

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

E-23

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

E-23

**Standing Committee on  
Estimates**

Ministry of Natural Resources  
and Forestry

Ministry of Heritage, Sport,  
Tourism and Culture Industries

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

Tuesday 17 November 2020

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Richesses  
naturelles et des Forêts

Ministère des Industries du  
patrimoine, du sport, du  
tourisme et de la culture

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature

Mardi 17 novembre 2020

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Chair: Peter Tabuns  
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Peter Tabuns  
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

## COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Tuesday 17 November 2020

Mardi 17 novembre 2020

*The committee met at 0910 in room 151 and by video conference.*

### MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good morning. We're going to resume consideration of vote 2101 of the estimates of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. There's now a total of two hours and 20 minutes for the review of these estimates.

We have a number of members present and, for Hansard, I'm going to identify them as MPP Harris, MPP McKenna, Minister Yakabuski, MPP Bisson, MPP Monteith-Farrell and MPP Gates. I've noted the members participating remotely. Are there any questions before we begin?

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Sorry. My apologies. I do need to note for the record who is here remotely: MPP Cuzzetto, MPP Parsa, MPP Pettapiece and MPP Khanjin.

With that, when the committee last adjourned, the official opposition had just concluded their 20-minute rotation. We will begin today with the government.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Good morning, everybody. It's nice to be back.

Thank you, Minister, as we conclude everything here today with the first time that the Ministry of Natural Resources has been up before estimates in I think almost 15 years. It's certainly exciting to be here. Thank you to everybody from the ministry who is participating online today. I guess we'll just jump right into it here.

I have some questions for you, Minister, in regard to the provincial rabies program. I've had an opportunity as the parliamentary assistant to actually take part in some of the rabies prevention measures that are done here in Ontario. About a year and a half ago, I actually got a chance to get up in a plane with some of our staff and do a rabies bait drop, which is something that is pretty interesting. I would think that most people probably have absolutely no idea what that entails, but there are actually small packets of vaccines that we drop all across the province, mostly in rural areas where animals can come by. They're scented and sweet. They'll come by and eat it and it'll actually inoculate them against the rabies virus. It's pretty neat. Maybe, Minister, you'll have an opportunity to touch some more on that.

But I wanted to ask you a little bit about what we've done over the last few years, since you've been here, in regard to how we're controlling rabies outbreaks. I know that in 2015 our province saw the beginning of what was going to be a large-scale rabies outbreak in many wild animal populations, not just your typical skunks and raccoons. I was hoping maybe you'd be able to describe a little bit what our ministry has done to help alleviate some of those symptoms for those animals.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, Thank you, Mike—MPP Harris—for that question. Yes, we've got a very extensive and, I would say, very efficient and effective rabies program. If you grew up when I grew up, rabies was feared. When I was growing up, your parents would be telling you about contact with animals, and you had to worry about even people's dogs and that kind of thing because we were just in the beginning of a vaccination program for pets at that time, so that you could protect your own pets against being infected with rabies from a wild animal. In those days most dogs actually ran pretty free, especially where I come from; they weren't penned or tethered in any way, so it was a feared thing.

I remember when I was a kid growing up, one of my favourite movies was a movie called—and for the young people, they might not remember, but they should see this movie because it's a great Disney classic—Old Yeller.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Ah, Old Yeller, a quality film.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** It's about a boy and his dog. Eventually this dog, which is so loyal and defends him—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Minister, you're going to ruin the ending for me.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Yes—defended him against boars, against a bear, and then a rabid wolf. While they were dealing with the disposal of a cow, a rabid wolf infected Yeller, and his mother said, "We've got to pen him up," because no wolf, unless it was loco, would come near that fire. So Old Yeller got rabies, and you saw what it would do to your pet.

If you got rabies yourself, you were pretty much euchred. As far as I know, there's only one case in history of a person who was infected with rabies beyond the point of where you could provide the antidote, and survived. When we were kids, if you contracted rabies it was 14 needles, separate needles, in your gut, over a 14-day—it was a trying process just to hope that you would not become infected with rabies. You had to get that earlier on, so if you were bit by what was concerned was a rabid animal, you'd be into that program right away.

