But for differently abled, Black and Indigenous people, people of colour, women and queer artists who have seen their income as less than their male peers, sidedooraccess.com demonstrates an equity solution that is available right now.

We need to find what is working and do more of it. To that end, many artists have received CERB, and this has been a lifeline for the artistic community. CERB demonstrates that basic income improves the lives of the most vulnerable among us. Rather than discouraging artists from working, CERB has made it possible for artists to

continue to work in new capacities through digital platforms. While CERB payments flow directly to banks in the form of mortgages or to landlords in the form of rent payments, this financial stability is more than many of us have experienced in some time.

Affordable housing models are working. The province of Ontario has supported the Artscape community, which provides artists' housing and workspaces. Artscape is a leader in artistic community engagement. The Artscape Bayside building opened in 2019 to accept 80 families of artist-led households, and this has been a fortress during the time of COVID-19. This is the community where I live. My colleagues and I face loss of income, but we do not fear eviction as do so many of our peers. The province may immediately create more housing in this capacity—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano:—as there is a direct correlation between stable housing, quality of life and artistic production. The work of artists supports the culture industry on which the province depends. We hold unique knowledge as storytellers and community builders. We continue to be allies.

Thank you for listening to this impact statement. I appreciate your attention and willingness to listen to artists like myself.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Our next presenter is the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Emad Hussain: My name is Emad Hussain. I am the president of the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre. The Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre's goal is to establish cultural services and programs for the Regent Park community, and foster diversity through unity and encouraging inclusion.

Today, I will discuss how the government should take action on specific issues which COVID-19 has exposed; namely, (1) home care and long-term care; (2) economic support and universal basic income; (3) student employment opportunities; and (4) capacity-building.

Home care and long-term care: In Regent Park, family-oriented care—keeping family members at home with family rather than sending them to long-term-care facilities—is the first choice for those connected to the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre. Keeping families whole under the same roof should be considered a high priority. This allows elderly parents to continue cooking and eating food and dishes that connect them to their community, culture and heritage. This could help reduce depression and isolation.

1510

Furthermore, according to Home Care Ontario, the average per diem cost for an Ontario patient receiving care in a hospital bed is \$842 a day, \$126 a day for a long-term-care bed, and \$42 a day for care at home. That makes home care the most cost-effective. Perhaps we could explore financially subsidizing families to take care of their elders in a way that is similar to the Canada child benefit. The more we connect our elders to their culture and communities, the easier the aging process will be for everyone.

Similarly, more subsidized part-time PSWs will expand scheduling options for people who do shift work and who may be afraid of leaving their loved ones alone during the day. A workforce training and retention strategy is needed. The government should try to recruit enough people who speak common languages in Regent Park, like Arabic, Somali, Bengali etc., to help clients communicate their care needs.

Regent Park needs more community space for large community events, prayer space and, now, physical distancing. If the province wanted to build a new long-term care facility that could provide culturally appropriate care to elders in Regent Park and that had prayer space, it could be popular and create opportunities for youth in Regent Park to practise their artistic skills while engaging seniors and recipients of long-term care.

Economic support and universal basic income: COVID-19 has hit all aspects of Canadian society and business. The impact on tourism and the service industry with the cancellation of physical business conferences and conventions has reduced tourism in Canada. What are we going to do about the taxi and Uber drivers—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Emad Hussain: —hotel staff, flight attendants, store workers, small and community-based business owners and their employees, when facing losses of more than 60% in business activity? This crisis is in many ways a continuation of the earning and inequality gap.

We suggest a universal basic income like CERB for households, and especially to help meet the needs of low-income households. Having a UBI will contribute to removing the anxiety and scarcity mindset plaguing our workers post-pandemic and give them a sense of financial ease. A UBI could also empower family members who want to stay home and take care of their elders to do so.

Student employment opportunities: Students and young people are and will be hurting from the sudden lack of economic opportunities. Youth unemployment stands at 30%, according to Trading Economics, and for students returning in the fall, nearly 40%, according to Huffington Post, are out of work. Given that minorities have faced higher unemployment rates, these youth unemployment figures are likely significantly higher for youth who are visible minorities.

These statistics are concerning, since it means an entire generation of young people will be idle and an unproductive unit of society that will not be able to develop the experience and skills that are vital for successful careers. They have lower-than-normal incomes and less savings, and for those graduating, it means entering a bleak job market where long-term underemployment—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Emad Hussain: —is a likely prospect.

Many students in the community, including my son, are actively seeking a job and one for his co-op work term. He enjoyed working, since it enhanced his individual and collaborative skills, and gave him a sense of pride in what he is doing. That feeling should not be taken away from the students of this generation.

What may be suggested is incentivizing and supporting local employers who do hire students through subsidies and other means. Public works projects such as beautification and creating or improving infrastructure should be considered for youth employment. Pairing this issue with the new need for community and economic self-reliance, utilizing local labour for farms instead of migrants—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. Your time has come up now.

We'll move to our next presenter, Ontario Black History Society. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Natasha Henry: My name is Natasha Henry. I'm president of the Ontario Black History Society. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute my thoughts to this important hearing into the impact of COVID-19 on our culture and heritage sector.

I wanted to take a moment to honour the life and legacy of Wilma Morrison, a woman whose life encapsulates my message. She passed away on April 23 due to COVID-19, at the age of 91. She was an advocate and steward for preserving and educating about Black history and played an integral role in the designation of the R. Nathaniel BME church in Niagara.

As I said, I'm the president of the Ontario Black History Society, and we have been around for 42 years. We were founded by Dr. Daniel Hill and his wife, Donna, as well as several other community members.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the operations of heritage organizations and has restricted access to them—archives, museums, libraries, heritage or historical societies. For instance, the research of graduate students like myself has been paused, and as a result, having the domino effect of delaying our research and writing. Further, along with this gradual opening during COVID-19, these institutions will need financial support to serve and make the materials accessible to research in a way that adheres to our new normal, such as processing, retrieval online etc.

Researchers, film producers and other cultural producers rely on these heritage organizations and their work that contributes immensely to the production of rich heritage resources.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the OBHS recent programming, including our summer tour to Black heritage sites for seniors was cancelled, and our annual high school conference, Leaders of Tomorrow, and our Emancipation Day events are having to pivot online.

COVID-19 has had a detrimental effect on the financial and programming stability of cultural heritage organizations like ourselves. Black heritage sites and organizations have already been under threat, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Borrowing the question from Minister MacLeod in earlier hearings, where will these places be in 18 to 24 months? What will be the fate and future for Black heritage organizations and sites post-COVID-19?

For various reasons, Black history and heritage sites have been lost for various factors. There are some sites that continue to be in tenuous, precarious positions that may be lost, such as the Fugitive Slave Chapel in London, Ontario.

The Oro African church in the Oro-Medonte area was redeveloped, but remains in a precarious situation in terms of management. More recently, the Salem Chapel, the BME church in St. Catharines, received national designation, and it's popular because of its historical ties to Harriet Tubman. We often like to make note of this historical connection, but sites like these also need support.

There are multi-layered threats faced by Black heritage organizations and sites that have existed for some time, which have been exacerbated by this pandemic.

1520

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Natasha Henry: I'm here to request that you include heritage organizations and sites in the recent funding announced for support by tourism, culture and heritage, and to expand the definition of heritage and extend supports for operations in the heritage sector. There are several benefits to this.

One, it supports the well-being of individuals and communities in terms of sense of self. For Black Canadians, it instills a sense of racial pride and develops a sense of community for all.

A second benefit is to public education. They provide opportunities for all Ontarians to visit sites and participate in programs to learn about Black history. Amidst the calls to examine and address systemic racism, Black heritage organizations and sites are effective in educating citizens about these realities from a Black perspective and a historical lens to help shift public attitudes. Heritage infrastructure can assist in educating Ontarians to develop a deeper understanding of systemic racism.

Also, Black history is excluded from the Ontario curriculum. There isn't one thing that all students in Ontario have to learn about the 400-year presence of Black people in Canada, which is a glaring absence. Black history and heritage organizations and sites are invaluable in filling these gaps and making connections to the social movement we are in, particularly during emergency distance learning.

A third benefit to investing in restoration, conservation, reuse and operations is to help keep these sites alive so that they could be repurposed. All heritage organizations and sites need support to operate, as they have suffered dire losses due to COVID-19.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Natasha Henry: Also, there are benefits in investing in creative projects such as the Voices of Freedom project—and investing in digital infrastructure so that these organizations become available helps with access.

The last benefit is that it could help to create jobs, particularly for Black youth who remain underemployed, as evidenced by a lot of reports and studies by the province.

To conclude: Substantial investments in the heritage sector have enormous economic and social benefits for the province and for the heritage sector. Investments in Black heritage organizations and sites, as well, will illustrate a tangible demonstration of support for the UN International Decade for People of African Descent, which the province

has endorsed. I want to encourage you to bolster the funding supports for heritage organizations and sites through various funding opportunities, so 18 months to 24 months—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the questions now.

Before we do that, I need to do an attendance check. MPP Morrison?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'm here, and in Regent Park in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. MPP Mitas?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Christina Mitas, here in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll start this round of questions with the independent members. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three presenters for excellent presentations on such an important topic.

I'm going to direct my first question to you, Natasha, and the Ontario Black History Society, mainly because I'm a huge supporter of Heritage Hall here in Guelph. The Guelph Black Heritage Society has been doing amazing work to not only preserve it as a historical space, but also as a community space for performing arts, which, unfortunately, has all had to move online lately. But what particularly disturbed me about your presentation was, you talked about how many sites are at risk of being lost right now. I'm just wondering what we can do, as a government, to make sure that we preserve these essential historic sites, especially to fill the gaps in the curriculum around Black history and culture that—we'd all receive an education. Can you elaborate on that some more for us?

Ms. Natasha Henry: It would be useful for there to be particular attention to some of these sites. There are jurisdictions and heritage organizations that have the will to do the work to save some of these sites—for example, the Fugitive Slave Chapel in London—but they do need that support.

I think funding is important, and if they could all have some guidance from the sector—I think that would be beneficial so that they could restore these sites, like the example you gave, the Guelph Black Heritage Society. The buildings can then be repurposed, so we're not losing that sense of history and connection and Black presence, but then you're also creating a community space that we always could benefit from.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm just wondering if, in some of the funding streams for heritage, we need a set-aside, specific stream for Black history, to ensure that that funding is available for these societies and organizations.

Ms. Natasha Henry: Absolutely. The reason for bringing up the International Decade for People of African Descent is that there's a strong component on education and preservation, and I see that as one meaningful way where funding can come through that program to support those goals, in order to have targeted funding for these particular sites, to develop those programs, to develop curriculum resources, in the midst of the absence in the curriculum.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Can you talk a little bit about the youth jobs component to that? I know the Guelph Black Heritage Society got some funding and they were able to hire an executive director. She's a young woman who is doing amazing work. Can you talk about some of the opportunities that would exist there in terms of employment?

Ms. Natasha Henry: Looking at Wilma—there are a lot of Black volunteers—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Natasha Henry:—who have done a lot of work preserving Black history, who are older now and concerned about passing on these efforts. The opportunity to develop skills in preserving, conserving, disseminating heritage and historical information is something that's important—to continue on this work, equip students with skills and provide them with those opportunities.

At the OBHS, we hire students—and a lot of Black students, as well, in order to help address the employment gaps for Black youth, to help them develop a skill, nurture that love of and interest in history and heritage so that they can contribute to this. We know that the field continues to be predominantly European, but we need to diversify in order to preserve our heritage, as well, in terms of succession planning.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I think I'm almost out of time, but you just touched on a really important point I want to ask about—the importance of many of these sites for your research, as a graduate student, and future research that others may do.

Ms. Natasha Henry: A lot of these small organizations—what they do and what they contribute on a volunteer basis is just amazing and often goes unnoted. These volunteers have been hit as individuals, impacted by COVID-19. I would like to think that compensation would be considered, as well, for these people. This is important work that a lot of people volunteer their time to do. Students like myself, researchers, would not have access to some of these materials were it not for some of these smaller organizations. So to expand the definition of what heritage organizations are and what they do, to help extend that support to them, I think, is crucial. We don't want to lose that.