Ontario started, as many other places did, an inoculation, or a vaccination, program. Just to give you some details, you're right, in 2016, after 2015—and this had been going on for years before that as well; the drop has been going on for quite some time with respect to foxes, skunks, raccoons. In 2016, we had over 250 known cases of rabies in the province; it dropped to 22 cases by 2019 and only nine to date so far in 2020. So you have to ask yourself, how effective is that? Extremely effective. We work with our community partners to monitor and test the wildlife. We work with First Nations, public health, animal control services and wildlife rehabilitators.

I know that some people will say, “Well, if it's been so successful and we've practically eliminated it, why spend the time and the effort at this point?” Well, there's a very good reason: We don't want it to be going back to 250 or 300 or 500 or even more cases of rabies. I mean, there's a reason why people get a polio vaccine or a measles vaccine today—because we don't want to return to those environments among the human population. We want to do whatever we can to control rabies in the province of Ontario.

Believe it or not, we actually get revenue from this program, too, because we sell many of these airdrop baits to some of our partners—about \$250,000 a year—to other provinces and jurisdictions, by selling rabies vaccine baits. But it's the long-term commitment, so this is not something that's a one-and-done sort of thing. If we get to zero cases of rabies, we're still going to be doing this program because it's shown itself to be effective.

The total cost since 2015 is approximately \$17 million, but if you ask yourself: think of the costs saved, the tragedy of pets that may have contracted rabies, the tragedy of even one human case of rabies, the hospitalizations of those that would be caught early to go through—I'm not exactly sure of the procedure today; I know it's not quite as invasive to deal with it, for someone who does contract rabies, but it is still not something that anybody ever wants to go through. Let's face it. And nobody wants to be living in the fear of, “Will it work for me? It doesn't matter if a thousand people have been cured or have prevented rabies, will I be the one that it doesn't work on?” It's just like every other vaccine, right? Vaccines, it's rare for them to be exactly 100% effective, so you could be that person. So the nerves and the headache that you would go through—not to mention about \$8 million to \$12 million a year in additional expenses in our health care costs in the province of Ontario.

This is a money-saving operation, because if you say \$17 million since 2015, well, subtract another million or \$1,250,000, from the revenue side of it. This program has been tremendously effective to ensure—not only are we protecting people and animals from rabies, but think of the reduction in concern and fear on the part of the population.

**0920**

We also have another—the air drop is for those animals that are out in the wild, so to speak. We actually have another program that is urban-based, where, basically, because the baits are attractive—I guess they taste good; I

haven't tried one—we're manually coaxing and feeding urban raccoons, for example, those baits, because if you walked down the streets of Toronto at night in any of the backstreets, there's a good chance you might see a raccoon or two. You won't see them very often in the daytime, and if you do, that's probably a cause for concern.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I actually had two raccoons that made a home on the scaffolding just outside of my office window for the last almost a year. So they're around.

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** Exactly.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** If I may, Minister, I want to touch—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Did you bait it?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** No, the windows don't open.

I think the other thing, too, just to highlight as well with that program, is the return on investment when it comes to our livestock and our agri-food systems. If you have a rabid fox or something along those lines that maybe is out there on your farm, for example, that could be catastrophic for that farmer to have rabies run through their herds, right?

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** Absolutely. That goes back to Old Yeller: Rose, the cow.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Yes, there you go.

You had a good segue in there, and I didn't want to interrupt you, but I want to talk a little bit about how we're continuing to further this agenda even though, with COVID-19, it's slowed us down a little bit in regard to a lot more people working from home. Of course we have several people joining us from home in their office via Zoom today. How are we still continuing to provide these services and prevent against rabies during the pandemic?

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** I'll probably ask the deputy for more details on that, on the operational side of it.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Deputy Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark. I'll ask Tracey Mill to just explain how we've been undertaking our rabies vaccination control program this summer during COVID. Thank you, Tracey. Over to you.

**Ms. Tracey Mill:** Good morning. Tracey Mill, assistant deputy minister for the provincial services division at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. As the minister referenced, we do a number of different types of rabies baiting and vaccination. It has been deemed a critical service, so we did continue to deliver our program throughout the early stages of the pandemic.

One of the things that we're obviously very mindful of is health and safety, both for our own staff and for the community and public members that we are interacting with as we undertake the baiting program.

As the minister referenced, one of the techniques that we do for vaccination in particularly urban areas where there's a higher density of raccoons—like the member mentioned, outside his window—we have staff that are essentially hand baiting. An example of some of the COVID-related protocols that we undertook this year, in addition to ensuring that our staff were fully equipped with appropriate PPE, was rather than approaching members of the public in their residences to let them know that we were going to be dropping off the bait, we were simply

putting notices on their door so that there was no contact between our staff members and members of the public.

I think probably the other thing that I'll just mention is that our staff, because they are dealing with, as the minister indicated, a very serious virus and disease, are themselves very used to wearing the protective equipment and following the appropriate protocols in terms of hand sanitizing, masks and visors, if that is required.

Similar types of activities were undertaken in terms of the lab work that we were doing to ensure that our staff were safe while they were still able to deliver the critical services of this rabies program. Thank you.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thank you very much, Tracey. I appreciate that.

Minister, was there anything else that you might want to touch on specifically in regard to the rabies program, or do you think that that pretty well sums it up?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, we could talk all day about the success of it and, in some cases, be repetitive, but I think we've pretty much covered it. If anybody has any further questions, we can get them answers.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Sure.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have about six minutes left.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Six minutes left? I'm going to pass it over to MPP McKenna. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** MPP McKenna.

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** I first of all want to say, Minister, you're a wealth of information. Being on estimates and having you here, your knowledge is above and beyond, so thank you so much. I've learned a lot listening to you talk. I want to thank your team and also, you have a heck of a PA in PA Mike Harris. He's done a phenomenal job, going out and doing things. I follow everybody's social media. It is exciting, after 15 years, that first time being here, so thank you again for that.

I'm going to go off in a different direction than the rabies. We've heard about how chronic wasting disease is threatening deer, elk and moose in many areas surrounding Ontario. There was a case in 2018 in Quebec—a deer farm close to the Ontario border—and in all five states bordering Ontario. Can the minister explain, please, what the government is doing to ensure this deadly disease does not enter Ontario?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, MPP McKenna. I appreciate your compliments, too.

CWD: While, like you say, you're going in a different direction—yes and no. Again, it's a disease that threatens the health of a very, very important resource here in the province of Ontario: moose, deer and elk. For those who hunt and harvest, and the tourism operators who survive and have a business as a result of that activity, it's most important.

As you said, all the five states bordering the province of Ontario, and the case on a deer farm in the province of Quebec, have now had cases of chronic wasting disease. Right off the bat, our people—the antennae were beeping like crazy, and we had to do something to do the very best we could to take whatever measures were necessary to keep CWD out of the province of Ontario.

We've begun a very, very extensive monitoring program. It's specific, I think this year, to a few of my wildlife management units in southern Ontario, but everybody is asked to return the head of a deer that they've harvested. I had the great opportunity to be at Trent University last year; not this year. We have a laboratory there, and then we have an outdoor lab as well. Were you with us that day? Man, it was cold that day. Wind was whipping through there.

But anyway, it was just a great example of what we're doing to examine every one that we can to see—because if we have one that is in Ontario and has chronic wasting disease, we've got a much bigger problem, and we'll have to tackle that. We'll have to deal with that. But the reality is—what's the old saying that you always heard? An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. What we've done with CWD is marshalled our forces and focused on prevention.

I'll just go through some of the things. As I said, if it is detected, it's very hard to eliminate it without massive eradication efforts. The last thing we want to see is the massive cull of a deer herd, for example, here in the province of Ontario. We're looking at early detection and best opportunity to fight it if it were to be found. Each year—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have two minutes left.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** How much?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Yes.

Each year during the fall hunt, wildlife research technicians canvass surveillance areas and visit local hunters and hunt camps in high-risk areas, asking them to remove a small amount of tissue from the deer for testing. In addition, hunters who are not approached by technicians are asked to deliver samples to several drop-off locations.

We've been doing surveillance since 2002. Tested over 13,000 white-tailed deer and it has not been detected—touch wood—in any of those samples.