1530

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Absolutely.

Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm going to get to the other presenters for the next round of questions.

Another quick question: Some folks have talked about the importance of property tax exemptions for heritage sites. Have you had people bring that up as a concern, just in terms of cash flow, for Black heritage sites?

Ms. Natasha Henry: No, I haven't, but I think any opportunity to generate cash, financing, for these sites would be good, or anything to alleviate additional financial burdens on these sites would be useful. They're already operating on very slim budgets, and so anything that could help go towards and funnel that money into their operations would be helpful.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My final question is around accessibility. I know for a lot of heritage sites, making them accessible—AODA guidelines. Have you heard that as a concern?

Ms. Natasha Henry: Yes, that is a concern—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll move to the government members now, and I'll start with MPP Rasheed.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to all three presenters this afternoon.

My question is to Mr. Emad Hussain from the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre. I listened to your presentation. Help me understand, when we are talking about seniors' homes—is that something that already exists? You're asking for some funding. I just want to understand in terms of what type of funding you are looking for, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Emad Hussain: It's my understanding that there is nothing in Regent Park. What we are proposing, actually, is to build full home care. Some of my relatives in the United States take care of their elderly parents inside their home, and it is saving money in one way; in another way, they're relaxing in their home—culturally. This is the main, important thing we are trying to encourage the government to do. Think about it as a different way to do home care, instead of the traditional long-term care. Traditional long-term care, you can do, but in most of the cases, and especially in a culturally diverse society, we see parents, grandparents who want to stay with their loved ones—their children, their grandchildren—and also, the family members want to take care of their old-age parents. The problem is, when you send them to long-term care, there are lots of costs and, also, people get tired and people get isolated from their families. Also, we can support—

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My apologies for cutting you off here. When you say that the parents get isolated and everything, and you are proposing a long-term-care home, or a seniors' home—what makes you say that the current infrastructure for seniors' homes and all those things are not suitable for the seniors who are living there right now?

Mr. Emad Hussain: You've seen with the COVID-19 pandemic that lots of seniors are dying. They are the main victims, and it is a hard-hitting situation right now. Even in some of the places, with the Canadian Armed Forces—the government invited them to take care of them. Instead of this happening in future—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Emad Hussain:—if we build home care in the cultural way, then it should be better than the isolated long-term-home care. You can save money too. It is important. We have to think about the money, where the money comes from and how we can save money.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: So when you talk about how you can save money and you want to build cultural home care—have you looked into raising funds privately for this home care? Just help me understand why, as a province, we would fund cultural home care. I'm just trying to understand the logic behind this, because as a taxpayer—we have so many cultures that live in this society, and if every culture starts coming and asking for funding for

long-term-care homes—I know there are a few cultural long-term-care homes and each culture has raised funds for their own long-term-care home. I'm not saying, don't build a cultural long-term-care home; please do. But why would the province fund something when we are already working with other long-term-care homes?

Mr. Emad Hussain: Those are nice questions you ask me.

When we are sending our parents to long-term care, ultimately, the province is spending money. You see the consequences sometimes; I'm not saying always. There are lots of privatized companies that are operating long-term-care homes, and there was some mismanagement in this pandemic.

Instead of these things, if we spend that money on culturally motivated long-term-home care, then it should be better than regional home care—

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: When you talk about culture—in our culture, my parents live with me. Both my mom and dad live with me. This is what my culture is. So when we talk about culture and we use certain things for funding—again, I'm just trying to understand why it is that you're asking for this when we come from the same culture and my parents live with me.

Mr. Emad Hussain: You are a fortunate gentleman, keeping your parents with you—and financially solvent. Lots of families in Ontario, especially in the downtown area, Regent Park, as an example, cannot—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We have to move to the opposition side now. MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My questions are directed to Hannah and Natasha, but I just wanted to respond, for the record, based on my colleague's questions. It's extremely important that the province knows to invest in culturally responsive long-term-care facilities, and it's very important that we speak and listen to the needs from community on that. I would love to have a conversation with him about that in a different space at a different time.

My first question is for Hannah. Hannah, it is so lovely to see you. For those on the committee, it just happens that Hannah was a student of my late partner, who was an ethnomusicologist. I don't think he ever would have thought that we would be having this conversation. There you are getting your doctorate, and here I am as an MPP—whoo!

You had spoken about food insecurity, housing insecurity etc., for many, many artists, and many, many artists that are Black, brown, Indigenous, as well. I'm wondering, because it kind of ties into what Natasha was saying—the arts were underfunded pre-COVID-19, and so right now, as we're coming together to talk about economic recovery and the need to think differently about how we fund things, it's important for us to note that there's a reason that these sectors were first in the hearings. The government had made it very clear that these are the sectors that actually stimulate our economy. They are very important, and yet the funding for musicians and other artists is quite low. I'm wondering if you can speak about the importance of investing in the arts now, when we have this opportunity, so that we can start to stimulate the economy in the future.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: That's an enormous question. It's true that we as artists have not only seen our income decrease on account of the rapid pace of technology; we have also seen our funding cut through short-sightedness, for a lack of a better term.

1540

The province is so vast that we need funding, such as the Indigenous Culture Fund that was cut, just so that we can hear the voices of people from all across the province, from the north. We need those voices in film, videos, music production, installations, art. And the province does benefit. I don't have the figures offhand. I haven't memorized how much our cultural production stimulates the economy, but it's already in the millions, if not billions. So it is important that our artists are healthy, and all of our artists, Indigenous voices, Black and people of colour—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano:—queer artists. We need those voices because our province includes all, and must include all, not only for the benefit of tourist industries, but for our own benefit, our own culture.

So I would love to support that idea that funding should be reinstated. Funding that has been cut must be reinstated. New funding is needed to transition right now, during COVID-19, as we try to figure out how we can reach people. Transitioning to digital is important. Equipment needs and, as you said, basic housing and food—these are front-line concerns. We can't think about making art if we're worrying about being evicted. We can't worry about—

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you so much, Hannah.

That leads me to a question for Natasha. It's lovely to see you. MPP Jill Andrew also sends her regards. She's in a different set of meetings.

One of the things that stands out is that the organization that you have preserves that history in the same way that artists are preserving this history for us. I do think that it's really important for you to have a little bit more time to talk about the importance, then, of expanding that definition of heritage so that we don't lose this. That loss, at a time when we're talking about the need to encourage local tourism—that's going to stimulate local economies. That, in turn, will stimulate and do this bigger economic recovery work. I would love to give you some time to speak a little bit more about that, especially when we're seeing solidarity rallies and the need to address anti-Black racism all throughout this province.

Ms. Natasha Henry: Yes, and that was something I really did want to convey—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Natasha Henry:—in addition to public education. Here we are during this time, this moment, this social movement, uprising, conversations around anti-Black racism. People need to deepen their understanding of what systemic racism is. We need to address it all throughout the educational system, health and whatnot.

Education is a key component for people to change their attitudes, to be more informed, and then to make decisions and policy changes. Organizations like ours play a very important role in preserving these stories and in disseminating these stories through various means. We had a lot of

face-to-face, in-person events, which we would have to consider—if they will be cancelled or if we can move them online. But moving them online also requires operational funds to do that. So that's very important as well.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll come back to that in the second round. Now we'll go to the government side. MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for Hannah. I wanted to say, Hannah, that you're very talented, by the way, an incredible musician. I was very impressed. I love your music.

You mentioned some virtual concert that provided a revenue stream. Can you expand on that, please? Is it new? Is it something that you've just tapped into because of COVID-19, or had you used it before?

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: Thank you, MPP Skelly. I appreciate that.

I had mentioned sidedooraccess.com. It was used prior to COVID-19 as one of those sites where artists who were on tour could do house concerts, so they could bump around from city to city and could host informal concerts. But in the time of COVID-19, it has transitioned to a much broader stroke, where artists can sign up for free, there are audiences built in who check in, and then sidedooraccess.com will host that concert. It's up to each individual artist—I could do a concert with my phone, let's say, but that might not be as enjoyable as the whole getup that I have with a microphone and a camera, such things, yet ticket prices can be so low.

I heard about sidedooraccess.com during the time of COVID-19, through consultations we were having with the city of Toronto's music advisory committee, and then when I experienced the platform with Sarah Slean's concert. She's another wonderful Canadian artist. Her ticket prices were so low, \$7—and you could never see a concert for that little money.

Likewise, if you are a differently abled artist, perhaps you couldn't do a concert on a stage, and yet you could do a concert at home.

So I noticed that sidedooraccess.com, that platform, really levelled the playing field—and also artists at their own ticket prices. You didn't have the same kind of disparity between gendered income that you typically have, which is a concern of festivals and the music industry in general.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Can you actually generate revenue, as an artist, from that particular platform?

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: Research has suggested that the average artist makes \$1,200 per concert, which is astounding.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is.

I learned about you because of your appearance today. You are very talented, and I will support you. I love your music, but I wouldn't have known about you had you not appeared today. Mind you, I'm not tech-savvy. I'm pretty long in the tooth, so I'm one of the oldies.

What is missing to connect you and your talent to Ontarians so that we can support you and we can hear about your work?

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: That is a marvellous question. It is very difficult to build an audience in Ontario—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano:—not the least of which is artists who are mothers. I've been raising my children for 10 years and haven't been going through the motions. If I don't have access to recording grants, I can't make new music. If I have to choose between feeding my children or spending \$1,500 to make a video that nobody purchases, just so that people can consume it—that has been a real barrier to a performance crew like my own. So I think—

Ms. Donna Skelly: But how do I learn about you? Is there a way that we can create some sort of a portal or something that—I sat on a board federally, and it was to promote Canadian content, but it was years ago, before people really were streaming videos. I'm just wondering if there's something, as a province, we can do to celebrate our artists and to connect artists with consumers.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: That's a marvellous idea. There has to be a way for independent artists like me, who aren't with a label, who aren't under a management contract, to connect to Ontarians who want to hear that music, people like you. At present, I don't know what that portal might look like. If there was a Bandcamp for Ontario, that might be a way, because you can buy an album's worth of music at a rate—where the money goes directly to artists. That could be one way. I'm sure my colleagues have more creative opinions than I do on this.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is something I would like to explore, because I think one of the big problems is the disconnect [*inaudible*] music industry to [*inaudible*] artists such as yourself and—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Donna Skelly:—support artists such as yourself.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: Thank you.

1550

Ms. Donna Skelly: Those are my questions for Hannah. Was MPP Piccini interested in taking up the rest of the time?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Just further on the comments from MPP Rasheed and MPP Lindo—both good comments. To what MPP Lindo said: I think, if I may—not to put words in my colleague's mouth—but the difference between the ongoing operating costs versus capital investments.

What I'm just seeking clarity on: Are you seeking—and this question is to Emad—capital funding or operating funding? MPP Lindo and others will know that the government invests in the ongoing operating costs—I don't think anybody is disputing that—and there is certainly a well-documented and culturally sensitive way we can do that. Is it capital costs you're looking for or the ongoing operating costs?

Mr. Emad Hussain: This is—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the opposition side now. MPP Morrison.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to direct my question to Emad. It's so nice to see you.

In your opening remarks, you spoke a little bit about the need to have better resources for youth, and particularly youth employment, in Regent Park. Can you elaborate on the supports you'd like to see for youth in Regent Park, for youth employment and prosperity?

Mr. Emad Hussain: This is very important. It's not only in Regent Park—I'm talking about Regent Park, but all over Ontario you see the unemployment rate for students at about 40%. If we don't spend money, if we don't think about these youngsters, then later on, they're going to enter a bleak market, and they're going to be less experienced for the jobs we're going to create. Also, it's going to lead to depression, mental health—and all the other aspects.

Instead of hiring from somewhere else, if we can think about locally—my son is looking for a co-op. He was working with the CRA from January to April. Right now, he is a co-op student at University of Toronto, and he's trying to go in September again—because he has a summer job and a summer class—but at this time, it is very hard to get a referral for any kind of government job to upgrade his experience.

So it's very important to invest some money in youth and students.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I know you got cut off when you were making your comments about not necessarily being able to afford to have your elders, your parents and your grandparents at home to take care of them, and why that's so important in the community. Can you elaborate on some of the financial barriers that folks face in being able to take care of their elders at home?

Mr. Emad Hussain: That is a very nice question.

Regent Park is a vulnerable neighbourhood, as you know—and not only Regent Park; I'm talking about some of the neighbourhoods where low-income families are living anywhere in Ontario.

Capital investment or operating costs—we don't research on it, actually. We can propose to the government to make something like a local—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Emad Hussain:—the public and the local government—

Ms. Suze Morrison: Something similar to the child benefit?

Mr. Emad Hussain: That's right, yes.

Also, local people can provide their [*inaudible*]. We can work on it. I have not studied much about that. The Armed Forces came in to help these vulnerable home care centres—and then we feel very bad for our parents who are going to be [*inaudible*] soon. They need to research something. We need to work on it, because how are we going to—

Ms. Suze Morrison: Absolutely. I know the CAF report was so upsetting to read in terms of the state of long-term-care homes in Ontario right now.

For the benefit of the other committee members that aren't familiar with Regent Park, we're going through a massive redevelopment project. We're tearing our neighbourhood down block by block and rebuilding it, and we have an opportunity now, if the government is willing to

listen, to have a conversation about the types of spaces we're missing in Regent Park.

I think what I'm hearing from you is that long-term care is part of the miss in terms of local services in Regent Park that we could be developing as part of the redevelopment. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Emad Hussain: Yes, that's right. Also, I would be happy if the government could listen to us, the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre. Again, the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre can help out with how to do community home care or other home care.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Chair, how much time do we have?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Okay.

Again, for the benefit of the committee and to get it on the record: I think one of the barriers that the Regent Park Islamic Resource Centre has faced in the last little bit has been that, through the redevelopment, we've lost community spaces.

For folks who don't know, the basements of the old community housing buildings that have been torn down to make way for condos used to house prayer spaces that were really important to the community.

Is that something you'd like to see this government invest in—replacing some of those spaces that have been lost through the redevelopment?

Mr. Emad Hussain: This is the point, actually. In point four—I didn't have the chance to tell you—this is the capacity-building that we are looking for. People do not have much money to give to a fund for that. We need some kind of generous help—it is not even generous help. It is good for the community and good for Ontarians to give an example of how communities can build themselves with government help and also their own community's help.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the independent members. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm going to direct my first question to you, Emad, and then to Hannah. Both of you talked about the importance of a basic income. One of the things we've learned from this crisis is just how important it is to have efficient, effective, low-bureaucratic, low-red-tape access to social supports.

I'll start with you, Emad. Can you elaborate a little bit more on why you think having a basic income is so vital?

Mr. Emad Hussain: With this situation right now, the CERB—low-income families and self-employed people benefit. Of course, I know if you were living in a vulnerable society—you can realize how important it was and it is right now.

The situation is not even over. Day by day, we see the big companies are taking over everything, and low-income families are hurting too much.

If we have a universal benefit for Ontarians—I'm not saying for all. If somebody is from a low-income family who cannot cover everything even though they're trying their best, then the Ontario government needs to support the rest of the expenses or whatever, the standard of living, so they can manage their expenses every day.

My solution is—I'm not saying about the kind of welfare you're supposed to give. But if low-income families

are going for work every day and they don't have enough earning, especially in this situation right now, then the government needs to come out with some kind of money which could cover their daily expenses. Leaving the sick children in poverty—we are a very fortunate nation, Canadians. If our children go to bed without food, then it is not nice for our generations. That's why we propose these things to think about—so that the present government thinks about that.

1600

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that.

Hannah, as I direct the same question to you, I'm going to preface it by saying that you talked about basic income in the context of allowing you to work. I think one of the biggest myths that exists around basic income is that it discourages work, even though all the research says otherwise. Maybe you could explain how a basic income—or the CERB, in this case—has enabled you to work through this challenging time.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: You're absolutely right that a low-bureaucratic, low red tape approach to basic income—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: —has made a tremendous difference in our family in the last four months.

I have continued to work on not only my doctoral project, but I have continued to work on music projects in my capacity to do that during COVID-19 by releasing videos, by having a live stream on radio. We were able to do that at Jazz.FM last week, a socially distanced live stream, and that was a very good thing, I think, for not only the community who listens to that music—but we see that reflected around other radio stations, as well.

I do think that knowing that you can pay your rent enables you to do better work. Knowing that you can buy groceries enables you to be creative. If you're not spending six or seven hours a day stressing about where your rent money is going to come from, then you can give some thought to your creative work. I also think that it facilitates that dependence that I was talking on earlier—how the government depends on our cultural production. A basic income, I think, goes a long way to enabling cultural production.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll ask my last question to you, Hannah.

I will have to sheepishly admit that one of the great things about these online committee hearings is that I can switch over and listen to a bit of your music, like MPP Skelly. You are very talented. It was great to have the opportunity to see that while chatting with you here.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: So many musicians have told me that the funding model for musicians was broken before COVID-19 and COVID-19 has made it even worse. Can you give us some solutions around how we can fix the model?

Ms. Hannah Burgé Luviano: Thank you for those kind words.

A lot of the funding models—it is broken and it's diverse, and you have to apply to six different agencies to get funding, and it's very project-specific. So if I want to record an album, I can get money for the engineer and I can get money for the musicians, but I can't get money for other things. It would be best to include a living wage component to every single artist grant, where 15% of that grant, whatever the dollar amount, can go to subsistence living. You can't make a record if you don't—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time. Thank you to all three presenters for your time and for your presentations.

Before we move along to our next presenters, I would like to do an attendance check. Some of the members have joined us.

MPP Tabuns?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Peter Tabuns, Toronto–Danforth riding, present here in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. MPP Gretzky?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm present here in Windsor, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you.

IATSE LOCAL 58

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF DURHAM

ARTS COLLECTIVE THEATRE

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Our first presenter is International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 58. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Justin Antheunis: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Justin Antheunis, president of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 58, in Toronto. While I had the pleasure to speak to the committee a couple of weeks ago regarding the effects of COVID-19 on live performance and tourism, I welcome the chance to discuss further the overall impact on workers in the arts and culture sector.

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, better known as IATSE, represents 7,500 workers in the entertainment sector in Ontario. IATSE Local 58 has proudly represented stagecraft technicians in Toronto for more than 120 years, representing skilled labour at employers such as TIFF, Mirvish Productions, the National Ballet of Canada and Soupepper, just to name a few. We are proud to say that the work IATSE members do behind the scenes, as carpenters, electricians, wardrobe attendants, box office personnel and more, creates magic that has made Ontario one of the top three entertainment economies in North America, behind only California and New York.

Across Ontario, live performance and live events drive the local economies. The arts and culture sector employs more than 250,000 workers in this province, but now, due

to the COVID-19 pandemic, the stages, concert halls and movie theatres have all gone dark, and the economic impact on workers in the arts and culture sector is devastating. There is no work-from-home option for us. We were the first sector to shut down, and we will be the last one to get back up and running again. We are a resilient workforce. We have survived SARS, 9/11, recessions and more, but our industry is in trouble.

Last week, Minister MacLeod spoke to this committee, talking about her vision for Ontario 18 months from now, but I would like to draw your attention to the arts and culture sector right now. In Toronto, the entire scene went dark in March, putting 95% of workers in the sector out of work. While most companies have been able to keep their administrative staff employed, the actors and musicians who grace the stage and the technicians and stage managers working in the wings have found themselves sitting at home, wondering how to pay their bills and when work may return.

Cultural sector jobs are an oft-forgotten part of the Ontario economy, and those jobs are now in peril. Work in live entertainment is precarious at the best of times. The reality of a single, full-time job for most in the sector is non-existent. Most workers in the sector, especially those behind the scenes, will require over a dozen employers per year to create a decent annual income. Whether they're with large employers like Mirvish Productions or small theatres like Factory Theatre, workers support themselves by jumping from one job to another—employed daily, weekly or monthly at each place they work.

The live-performance sector, however, is built like a house of cards. Removing just one card could cause the whole sector to tumble, making the rebuild that much more difficult. As companies fold or, in the case of Young People's Theatre or Tarragon Theatre, pause their programming until fall of 2021, we are pulling these cards out of the house, and the artists and technicians who rely on the income from these companies will now have large holes in their earning potential. With these known holes in the future and with the current schedules continuing to look bleak, many workers in the sector will leave to find other work.

As I mentioned before, IATSE members work as carpenters, electricians and in wardrobe, just to name a few areas. These skills are highly transferable, and the longer the shutdown continues and employers can't afford to mount productions, many will leave the sector and may not come back. If this happens, when the sector readies itself to come back, there may be a shortage of workers there to support it. This is why we need to ensure a swift recovery to the sector.

Workers can't wait 18 months for a recovery; they need it now. Every month that the industry is shut down sees IATSE Local 58's members losing almost \$3 million in wages, while provincially IATSE members are down \$5.7 million in wages per month in the live-performance sector alone. The longer these losses continue, the harder it will be for the sector to recover.

So on behalf of all the workers in the live-performance sector, we at IATSE Local 58 are requesting, once again,

that the ministry temporarily double the Ontario Arts Council budget, providing the OAC an additional \$60 million in funding that can be distributed as operating grants to recipients in the live-performance sector. This funding will allow organizations, large and small, to survive as they rebuild their audience base and will allow workers across the sector to return to work and contribute to the province's economic recovery.

1610

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Two minutes.

Mr. Justin Antheunis: Furthermore, we need to find other ways to stimulate the sector so the opening of the theatre doors can happen when it is safe to do so and there is no delay in the recovery efforts. This money is required to rebuild the live sector, not to shift to online media. The move to online streaming platforms, while it may add revenues for companies in the sector, will have an adverse effect on jobs in the province.

While the National Ballet of Canada may be able to record this year's production of *The Nutcracker* for an online audience, the almost 200 musicians, dancers and technicians would only work one performance as opposed to the usual 30. The broadcast of *Hamilton*, the musical, will mean fewer audience members the next time it rolls through town, which will mean a reduction in the total number of performances. Not only does this lead to less employment for workers in the sector, but those 2,000 audience members per show will not be eating out, paying for parking, or staying a night in a hotel.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Justin Antheunis: The magic of theatre and live performance is the live aspect. When it is safe to do so, we need to ensure that audiences will be able to leap to their feet at the end of every performance of *Come From Away* again, or wipe away the tears after a beautiful aria at the Canadian Opera Company.

Without additional temporary support, the live-performance sector might never fully recover, and that will have a lasting impact on the jobs of many Ontarians from multiple sectors.

As I've said before, it's going to take a team effort to bring the live-performance sector back from this crisis. IATSE Local 58 and its members invite the Ontario government to join our team and champion a triumphant comeback of the sector together. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Before moving to our next presenter, I would like to do an attendance check. MPP French?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm in Ontario, in Oshawa, in my kitchen.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. Our next presenter is the Regional Municipality of Durham. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Brandon Pickard: Thank you for the opportunity to present on the impact that the tourism industry has felt as a result of COVID-19. My name is Brandon Pickard, and I am the manager of tourism for the Regional Municipality of Durham. I also serve as the director on the board of Regional Tourism Organization 6.

We appreciate the role that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is undertaking. We would be remiss if we did not also recognize and thank Minister MacLeod and her team for their hard work and dedication to this portfolio and the leadership being demonstrated in support of all tourism businesses in the province. Thank you.

On behalf of our tourism stakeholders in Durham region, I want to convey the importance of tourism and that we are in support of the recommendations made by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario that were presented to this committee on June 29. We want to emphasize their recommendation through responses that we have heard through consultation with businesses in Durham region during recovery. We'll keep our presentation brief to highlight the common themes that we have heard through our own recovery efforts and provide a few examples of impact from stakeholders within our region.

We recommend to this committee the following objectives:

- (1) The ability for a business to reopen so long as businesses can meet key health and safety guidelines outlined by the province;
- (2) The need for clear and credible information about the reopening process;
- (3) Financial aid in the form of grants, as opposed to debt deferral programs;
- (4) Grants for tourism businesses to complete capital infrastructure projects;
- (5) An extension of the rent relief program; and
- (6) Funding for sport organizations that support a safe return to play.

Through our Durham region recovery survey, two of the top three responses for the question, "What type of support would your business benefit most from?" were, firstly, support for broadband infrastructure development—and this was also identified by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario recommendation. The second was integration of local food and local agriculture business. We know that these are key priority areas for the province as part of recovery and for the future strength of Ontario.

The greatest concern that our business community has expressed is the potential impact of a second wave and an increase of transmission. Advancements in contact tracing will support the safe reopening and recovery process. In Durham region, our key contributor for overnight visitation is driven by corporate bookings during the week and sporting events on the weekend.

Day trip motivators include the short-haul experiences for outdoor recreation, agriculture, culinary, arts and culture, events and weddings etc. It has never been more evident that tourism is a sector of sectors, and the collective impacts of COVID-19 are having a detrimental effect across each segment through the lack of direct, indirect and induced economic impact benefits.

Locally, we are feeling that impact. Our accommodations sector is reporting 50% to 70% revenue losses in 2020. Prior to COVID-19, we were on track for 17% growth in revenues across the accommodations sector from 2019 to 2022.

The cancellation of the Ontario Lacrosse Festival—the largest youth lacrosse event in the world in celebration of our national sport is an annual 10-day festival that attracts over 10,000 participants plus their supporting family and friends to Durham region, and has an economic impact of more than \$5.4 million.

We are home to Canadian Tire Motorsport Park—owned by Canadian Motorsport Ventures Ltd.—Canada's leading racing and automotive performance facility, which welcomes more than 500,000 people to the region each year from more than 25 countries. The facility employs 350 full-time and part-time staff, and is supported by more than a hundred local and national companies that provide event services to the park. The facility hosts a variety of events from April until October and is projecting a loss of 80% in revenue in 2020. Their concerns for 2021 include the risk of future waves of the pandemic—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Brandon Pickard:—as well as the impact of the United States recovery and the cross-border implications, as several of the racing teams, drivers, sponsors and spectators of the track are based in the US.

Funding for sport at all levels will be critical as part of recovery, as highlighted by the Canadian Olympic Committee presentation earlier today. Private sector support of sport is a critical component to supporting recreational opportunities in the province, from club events to the highest level of competition. The impact of COVID-19 will have a direct impact on the community's ability to deliver and host sport and recreation as a result of impacts to businesses that, prior to COVID-19, would typically provide financial or in-kind support.

In closing, we know that there is no direct path to recovery. We appreciate our colleagues across a variety of industry sectors who are working together to provide their best recommendations to the province as part of this open process.

We want to thank this committee for their time today. On behalf of Durham region, we thank each of you and also wish you a happy Canada Day tomorrow.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. Our next presenter is Arts Collective Theatre. Please state your name for the record, and you can get right into your presentation.

Mr. Chris Rabideau: I'm Chris Rabideau from Arts Collective Theatre.

Ms. Moya McAlister: I'm Moya McAlister from Arts Collective Theatre.

Mr. Chris Rabideau: We want to thank you for having us here today and being a voice for Windsor-Essex region.

My name is Chris Rabideau. I'm the artistic director and president of Arts Collective Theatre, also known as ACT, a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the well-being of Windsor-Essex through arts-based practices.

Today I will be presenting with ACT's vice-president and marketing director, Moya McAlister.

ACT's team of artists, educators, mentors, community partners and volunteers creates original social justice theatre performances, produces renowned musical productions, and provides training and performance opportunities for

multi-ethnic artists of all ages. Our board of directors observed that Windsor was lacking in showing the city's diverse population on the stage, and we are proud to say that we are a leader in advocating for our theatre community to acknowledge their flaws, make changes to their programming, and make a conscientious effort to ensure that we are more culturally inclusive.

Ms. Moya McAlister: Unfortunately, this year has been a difficult one for Windsor's performing arts community. COVID-19 has impacted our organization, like so many others within our region. ACT had to cancel its 2020 season, along with many arts organizations and individual artists who depend on ticket revenue to pay rent—including prepaid theatre costs, utilities, insurance, website maintenance, Internet costs, marketing costs, show rights and professional artist fees.

To cancel a show goes against every instinct that artists have ingrained in them. That old adage, "The show must go on," has been wiped away, and it's heartbreaking. Without this income, COVID-19 has left our arts community in a vulnerable state. We are here today to be open and honest with you: Within our thriving arts community, many groups may not survive this pandemic.

On the positive side, this pandemic has pushed our performing arts community to work together. Chris and I currently sit on a newly formed advisory board called the Windsor-Essex Theatre Alliance, also known as WETA. We meet monthly to discuss current struggles and challenges of local artists, arts organizations and venues, and provide a safe place to air fears and give each other much-needed support and encouragement during this time. The group is also thinking ahead to the future by sharing new ideas and recommendations for performing arts development and advancement, branding and marketing, programming and audience development.

1620

Mr. Chris Rabideau: We know the full reopening of theatres will be part of the last phase in Ontario. We understand that this is needed to remain safe and healthy—but we do ask that this help also includes the vitality of our community, especially when it comes to the arts, culture and heritage.

Windsor spends less money on arts funding per capita than most cities in Ontario of the same size. In 2017, Windsor spent 1.05% on arts, heritage and festival grants per capita, and the municipal benchmarking medium was 6.76%. Windsor spent 1.05% on operating costs for arts, heritage and festival grants per capita, and the municipal benchmarking medium result was 9.32%. That's a huge difference. Windsor's impact is furthered by the fact that we are the last group to remain in phase 1, and our border to America still remains closed. Most theatres and public art spaces will not be reopening until 2021. We are calling for action so that we can remain part of the vitality of Windsor-Essex.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Moya McAlister: We need your help. We are in dire need of an increase in funding for the Windsor-Essex region allocated specifically to artists, arts organizations and non-city-run performance venues. We need more

grant and funding opportunities to assist in paying for the needs of our arts community to ensure its survival during COVID-19 and the recovery phases. This virus has unleashed an existential crisis for performing artists and arts organizations. Without the ability to gather together to listen, learn and create, COVID-19 has robbed the arts of the core of our identity.

The Windsor-Essex arts community needs monetary help to stay afloat during this pandemic, adapt programming and content to digital platforms, and prepare for when we can open our doors again—and provide arts experiences in healthy and safe environments. We urge you to help us. We need the arts more now than ever to enrich our emotional world, to educate and reflect on our cultural values and document the experiences that impact our society. Help us keep the Windsor-Essex arts community thriving and help our community stay vibrant and alive. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

We'll start with the questions now. We'll start with the opposition. MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I certainly appreciate all the presentations.

I'm going to focus my questions, initially, on Brandon from the region of Durham. Thanks, Brandon, very much for your presentation and the work that Durham region has been doing with my office and with others across the region in terms of advocacy. Keeping us in the loop has been awesome on the tourism side, economic development, so I thank you for that, and I'm glad to see you here.

To your comment about Canada Day: I know that at Lakeview Park in Oshawa we have—if not the largest outside Ottawa, it's among the largest celebrations. We'll all be missing our neighbours tomorrow.

You listed six supports. What was (4)?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: So (4) was grants for tourism businesses to complete capital infrastructure projects.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. I was typing as fast as I could.

Among the supports that you listed—programs like Digital Main Street that would help some businesses or groups pivot and get online. We've heard the need for a continuation of programs that work like that—of course, investment in infrastructure like broadband. All of these things have that focus on the Internet and connecting people, and that is great. We encourage the government to push, and put their money where their mouth is, literally, on those fronts.

Grants: not more of the debt-deferral options—I take your point. We are hearing that from folks.

Though you said that there's no one path to recovery, what would that transition need to look like? Some people are very concerned about a one-time investment or a hard-stop in terms of the transitions. What would it need to look like across the region, across the sector?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: It's a great question. What we're hearing is different impacts across different stakeholders in the region about the reopening, and the difference between grants and one-time—and obviously there's a lot of money that's being spent to support this. We want

to be mindful of how that money is being spent and how it's creating and generating a meaningful return, and that it's not just money that's going out. I think that takes work. I think that takes collaboration. I think we've seen some financial investments to this point that are really helping on the ground.

To our second point: We know what our stakeholders wanted to hear around the connectedness between local food and agriculture. That's an action that's in place through the Culinary Tourism Alliance and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario in funding amounts that have already been made.

I think the acceleration on infrastructure grants, whether that be within tourism or construction as a whole, is an area of opportunity within the province to start to spur more job and employment activity. Our hotels are looking at new streams that otherwise would have been corporate, so any construction or infrastructure projects that can come online, the addition of people completing these jobs is an opportunity to fast-track money that might have been spent further down the way, that we can speed up now.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Brandon, thank you. Of course, keep my office in the loop and send us more of the specifics for the region.

I know my colleague has a question for someone.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Further questions? MPP Gretzky.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a question for Chris and Moya from the Arts Collective Theatre in Windsor.

Full disclosure: Both of my children went to Walkerville Collegiate Institute. They were both part of the Walkerville Centre for the Creative Arts. For those of you outside of our area, that is a specialized program, integrated within a high school, specifically for students who are interested in the arts, whether that's theatre, music, vocal—you name it. I believe Chris has also been directly linked to that program. I know that many of the students who come out of that program go on to work within our local community theatres.

As was pointed out, community theatre does a lot; it's not just about entertainment, although it can be very entertaining. I should point out that ACT did a performance called *Wherever It Takes You*, which was about the journey of families along the path of Alzheimer's. I know there was a production of *Memphis*, which talks about the importance of, specifically, music produced by Black people and that entering into the Canadian culture, on our side of the water here. So there's a lot of education that can go into theatre, as well.

I think Justin had pointed out as well that there's a lot of money that goes into—there's a great cost to this as far as actors, musicians, set and costume design, sound and light techs—you name it. Some are volunteers; some are paid professionals. The fact is, without these productions happening and these performances happening, it's a hit to our local theatre venues, especially small venues like the Capitol Theatre here in Windsor. It's a hit to our hotels and our restaurants. It's a hit to tourism in general, and it could be a very long time before people are comfortable going

back into venues to take in a theatre production or a concert or that kind of thing.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to either Chris or Moya. Can you talk about what direct funding from the government could go into supporting large theatre productions, professional productions, but also our community-based—and I would say that the people within those are also professionals, really. They put a lot of heart and soul into it. So what kind of direct funding from the province, not through the municipality—what kind of support could come directly from the province to support our arts and culture sector, and more specifically, our community-based?

Ms. Moya McAlister: I think we need assistance, especially when it comes to rent, for those big productions, especially for community theatre. That's one of the biggest expenses that we have. If there is any help with that at all, that would definitely be one of the major areas of our budgets that we could use some assistance with.

Mr. Chris Rabideau: And we need grants, grant money that will go into performing arts.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll have to move to the independent members now. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to all three organizations for coming in and giving excellent presentations and contributing to the conversation.

I'll pick up with the Arts Collective Theatre really quick from the last question, because it's in line with some of the questions I want to ask. First of all, you talked about the importance of rent, and I'm just wondering if you've been able to access the CECRA federal-provincial program, and if not, what has been the barrier to that? If you have, would you need it to be extended beyond its current window?

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Mr. Chris Rabideau: If we're being honest, it scares us, because we know that we have no revenue coming in. We might not have any revenue coming in for two more years. So the thought that we might get \$40,000 or a percentage of that, and maybe forgiven \$10,000, is wonderful, looking at it, but it scares us because that means—what if we don't have money coming in? We still owe \$30,000. Because we work with many people in the non-profit sector, a lot of people don't have money, so we are helping communities, diverse communities. How do we do that if two years from now we owe this money back, and then we have to close? We're not helping anyone then.

If we're being honest—I've heard from other people in the community. They've all told me, "We are scared to death because we're using our own money right now. Any money we have in our treasury is going every month to insurance, rent. Those things are still being paid." They didn't stop the lights going on. Every month it's depleting, so it's very, very scary; I won't lie to you.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Are you able to access Ontario Arts Council funding? If that funding was increased, would that be a way to flow through support?

Ms. Moya McAlister: Yes, it's something that we definitely are still looking into. We were looking into applying for some grants, but a lot of them are project-based. We are looking at the lay of the land on what we can do at the moment. We do pay our artists, so a lot of it is, how can we support a new project and pay someone to manage that project and take it off? You need some start-up costs for that. We're constantly applying for grants, but because they're project-specific, it's very hard to continue paying for things like insurance and rent that we have to have no matter what, when it's specific to one item, one specific region of our programming.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I think that's a chronic problem in the entire non-profit sector.

I'm just going to shift over to Durham really quick. You had also talked about, Brandon, rent relief for local operators. Can you give us a sense of how the program is working, not working, and if it would need to be extended?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: The collective point of extending the rent relief program—but beyond the current terms, as we've experienced with different operators. I think the Arts Collective Theatre really paints the picture perfectly there of how challenging it is.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Brandon Pickard: The fact is that if it doesn't open up in two years, you're not going to have—if somebody goes to a restaurant four times in a year, when this opens up, you're not going to go back for those four times that were missed in 2020 or 2021. So you're starting from scratch and you have a significant amount owing. So it's really about helping these businesses, creative spaces and restaurants survive.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to ask you a bit about culinary tourism. I did a lot of work with the Culinary Tourism Alliance before getting into politics. It seems to me that there are some real opportunities to connect farmers, food makers, but also artists, because we might be able to do some physical distancing live performance on-farm and connect all that. I'm just wondering if that's happening a bit in Durham.

Mr. Brandon Pickard: We're definitely seeing those conversations manifested through events that we've held. We've started a Gates Open event back up, connecting farms, food and the artists. It comes down, really, to developing and building a strong quality of place. I think across Ontario, we're seeing that through advancements in culinary and connecting experiences with purveyors and artists. I think it's a huge opportunity with open spaces. We're seeing some of that creativity already with drive-through asparagus festivals, as an example, or drive-through festivals that are picking up. Absolutely, there's an opportunity to utilize that open space and create the creative communities with more open-space areas.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I can ask Rebecca, but the funding for the culinary tourism work—do you think it's sufficient at this point, or do you think enhanced funding would enable them to do even more?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: We were on a call with Rebecca this morning related to funding that was made available, and I think they've been boosted. The Ontario road map of

local food is still in development, but I think it's a great starting point to connect producers and restaurants in the province. I think they're looking to do some sourcing of local regional tourism funds that can really help bolster it. I think they have ambitions of a \$1.6-million project for the province, so they're about halfway there now.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: One final question on deferrals: It just seems like debt is piling up for a lot of the smaller players. Can you elaborate on that a little bit? You hit on it briefly in your presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thirty seconds.

Mr. Brandon Pickard: We were really in support of the presentation that the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario provided, so we wanted to keep our recommendations brief alongside that and support their full effort that went through consultation and collaboration with our stakeholders. We wanted to sign up for this day, essentially, to connect with a number of—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the government side now. MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: My first question is for Brandon. You touched on a number of different things. I'm going to start with (6), funding for sports organizations that can open responsibly. What kind of funding are you talking about?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: It's starting to have that conversation about making additional funding available. If we look at the impact from COVID-19 on businesses that typically support our local sport organizations, that are sponsors of our ability to attract and host events—we aren't certain what that impact might be; we continue to survey with our sport community as well as business community. But we think there's an opportunity for a shortfall there—not to mention the competitiveness in Canada and internationally on the sport tourism landscape, to have the ability to host some of these events. So a consideration that more funding will be available as we roll through our back-to-play strategy—and that really stems from a vitality and community health and wellness standpoint and then leads into youth sport hosting and tourism opportunities.

Mr. Dave Smith: You mentioned contact tracing. Do you have any concerns about the amount of data that you would be giving up to a government agency through cell-phone contact tracing?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: I absolutely think there's a concern there. But if there's a way to safely—

Mr. Dave Smith: To interrupt you on that: There is no way to safely do it. I come from the software industry. Having been in software for more than 25 years—in order to get that information, I'm going to have to open up your Bluetooth on it and I'm going to need to have access to every piece of Bluetooth devices that come in contact with you. I absolutely cannot determine the distance that you are—depending on the generation of Bluetooth that it is. I could have generation 1 five feet away from me and have the same level of signal as a generation 3 Bluetooth coming through a cement wall. So there's a great deal of information that can be given up that way. I understand that there are a lot of jurisdictions that are already doing it.

Do you have any concerns about any of the information on your cellphone device being given up?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: Yes, it's a valid point. I would defer to the experts on contact tracing. Maybe it's not the best solution amongst everything that we're looking at to safely move forward.

Mr. Dave Smith: It's a significant challenge. And I do not want to undermine that at all; we have to have a form of contact tracing. It's just that it's one of those things that we need to move forward with very, very cautiously.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague MPP Piccini.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: My question is also for Brandon.

Brandon, I appreciate the work the region has done on our weekly touch-base that I've been a part of—as many as I can, certainly—on the work the economic task force is doing, with an eye towards post-COVID-19 recovery.

For the benefit of the committee and everyone, could you discuss the top three measures you'd like to see the government take for economic recovery, that you've developed with the task force in Durham?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Brandon Pickard: Two of the top three were related to recommendations that went forward from TIAO. Support for broadband infrastructure development, which is currently under way through the regional broadband strategy, as well as the integration of local food and local agriculture business, is a way to move forward.

1640

Mr. David Piccini: Brandon, would you go on record here as stating you'd like to see part of that \$1.7 million the federal government invested in broadband front-loaded now to work with the province, to get the money out the door?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: That's probably better suited for a colleague of mine. But I think if we're able to fast-track investment in infrastructure, we would have support within our division to advance that.

Mr. David Piccini: Definitely. I know we want to get broadband infrastructure as fast as we can. We've seen EORN's and SWIFT's proposals, and I spoke to Regional Chair Henry last week about broadband.

Just moving on to agriculture: Specifically, the area I represent, a portion of Clarington, has a proud agricultural tradition. We've seen a lot of innovative use of digital technology to support farming by the side of the road. We've seen our weekend farmers' markets, and I know the website that the Durham region has done has been very user-friendly. With an eye to going forward, how can we help to standardize that, invest in platforms to order online etc. Can you flesh that out a bit more?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: I think we're seeing some of the best practices float to the top within the province. Obviously, every region or jurisdiction is looking to support their members and their businesses as best they can. I think we're getting that with the Shop Local campaigns and government investment into those platforms. I think it hit us in an unexpected fashion, and everybody started running forward to provide—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Brandon Pickard:—those platforms for businesses to go to. I think it's a continuation of learning from this best practice and better ways that we can work together across the province to find some cost-sharing resources and help move forward.

Mr. David Piccini: Thanks very much.

For our next round, my colleague MPP Roberts is going to lead.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go back to the independent members. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would like to direct my next questions to Justin at IATSE. I think you made a really compelling case, as we think about preserving the sector, to keep in mind all the money that flows to hotels, parking, restaurants, everything that you can't replicate digitally—all those extra economic benefits. When you think about the money that's needed to maintain and rebuild the sector, do you have a sense of what that investment is going to look like, so when we do come out of this or come through this, we have all those spinoff economic benefits in our communities?

Mr. Justin Antheunis: No, I don't have an exact number as to what that investment is going to be. It needs to be substantial, because, as was said before, the Stratford Festival is the economy for Stratford, Ontario; the Shaw Festival is the economy for Niagara-on-the-Lake. The amount of stuff that's so reliant on these arts organizations—it's massive, the amount of money that's going to be required to get these up and running again.

We need to have not only sustained funding—currently, arts organizations rely basically on three different levels of funding: private philanthropy, ticket sales and government funding. We know private philanthropy money is drying up because of the effect on the stock market that COVID-19 had. We know ticket sales are drying up. In Toronto alone, TAPA, the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts, has said that already \$500 million has been lost due to lost ticket sales. We need to find ways to supplement that income for these organizations and to help rebuild the confidence in the theatregoer to come back—to come to the theatre, to go to a restaurant, to stay the night in a hotel.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: A few organizations have said there are some ways that maybe we could make charitable giving and tax receipts more generous and some things like that, at least in the short term, to create additional incentives for philanthropy. Do you think that, combined with government funding, can help close the gap?

Mr. Justin Antheunis: It's a very positive way of looking at it right now. But I think whatever needs to be done needs to be done immediately, so that we can get these organizations up and running once it's safe to do so. Like I said before, 18 months from now is a long time for an arts and culture sector worker to be out of work.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Justin Antheunis: They will find work elsewhere, and then we won't have the strength that this sector has been built on over all of these years.

It is a very positive way of looking at it. I think the other idea is that if there are tax credits for producers for empty seats, they could find a way to rebuild the confidence in

the sector—an “If you build it, they will come” kind of idea behind bringing people back to the arts and culture sector.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: How vital is the CERB program right now for a lot of people who can’t work—you can’t open. So how vital is that in supporting workers, and would extending it help those workers bridge this gap?

Mr. Justin Antheunis: Extending it is vital. Some 95% of people who work in the sector are unemployed. The members in Local 58 are mostly employed, so they would be eligible for EI. Actors, musicians and many people who are not unionized are contract workers and independent contractors. Because of that, they aren’t even eligible for EI. If they didn’t have something like CERB, there would be no way that they’d be able to survive through this and weather the storm that we’re facing right now.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: So would you like to see a basic income as a non-bureaucratic approach to providing some support?

Mr. Justin Antheunis: I think that goes without saying. I think the need for basic income is long overdue in this province and in this country.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you. That’s all my questions, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We’ll go back to the government side. MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for Arts Collective Theatre. Thank you so much for your presentation. Although I hail from Ottawa, Windsor is a bit of an adopted second hometown. All of my mom’s side of the family are from Windsor, so I spend a great deal of time down there. I’m looking forward to getting back and getting some Armando’s Pizza, amongst many other things.

We heard earlier today from an art gallery up in Sudbury, and they mentioned that a couple of years back the federal government had a children’s arts tax credit that encouraged families to get their children to participate in arts activities. There was a similar one for sports activities. I was wondering whether your organization had put any thought towards any tax incentives that might be helpful to get families to re-engage with your organization when the time is right and when things are safe to do so.

Mr. Chris Rabideau: That is one of the number one things we get asked with our youth initiatives, actually. Because we’re a non-profit, we don’t get the same access as a charity. If we could extend that to the non-profit world a little bit more, we would be able to offer a lot more incentives to get those people back in the door during summer events, winter and March break events, children’s theatre events. That would be amazing, because they’re always asking, “Can I get my money back for this script I bought or whatever—or my investment?” I would encourage them to [*inaudible*] with their kids to come and try something, because they know they’re going to get some money back on their taxes. That means something to people. They want investment in our communities, so let’s let them invest.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I really appreciate that. I look forward to it. On my next visit to Windsor, I’m going to have to swing by with one of my cousins and have a visit.

Hopefully by then, your doors will be open. Thanks again for that.

Mr. Chris Rabideau: We’d be happy to see you.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: That’s it for me, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Any further questions on the government side? MPP Khanjin.

1650

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to all the presenters. This question is for everyone. I wanted to ask you about your ideas of how you would manage risks in terms of both the employee side and the customer side. Would you have employees tested? In terms of customers—providing them with the necessary sanitizer etc.? What kind of risk management do you have put in place in terms of the health side of things?

Ms. Moya McAlister: We’ve been thinking about smaller productions, smaller casts, and what that could look like—because we’re so used to having a cast of 30-plus, plus musicians, plus all of our volunteers backstage helping. You need an army to put on a big live show. So we’ve been thinking about how we could cut down on some of these big shows. Maybe in 2021, we’re not doing large-scale productions. Maybe we’ve got to bring that down to a smaller size.

We also recently were in a meeting with different venues within the city—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Moya McAlister: —talking about social distancing within the theatre, from some of the seats being blocked out so that there’s more space in between them—and of course, the handing out of masks and so forth. We’re even thinking we could brand the masks with our different shows and different things like that, as well. So we have been thinking about different ways of what it could look like when we are allowed back in to our venues and back to the show.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: We have that PPE-purchasing website now, but would it help to have something like the government do a bulk purchase so that the cost of ordering those goods is lower for you, and then you could just go to a general government website and you have a flat rate for your business?

Ms. Moya McAlister: That would be amazing. Anywhere we can bring down the costs when we get back in to the theatre will be definitely helpful—because that’s it: Right now, we’re more worried about, when we get back in the theatre, what funds we have to even put on a show right now. We need start-up money, so anything that can bring those costs down would definitely be beneficial to us.

Mr. Justin Antheunis: I would just add that the health and safety of our members is key. One of the guiding principles of our union is to make sure that all the workers are safe and everyone can return home safely, and that includes being safe from this COVID-19 virus.

One thing we are working on, and most of our employers are on board, is developing proper back-to-work guidelines for everyone, when it is safe to get back to work. There has been a large buy-in from the theatres in the city of Toronto to reopen safely, and we as IATSE, across

Canada and across North America, have been trying to develop guidelines across the continent so that the reopening for everybody looks similar, so that everyone's on the same playing field when it comes to—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Justin Antheunis:—what people need to do when it comes to reopening.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Brandon and Chris, did you want to add?

Mr. Brandon Pickard: First and foremost, we're in a health crisis, and that trumps—public safety and the safety of our residents is most important. I think we recognize that within the lens. Even some of the planning that we've done with our regional health division—we're limited by the size of gatherings from the province, and we want to make sure we're adhering to those, but having that longer-term look of how we get to recovery. So, first and foremost, risk and people's safety is the number one priority.

Mr. Chris Rabideau: It continues to be a risk. We are all scared because we don't know what's going to happen when we're back. I think one thing that would really help us is, again, if we're going to be doing every other seat or every other two seats, is there some kind of government support that would allow us to—say, “Okay, we get it. Instead of doing 700 seats, you're doing 300 seats, and we're going to help off-cost 100 seats.” That would help us too, because then we could get people out, get them working again. The community is scared. Let's get them back in the seats to say, “We're okay.” It's going to take a transitional period. It's probably about a three-year transitional period, if we're being honest.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to the opposition now for the final round. MPP Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to all the presenters today.

Justin, it's good to see you again. I'll be splitting this time with my colleague MPP West, and I want to start off by sending greetings from MPP Jill Andrew, who couldn't make it to this round of questioning but wanted you to know that she was paying attention.

You're recommending an allocation of \$60 million, doubling the OAC budget, to help live performance survive this period. Can you give us a better picture of how you see funds being allocated to actually give us that result? How do you see it being played out over the next six months, 18 months, and where do you think the highest-priority investments are going to have to be?

Mr. Justin Antheunis: Well, I think that the reason we're advocating for the funding to go through the OAC is because many not-for-profit theatre companies in this province already receive money from the OAC, so this is an easy way to get money out to those grant recipients quickly.

With the ability to double their current grants from the OAC, they'll be able to subsidize some of that lack of ticket money coming to them right now. That's why we think that the OAC is the best way to actually facilitate this and allow for these companies—if there's a way that they can open with 30% capacity, that they are actually going to open, because they know they have this extra money coming in, even though they're going to lose on the ticket

sales. They'll be able to actually open and start employing actors, musicians and stagehands to do this work and then have them contribute back to the economy. It's that cyclical nature. You need to find that funding so that the people who are working in the industry can then contribute better to the overall economy of this province.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Chair, I'll turn it over to Mr. West.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Justin. My questions are for you. One of the things you said early on, and I scribbled it down, was, “We're proud to say the work IATSE members do behind the scenes creates the magic that has made Ontario one of the three entertainment economies in North America.” I want to mention that, because earlier we had a meeting, along with MPP Jill Andrew, and one of the comments you said that has always stuck in my head is that most people don't notice the work that your members do. I want to congratulate you and just thank you for speaking out for all these members who aren't normally noticed, and bringing their attention ahead.

Two key messages, two important messages that I heard were that live performances grow the economy, so not to forget the spinoff jobs—the dining, the hotels, the parking, all that other stuff. The second one was that without temporary support, the sector might never fully recover. I think that's important for us, for all the people in the government, to recognize and listen to how important it is, and that if it doesn't recover, how it will affect those spinoff jobs, not just in places like Sudbury and Toronto, but places someone had mentioned earlier, like Stratford, where it's a more core component of their economy.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Mr. Jamie West: You had your two asks about improving the Ontario Arts Council budget and income support for the workers. I want to focus on the income support for the workers, because this is important for us, as MPPs, to learn from you. It's going to echo the previous questions about deferrals.

When it comes to debt-deferral programs or debt relief, which is the most impactful help for your members, and why?

Mr. Justin Antheunis: I think, again, it's always going to be debt relief, not debt deferral, because we're looking at a long-term recovery process. Eventually, if they're going to need to pay back this debt, they're not going to have the income coming in to even pay the bills, let alone try to make any kind of debt payment. Debt relief, I think, is something that will benefit better for all of our employers, and therefore have a better trickle-down effect for all workers in the sector. Like I said before, the sector is built like a house of cards. If you pulled just one organization out of that house of cards, the whole thing can tumble. What we want to make sure is that the entire sector is strong and vibrant to maximize the recovery time.

Mr. Jamie West: You had mentioned earlier, too, that this is a sector that has recovered from SARS, recovered from the 2009-10 collapse. I want you to have the oppor-

tunity to emphasize how important it is that if the government helps your industry get on their feet, they'll stay on their feet afterwards.

Mr. Justin Antheunis: You can look at the great things that came out of the last SARS pandemic here in Toronto, like the Luminato Festival, which had 15 years of sustained funding—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Mr. Justin Antheunis:—which has just recently expired, and it has actually allowed for the entire sector to grow, to add those extra tourism dollars to Ontario, as well as really allow people to showcase the fantastic work that this sector does.

1700

Like I said before, we're resilient. We've survived all these problems before, but we're also used to working behind the scenes and not bringing any attention to us. Having this kind of robust recovery is essential so that we can go back to where we're comfortable, behind the scenes, and making people smile in the theatres and only getting noticed on the occasional time.

Mr. Jamie West: I only have a few seconds, so I just want to thank you for bringing your members to the front of the scenes and making the importance of this industry more visible. Thanks again, Justin.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): That concludes our time. Thank you to all three presenters. We appreciate your presentations.

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE

MIRACLEWALKER PRODUCTIONS

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll move along to our next presenters for the 5 p.m. slot. First, we have Harbourfront Centre. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Marah Braye: My name is Marah Braye, and I'm the chief executive officer of Harbourfront Centre. Thank you to the committee for inviting me to speak today. I know I also join my colleagues in thanking Minister MacLeod for her leadership through this crisis.

Torontonians and Ontarians have grown up at Harbourfront Centre, a leading international centre for contemporary arts, culture and ideas, operating a 10-acre site on Toronto's central waterfront. We provide year-round programming 52 weeks a year, seven days a week, supporting a broad range of artists and communities. We're committed to diversity and equity in everything we do. The campus includes five theatres, two outdoor concert stages, five working craft and design studios, two large marina facilities, a sailing and paddle boarding business, a summer pond and a winter ice-skating rink, and several restaurants and food and beverage outlets. We are also home to the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery and the Toronto International Festival of Authors, Canada's longest-running literary festival.

Each year, Harbourfront Centre welcomes five million people to our site, with 1.5 million of these visitors en-

gaging in arts, culture, education and recreational activities. More than 70% of our arts activity is offered completely free. Each year, Harbourfront Centre also hires more than 1,000 artists and spends over \$1 million on artists' fees, promoting Ontario and Canadian artists on international and national stages.

Harbourfront Centre is one of Toronto's eight largest arts and cultural institutions, and I was proud to serve with my colleagues on one of Minister MacLeod's advisory panels as part of the big eight. Combined, we are a magnet for seven million visitors each year and employ more than 3,000 Ontarians. We've recently submitted a paper outlining the impact of COVID-19 on the big eight arts and culture institutions. The losses have been significant.

The COVID-19 crisis has hit Harbourfront Centre hard. That said, we believe that the organization will emerge from the crisis as a leader in an exciting recovery on local and global stages.

For the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, patrons, supporters in the community, Harbourfront Centre closed to the public on March 16. We will remain closed until we can safely bring audiences and staff back into our theatres, galleries and buildings. Forced to abandon all activities from April through to at least September, a decrease of \$9 million in revenues is currently forecasted, which is close to 25% of our \$37.4-million operating budget.

We generally employ more than 130 full-time staff and 470 part-time staff and seasonal workers. Of these 470 part-time staff and seasonal workers, the majority—438—are losing all or most of their hours. All remaining full-time staff continue to work from home, utilizing the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. Once the wage subsidy program ends, Harbourfront Centre will likely be forced to further reduce our workforce.

Since March, a number of programs have been cancelled, including March break camp, in addition to our school visits program, until the end of the school year, affecting close to 12,000 students. We also cancelled our summer camps program, which is one of the largest, if not the largest, single-site day camp operations in Canada. Approximately 3,800 children and youth were expected to attend camp.

We cancelled all remaining spring programming, in addition to all 2020 outdoor summer festivals from July 1 through to Labour Day. This also means that 852 artists who would have performed on Harbourfront Centre stages over summer will not have this employment.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Marah Braye: Going forward, we know that large-scale live events, live performances and large crowds will be the last things to resume, so there is a high degree of uncertainty moving into 2021. We cannot predict what summer audiences will look like by then.

Like many organizations, Harbourfront Centre has pivoted to producing online content to stay connected to our community. Tomorrow, as the lead producer of Canada Day celebrations for the city of Toronto, in partnership with TO Live, Harbourfront Centre has curated a live-

streamed music, dance and comedy interactive and creative program for the whole family. This programming has engaged close to 200 Ontario artists.

We've also built harbourfront.live, an online platform that will allow us to bring our audiences all the programming they have come to expect from the centre at home. And commencing this evening, as the world comes to terms with systemic racism and increasing calls for major change at all levels of society, Harbourfront Centre is proud to present Da Mic Is On, amplifying voices that need to be heard in a time when everything is recorded, which is curated and hosted by Ashley McKenzie-Barnes and Trey Anthony. It's a free online series of candid conversations, comedy, spoken word and art, focused on Black experience and what it means to be Black and/or a person of colour in these times.

Harbourfront Centre's annual funding from the Ontario Arts Council is critical to sustaining our programming and our support of artists and community partners. We ask that the government continue to provide supports through the Ministry of Heritage, Tourism, Sport and Culture Industries, to enable arts and culture institutions to continue operating and serving the public through the recovery from this crisis. We ask for increased infrastructure and operating investment to support the increased costs associated with safe environments, so that venues are safe to return to. We ask that performance venues are supported to be well-equipped for digital content capture and sharing, and moving forward we also ask for investment in marketing campaigns as we seek to bring back audiences to live performances and events.

Thank you again to the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. As a leader in the arts and culture sector, I look forward to working with the government to ensure Ontario's recovery and to ensure that cultural institutions emerge from this crisis with renewed focus and engagement with our audiences and people of Ontario. Harbourfront Centre's accessible programming will enable us to be part of the solution and the recovery. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much.

Our next presenter is Miraclewalker Productions. Please state your name for the record, and you have seven minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Anja Sagan: My name is Anja Sagan. I'm from Miraclewalker Productions. Quite in stark contrast to the Power Plant and the Harbourfront Centre, we are a very small, emerging film company. I have some information from my own business, and also from the much smaller-scale businesses that I have associated with and how the impact has been for them with this COVID-19 pandemic.

In my case, as a film production company, obviously filming has stopped because of the lockdown and the social distancing. Galleries have been closed for months, and theatres and other venues like concert halls and whatever else have been shut down. While some efforts have been made to go online with varying degrees of success, for many arts organizations that offer in-person classes and events, it has just simply not been possible. The arts and culture, by their very nature, are social,

collaborative and interactive, and as important and vital as social distancing is, it has had an immense negative impact on the arts and culture.

For my own business, Miraclewalker Productions, as an emerging film company, as any relatively new business, we need exposure and to create films in order to expand and to grow. Right when we were in the midst of—about halfway through—filming a film for an important film festival, we had to shut down production, and the film wasn't able to be completed because of the pandemic. So that has had a very important negative effect on us in terms of our growth.

1710

I'm fortunate in that I have another source of income, but another associate, a person I know—Ann Ivy Male is from the Pixie Blue Studio in Mississauga, and her business is her primary income. Her business was hit hard, and her livelihood was strongly affected. Her studio is a storefront business, where she shows local artists' work. She also teaches art to special-abilities adults and has classes, group creative workshops and things like that, and they all had to be cancelled. She tried to go online, but it really wasn't feasible for her type of work, especially with the special-abilities adults. Her storefront was mandated to close for months, and no sources of income were coming in, so she had to rely on her personal savings. Unfortunately, none of the government assistance programs were useful for her business—she did happen to benefit from the rent relief because her landlord managed to apply.

The Beech Street Theatre Company, managed by Michael Khashmanian: He mentioned that the biggest negative impact on his business—the theatre company has been forced to cancel all of its community programs. It's a community theatre. This year, it would have been providing drama workshops for the Brain Injury Association of Durham Region and Friends of Aphasia. They had to cancel two plays that were scheduled as fundraisers, that they had already sold tickets to. One was a dinner theatre scheduled to be performed in Bowmanville in support of migrant farm workers. Another would have been in the afternoon at a live theatre in Minden in support of the hospital auxiliary there.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes left.

Ms. Anja Sagan: Thank you.

The economic impact on his business is significant. The cancelled shows also mean that the actors and the crew can't get paid. The loss of revenue from the cancelled plays will also have an effect on their future programming, ability to create new plays. It will take some time to train new facilitators for the programs when they do resume. The loss of revenue will likely mean some very tight budgeting when they do return to the stage.

What we are recommending is, if there could be some kind of, especially on the smaller—the larger businesses operate slightly differently, obviously, than the more grassroots ones. While arts and culture are a huge asset to us—it would be really helpful to have more solutions for smaller businesses and smaller companies in order to facilitate their re-emerging back into stage 2 and, ultimately,

into stage 3. Because of all of the impacts that they've had, they haven't got the resources that larger corporations and larger companies do.

Thank you very much for your time and allowing me to make this presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll start with the questions now. This round of questions will start with the government side. MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for Marah from Harbourfront.

Thank you very much for your presentation. I had the chance for the first time this year to really get out and experience Harbourfront. I hail from Ottawa but of course make my way to Toronto quite often for work. Back in February, I skated on the ice rink at Harbourfront and enjoyed a small Ottawa transplant to Harbourfront—I noticed that you guys had a BeaverTails hut set up there, so I enjoyed one of those.

A question for you that we've asked a number of our different deputations, and that's around marketing: What can government do to help organizations like yours to promote the idea of staycations and different things like that, to help encourage people to visit some of these wonderful attractions that we have right here in our backyard when travelling, for example, over the border to the US may not be a possibility right now?

Ms. Marah Braye: One of the things that the group of eight have often spoken about—I've been a member, part of that, since I moved here six years ago, and I think that what would really benefit all of us is having a coordinated effort where we would be able to liaise with whichever organization, be it the tourism authority or be it the ministry, to actually have a coordinated approach to the marketing.

Many cultural institutions share the same sort of offerings in terms of staycations, and I do think—one of the reasons that I moved here was because Toronto and Ontario do have such a vibrant cultural infrastructure, which is really what's so important coming out of the pandemic and into the recovery process, is to really celebrate that.

I think what I would say, largely, is a coordinated effort, so that we're not all doing just our own things, and that there is some sort of larger effort, which actually makes sense and speaks in the language that speaks to those audiences. There does need to be a little bit of tethering, as well. It's not necessarily a one-size-fits-all, and I think the language around a staycation is pretty different to the language around inviting someone to cross the border to come into a city or a country.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I think the idea of a coordinated approach makes a lot of sense.

Do you have any thoughts on incentives that the government might want to look at through the tax system to encourage people to do things like staycations? Is that something that either you guys or the group of eight have been thinking about?

Ms. Marah Braye: I know that the group of eight has been looking at tax incentives in terms of donors and matching sponsorship donations, but not really tax incentives in terms of staycations. Obviously, I think most ideas

need to be explored at this point. I don't think any idea is a bad idea given that the recovery, like the pandemic, will take many shapes and forms.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate your ideas.

Chair, I think my colleague MPP Piccini might have some questions, as well.

Thanks, everyone.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes, MPP Piccini.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the two presenters.

Marah, thank you for your role with the big eight. I've read a number of the reports—and actually supported on the hotel front, with a specific emphasis on our rural folks.

I'll start with you, Marah. Jeremy just mentioned the tax credit and support. If we're to look at the overall marketing recommendations—I know you produced a report to the ministry. Any recommendations you can share here with the committee on where you feel our marketing dollars would be best put with respect to encouraging—I see it twofold—both travel within Ontario and vacationing, and this summer, getting people out and about in Ontario as we gradually continue to reopen the economy? And then, secondly, with an eye to international, when the borders open up again, what do you think that would look like?

Ms. Marah Braye: I hope I've interpreted your question properly, but I think a lot of the messaging that people need is how they're going to feel safe. That's something that we're talking about a lot. One of the things Harbourfront Centre has done is that we have removed all the chairs from our outdoor concert stage, because we can't have concerts for a while, and we've created another patio beside the slip. One of the reasons we did that was because I felt that people will remember, coming out of COVID-19, where they felt safe—because I remember where I felt unsafe, in these past weeks when I've been shopping or when I've been walking past a patio.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Marah Braye: So one of the things that we're doing in terms of the patio that we've just opened in these past few days is making sure that it is best-practice and that people feel that there's a huge distance. A lot of food and beverage outlets, unfortunately, have to halve their capacity to be able to reopen, whereas we were actually in the fortunate/unfortunate position of being able to dedicate a new area.

Safety is a huge message, and I think that a lot of the research that's been done has been on, when will people feel safe to return into a theatre, and when will people feel safe to return to a park? Unfortunately, some people felt safer perhaps sooner than they might have in terms of going back in.

1720

Mr. David Piccini: I have a quick question just on that theme of delineating between those costs that are associated with temporary COVID-19 measures now, and the long-term costs for retrofits you're now going to make as a result of COVID-19 in perpetuity. Have you delineated that cost, and what's the percentage?

Ms. Marah Braye: We're actually still working on those costs. For example, the patio that we're working with at the moment is usually a summer patio only. It falls nicely into an infrastructure project that we were already doing to replace the site. So it was one of the few serendipitous things—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go to the opposition side now. MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Marah and Anja, for being here. I'm going to start with a couple of questions for Marah.

Harbourfront Centre is in my riding. It's an important part of the riding and the cultural life of the city.

Marah, you were mentioning that Toronto has such a vibrant cultural structure and scene here. I've been doing an IT tour of my riding and talking to all these IT companies that are moving here or that have set up shop here. One of the things they say is that they need a city that attracts talent, because they want to be able to attract people. Have you had those kinds of conversations about Harbourfront Centre and the big eight, all the cultural attractions in Toronto, being one of the magnets that draws international workers to Toronto?

Ms. Marah Braye: I'm an example of that in that I'm not originally from—maybe that's the answer. I would also say that there is often a lot of conversation about the fact that a number of cultural workers in the city were not born here and do move here because it is such a vibrant community.

I've been really blessed in terms of being able to work with my colleagues in the group of eight in terms of—we have weekly meetings. We've been extremely transparent with one another in sharing financial information. We have subcommittees that we have set up, so we've really collaborated to get working groups together. I think it's a conversation that we have all the time about attracting talent, but also mentoring local talent, and making sure that we have opportunities.

One of the things that I would say about Harbourfront Centre is that it has been a training ground for many, many arts workers throughout Canada. One of the projects that I'll do one of these days, when I've got time, is work out how they had their start at Harbourfront Centre.

Mr. Chris Glover: In the current situation, we've been talking a lot about, how do we promote Indigenous and Black artists? What role does Harbourfront Centre play in that?

Ms. Marah Braye: Actually, the majority of the programming that, unfortunately, we had to cancel in our summer programs featured a number of Black artists. We were looking at our usual Habari festival, Barbados on the Water and our Island Soul. So that's been very disappointing for all of us. But as you heard before, we're premiering a new series tonight called Da Mic Is On, where we've invited two Black women to curate a program for us over the week or so.

In terms of working with Indigenous artists, we try to include Indigenous artists across our programming year-round. It's been a particular focus, in addition to women

artists and disabled artists. So we really are trying to represent communities and sectors that may not have the representation that they should have.

What I would also say is that multiculturalism is part of Harbourfront Centre's DNA, so the history of programming that we do there—which is another reason why I came, because I was interested in working with artists and colleagues from all over the world.

Mr. Chris Glover: I live up the street from Harbourfront, so I'm there all the time, and I have seen the diversity of the programming there. It's been absolutely spectacular.

I want to ask a quick question of Anja. I'm not sure how much time I have left. You said you had to shut down a production halfway through filming.

Ms. Anja Sagan: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm just thinking about the cost outlay of that. What is your cost outlay? You've got all this money invested in this film that you're not able to complete at this point and so you're not able to generate the revenue from it. Can you give us a bit of a sense of the financial picture?

Ms. Anja Sagan: Because I'm also an indie producer, the cost was not immense, but it was a personal cost. It was in the thousands, but it wasn't in the tens of thousands because it was an emerging production. But it was a lot of hours invested, a lot of volunteer hours, and a lot of things that had a very negative impact. People understood, but—I'm sorry if that's not a good answer.

Mr. Chris Glover: No, that's fine. It's an accurate answer.

The other question that we're asking is, how do we keep the arts and culture community as vibrant as possible through the pandemic? How do we maximize the revenue that is possible, the potential revenue, while still keeping everybody safe? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. Anja Sagan: Finding new ways to have these presentations online would be immensely helpful. One of the people I was referring to was perhaps intimidated and also had a hard time finding ways to fit their work into the online community. Maybe some kind of a development of—even a brainstorming think tank or something like on how they can do it—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Anja Sagan: —because it has really impacted them.

Mr. Chris Glover: So even a digitization forum for arts communities and filmmakers, especially smaller filmmakers—the bigger industrial players will be able to do their own training. Would that be helpful, if the government were to step in and provide some guidance on that?

Ms. Anja Sagan: Promotions would be immensely helpful, if there's some way that we could start to get some kind of promotions. Yes, it would be hugely helpful.

Mr. Chris Glover: That's great. That's something we've heard from organizations over the last few days.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): We'll go to our independent members now. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks to both presenters for your excellent contributions today, providing such useful information.

I'm going to start with Miraclewalker Productions. Anja, I'm trying to get a sense of some of the distinct challenges you face as a small, independent producer versus some of the more established players. Some of the other film companies have talked a lot about the tax credit system and the importance of that system and how we could make it better. I'm just wondering, as a smaller player, are those types of supports available to you? Do they assist you as you move forward?

Ms. Anja Sagan: Thank you very much for that question.

It's more right now in the emerging filmmakers, when you're really starting out, because a lot of your personal income is going into investing in it—it's the way it is—but a tax credit or something like that I don't think would be immediately helpful. If there could be some kind of other facility—maybe a granting body or something like that that would be immensely helpful. Even a rudimentary one would be hugely helpful. I hope that's a—

Mr. Mike Schreiner: No, you've established one of the differences between being a smaller filmmaker versus a more established one.

Are you able to access any of the Ontario Creates, Ontario Arts Council—any of those kinds of grants to support your work?

Ms. Anja Sagan: They're very competitive, unfortunately. There are a lot of people out there in the industry. I have applied—unsuccessfully, as of this moment. Yes, there are grants out there, but I know that, because of whatever is happening, a lot of the funding has been cut. It is what it is. Even if it's a small amount, just to help with some of the costs, it would be hugely helpful.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Do you feel like you have enough guidance in terms of how you can safely reopen? I'm going to ask Harbourfront some questions on this as well, around how we safely reopen. Do you feel like you have the kind of guidance you're going to need when you're able to start production again?

1730

Ms. Anja Sagan: At the moment, I'm still a little bit uncertain. As far as the actual filming goes, with the social distancing and things like that, it definitely would be proving a challenge in terms of proximity with actors and things like that. That might be challenging. It would be helpful to have some specific guidelines on that kind of thing.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Marah, I just wanted to ask you a bit about reopening and what is needed to instill that public confidence that you talked about.

Ms. Marah Braye: I think it goes back to what we were just talking about with guidelines. I think that the guidelines that come from government are very helpful—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Marah Braye: —because the government has access to qualified specialists at all times of the day and can actually provide the right information and the right sources. I know that many institutions, when they were making a decision to close temporarily, were seeking information from those guidelines to make the best decisions.

I think that giving people, giving arts institutions guidelines and parameters—and one of the things that I was saying to the team as we were making decisions was that we have to make the best decision that we can. It won't be a perfect decision, but it will be the best decision that we can make with the information that we have available. So the more information we have available and the better the guidelines, then the better the decisions that we'll make. I have been very grateful to be here in Canada and to see how well it's being dealt with by all three levels.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: So I take it that you feel like you've received sufficient information through the guidelines that you need. Or do you need more sector-specific information?

Ms. Marah Braye: We received good guidelines in terms of closing and knowing when to close, but in terms of reopening, and reopening safely, we need very particular guidelines. If I look across the group of eight, where we have performing arts as well as smaller venues and festivals, we actually all need slightly different information. But the one thing that we do need to know is when we can have people in spaces, how many people can be in the space and how they can work together safely. Similarly, that's for artists, audiences and staff. The parameters around those requirements really, really will shift as the pandemic progresses.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Marah Braye: But also, how do we deal with an echo or a second peak of the disease? Those things are areas that institutions just don't have the general capacity to be able to make decisions about. This is one of the reasons why the group of eight has been meeting weekly—because we have also been sharing information with one another. I know that there is a lot of concern in the performing arts area, sectors of the group of eight where they're trying to know when they can get artists back in spaces together.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: That's really helpful. Has the group of eight—in the absence of clear guidelines at this point from government, have you looked around at best practices from other places around the world?

Ms. Marah Braye: Yes, but I think that you can only do that so much, because the pandemic is very different in every country. For example, if I look at Australia, where I'm from, they appeared to be doing very, very well until yesterday, and then it appears that they're not doing well at all. So I think that you have to have the—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you. We'll go to the opposition side now for their second round. MPP French.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Marah. Thank you, Anja.

I'm going to start with Miraclewalker Productions, of course, hailing from the Durham region. I don't know that you mentioned it in your presentation, but I think you're from Ajax. So when you're talking about those films, I immediately know that many of those folks are telling our stories locally, or our connections, and we're missing out if we don't have those. I know that that's true across the province, when it comes to film.

And of course, festivals: We've got the Durham Region International Film Festival, which is a fledgling film festival. We see festivals like it across communities, all wanting to share and tell their stories and showcase the talent. This is, of course, the sector of sectors, as we had heard earlier.

I really appreciate that you introduced us to some of your colleagues, and other artists and other business people who are struggling in very creative ways. I think that is going to be a challenge for this government and they will have to really work with folks like yourself, like Marah, like the others we've heard from, to make sure that the solutions and the strategies are just as creative as the experienced problem—because for someone who has a storefront and artistically supports adults with special needs, as well as being a studio space, one-size-fits-all isn't going to work with them. So I really hope the government takes to heart that as this path continues, in terms of transition and recovery, it needs to work with all individuals—not to go so long; sorry. I'm a talker.

The marketing, I imagine, would be very interesting for a small business like yours or a large business like Harbourfront Centre. What would you hope to see from the government in terms of that centralized support, be it marketing, be it support on a platform for income transactions, that sort of thing, getting you online. Not all businesses can go online or create adventures. What would the government support have to look like, in terms of those pieces?

Ms. Anja Sagan: In terms of promotion, in terms of that kind of support, the specifics—I'm not really sure. If there's some kind of a centralized hub that would have guidelines and things like that, maybe. As far as the promotions go, to have something—I don't know if there would be some kind of a website or some kind of a service that we could go through to get known. I don't know if that's even doable.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, I think right now with COVID-19, anything is doable. We're in a situation that you maybe have heard is an unusual one, so I think that the way out is going to have to be just as unusual and creative, as I said. I do think that the government needs to take some responsibility, because it's going to be very challenging for smaller businesses—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: —and creative spaces and performers to figure out how to market their wares, whatever it is, whether it's their fashion piece, whether it's their play, whether it's their movie.

The other thing is that we want to ensure that folks get paid. It's fine for you guys to figure out how to put together a film and get it out there; the same as for Harbourfront. You're putting out these productions, be they big or small, but all artists deserve to be paid and paid fairly, so I think the government needs to recognize there also has to be that secure way to collect money, donations and investment.

What would it mean for you and the broader community to be able to continue? What kind of spinoff jobs and whatnot support the film industry in the community?

Ms. Anja Sagan: There's a whole number of them. There's editing, there's the acting; there's also the lighting, the technical, the extras. There are venues that you end up renting, catering. There are a lot of different industries that feed into the film industry that would be benefiting from a thriving—I'm obviously preaching to the choir most likely here, but a thriving film industry definitely has a spillover into a lot of other, different local industries and businesses.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Just so you know, I have advocated with the minister and written a letter for Durham region to also be considered like the GTA, in terms of incentives for production in the area. I'm not successful yet, but maybe you can help me make that push, because—

Ms. Anja Sagan: I'd love to. I would love to contact you, if you wouldn't mind.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would not mind. Have your people call my people.

Ms. Anja Sagan: Yes, and they'll do lunch.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: On Zoom.

Ms. Anja Sagan: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Chair, am I out of time?

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Perfect.

Marah, as I mentioned, getting content out is one thing—you can do a big production and get it out, which is great—but how do you bring the income in? What would you like to see in terms of support for, as I said, the marketing, but also how do we ensure that we have folks sitting at home—how do we get their resources and their support to you?

1740

Ms. Marah Braye: Two of the things I wanted to speak to when you were speaking—one is that we've been really careful and dogged about paying artists and continuing to employ artists where we could; hence, we've given money to 200 artists for tomorrow, for Canada Day, working with those artists. The second thing—and I think this ties into what you're talking about in terms of marketing. I don't know if other people have spoken about it, but I think there's an issue in the arts sector in that, all of a sudden, a sector that doesn't normally have a lot of money to spend on state-of-the-art technology has suddenly gone digital. So you have a whole industry that's suddenly producing online content to varying degrees—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. We'll go to the independent members now for the second round. MPP Schreiner.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Marah, I'm going to ask you to pick up where you left off a little bit there. One of the challenges a number of artists have talked to me about is not only affording the shift to digital but then monetizing it. In some cases, that's been very challenging. I don't know what your experience has been.

Ms. Marah Braye: I think the monetizing is very, very difficult for Harbourfront Centre because more than 70% of our arts programming is free—and that's really something that's core to our belief, the fact that arts should be

accessible for everybody. Monetizing has been less of a focus, but I understand that my colleagues in other areas and institutions are having a lot of trouble monetizing content, particularly at this moment when there is so much that is free online.

It's very difficult to come up with an answer because it seems to be a mystery, as to how we monetize, because it really depends on audiences and whether they actually feel like paying. We're looking at this even with our authors' festival that will be coming up in October, for which we're pivoting to digital. I do think that the digital support—and as I mentioned, one of the recommendations would be hoping that we can get performance venues to be well equipped for digital content capture and sharing. These are concerns that I think are ongoing, as well. Even in a post-COVID-19 world, I think that we'll still have shifted into consuming culture in slightly different ways. Digital is probably an area that needs some particular attention, because it has not been a strength of the not-for-profit sector.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, it's certainly an opportunity, but it's not the silver bullet salvation that I think people would like it to be.

Ms. Marah Braye: No, I would agree. The other thing is, you can't replace a live performance experience. So I think it's helping us all get through COVID-19, but it might not be what we want to be the defining new normal—

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Absolutely. You had mentioned in your—I had written a couple of notes down; it's getting late in the day, so my notes may not be as good as they were this morning. You talked about matching sponsorship donations. Is that something you're looking at government to match to help you weather the storm?

Ms. Marah Braye: I know this is something that the group of eight did talk about, in that we all have slightly different economic models. That would be a help in terms of—it's very clear throughout the world that government investment yields not only philanthropic donations but also corporate sponsorship. When organizations are invested in, when anything is invested in by the government, it is the seal of approval for it, and it does lend it a lot of credibility. When governments set up these programs—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Three minutes.

Ms. Marah Braye: —and they have the capacity to promote them and to communicate them, I do think that it can help the sector in a way that individual donations or sponsorship drives might not in this environment, when a lot of sponsors have been affected as well. In the same way that there are tax incentives being discussed, there probably need to be corporate incentives for sponsorship going forward, given that we're really unsure of what that section of our businesses looks like.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: You mentioned that you're continuing to pay your employees, but the artists, as much as possible—what do you think it is going to take to sustain artists? Extending the CERB program? Looking at things like a basic income? I'm just trying to think of being

creative about how we help individual artists get through to the other side of this pandemic.

Ms. Marah Braye: Obviously, the government programs that have been set up are really helping. The things that probably need to be looked at are where there are glitches, where you can't access money if you're earning more than X number of dollars. I think that those boundaries on some of the programs need to be massaged a little bit, and I know that the government has been responsive to that as well. We don't employ artists on staff, but we commission them through our programming, yes.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's good that you continue to do that, because I think that for a lot of artists, finding any sort of income right now is a huge challenge.

Ms. Marah Braye: Yes. And one of the other things that we're doing—

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): One minute.

Ms. Marah Braye: —is actually making sure that we animate the site, have the Harbourfront site open for summer in all the outdoor areas, so we've commissioned a number of artists to do some visual arts installations. Again, it's getting money into their hands where we can.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thanks for coming to committee today.

That's all, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): I'll go to the government side. MPP Cho.

Mr. Stan Cho: I don't really have a question today, but I have some comments that I'd like to make. I was on the phone with the Minister of Finance just now, and he wanted me to communicate his thanks to all the presenters for their comments and their feedback to the committee. All of your suggestions, your comments, feed into the budget, which we had to push from March until November, but certainly that's not to say that your suggestions and your feedback aren't being listened to now, and they are being acted upon now. We know that November is a bit of time out, but we can hear the volume of concerns out there during these unprecedented times. We're living through history.

So I want to thank you, the presenters now and all who have come, and the members—not just government members, but the members in opposition, and the independent members—and the Clerk and Hansard, for being here during these historic times. We really appreciate your concerns, and you can hear what the volume of the asks is in the passion. I think it's appropriate that we are on the eve of Canada Day here to close out the deputations for the time being, until we resume next week.

I want to share that my parents immigrated to this country nearly 50 years ago with nothing. My dad's first job was selling earthworms as fishing bait, working minimum wage, and he went on to employ 200 people in the greater Toronto area. He's now a senior and retired—at least, he should be retired; he's driving my mom nuts right now. But certainly that's the Canadian dream, isn't it? What I've heard during the deputations so far is that Canadian dream, and we need to preserve that. We need to fight to preserve that Canadian dream, and our government

will do that with your help. Certainly, that's not lost on us, and so I appreciate the feedback you have given us today.

These consultations are going to continue. We know that through the Chair, who has mentioned that the written submissions will be continued to be accepted, so please don't hesitate to offer those opinions, even though our time here has been somewhat short, because the volume of work we need to do to right the economy as we move forward—well, we're going to need all your help. That includes the members opposite. That includes everybody who has given their input so far. Let's fight to preserve that Canadian dream—that you can in this country go from selling earthworms to owning a successful business. Thank you very much.

With that said, to you, Chair, and to everybody: Happy Canada Day.

The Chair (Mr. Amarjot Sandhu): Thank you so much. That concludes our business for our hearings on the culture and heritage sector. Thank you to all the presenters, all the committee members and the committee staff for their assistance.

As a reminder, the deadline to send in a written submission will be 6 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, on July 6.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on July 8, when we'll meet for report-writing on the tourism sector.

Happy Canada Day.

The committee adjourned at 1750.

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Miss Christina Maria Mitas (Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre PC)

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Mr. Guy Bourgouin (Mushkegowuk–James Bay / Mushkegowuk–Baie James ND)

Ms. Jennifer K. French (Oshawa ND)

M^{me} France Gélinas (Nickel Belt ND)

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