#### 0930

We also passed legislation and updated the Chronic Wasting Disease Prevention and Response Plan in last year's fall economic statement. We're continuing to redouble our efforts—and of course, the finding of that case in Quebec was, as they say, a little too close to home. We're very cognizant of what that can mean, so we've also taken some steps by prohibiting people from importing live, captive cervids into Ontario, and that's deer, moose, elk, from outside of the province, with some exceptions; prohibiting people from moving live cervids from one part of Ontario to another, with some exceptions; expanding the existing prohibition on the use and possession of lures, scents and attractants made from cervid parts to include any purpose beyond hunting—so that any deer attractor, that's the only thing it can be used for—and expanding the prohibition on the import of high-risk parts of cervids hunted in other jurisdictions. These are the proposed measures, next steps, to protect Ontario's wildlife—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, Minister. I'm sorry to say you're out of time.

I'll go to MPP Bisson.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Thank you very much, Chair. I'm not going to take too much time, because I know my colleague from Thunder Bay is eager to ask questions, but a couple of questions I wanted to bring here this morning—because they're questions that have been raised by our constituents, and I'm sure other parts of northern Ontario are the same.

One of them has to do with the moose hunt. As you know, you need to apply in the spring in order to get into the system to get a tag. Unfortunately, a lot of people applied, as they always do, hoping that this COVID crisis would be over and they would be able to congregated with their regular hunting party or go to some outfitters' camp in order to be able to participate in the hunt this year. A lot of people have had to cancel because of COVID-19 and for reasons that we can all understand.

Is there any plan by the ministry in order to allow people to have their licence rebated in the event that they can prove that they weren't able to do their hunting because of being unable to attend due to COVID concerns?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, MPP Bisson, for the question. We have agreed to rebate the licence fees of non-residents, because they can't travel here. A resident can still hunt, and many have. I would have to see the circumstances involved, but there's certainly not a blanket rebate being offered on the moose licence, because we have no way—they may not have been successful, but we do not know that they didn't hunt.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** As a follow-up, if I were to give you a couple of cases that I've got, where people have said, "I've booked a place. I had to cancel" etc., would you be willing to look at that, and is there a possibility there would be a rebate?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** We should take that offline, but I'd have to look at those situations and talk to my staff. But we don't have any plans for a blanket exemption or rebate. I don't believe we've ever had that discussion.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** We've had the discussion, but we've never—

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Yes. You're correct, Minister: We haven't had a discussion about residents. But if you don't mind, I will refer to Tracey Mill, provincial services division ADM, who looks after licensing, to ask if there has been any process to date. Then certainly, we can look into those circumstances for you.

**Ms. Tracey Mill:** Thank you. Tracey Mill, assistant deputy minister of provincial services division. Thank you for the question.

As the minister indicated, we have not contemplated a broad refund for Ontario residents on the basis of what the minister was saying. I'm happy to look at the individual circumstances that the member has identified to consider them. I will say that one of the things that we have done this year, recognizing some of the challenges associated

with the pandemic, is to allow unlimited tag transfers associated with COVID, making it more feasible for hunters who were unable to participate or not willing to participate to transfer the tags. That's a part of the change that we did introduce in recognition of the pandemic.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I'll bring you some examples of constituents.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Sure.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** The second question is one that I don't think—since the early 1990s, and maybe as far back as the late 1980s, the MNR got into the business of developing cottage lots. There are all kinds of lakes and rivers and areas on crown land that lend themselves very well to building cottages. As you know, when you build a cottage, you've got to buy local material. It's not as if you get the material shipped by Amazon; it's bought at your local lumber store, and you would know that from where you were at. When you buy a boat, you buy a Sea-Doo, you buy whatever, it spurs the local economy.

Is the government in any way looking at getting back into doing cottage lake lot assessments in order to get back into the sale of crown land for the purposes of building cottages?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thanks, Gilles, for that question. We're actually having a review of the Public Lands Act and crown land policies, and we'll let you know. But we definitely are looking at some of the options that present themselves to us as the crown, with respect to crown land. That's a fair question that you've raised. We haven't landed on anything as of yet, but we'll certainly let you know when we do.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Can I hear from the deputy? Maybe you can clarify that a bit for me. Is it actually being looked at or is it just maybe?

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Deputy Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark. As the minister said, we are currently doing a review. To date, we have done them on an ad hoc basis. There are certainly developments that have proceeded, like Elliot Lake. We were working with local municipalities in the development of cottage lots on lakes—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That's only been for, like, 20 years.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Yes. Certainly, there are some throughout the province—more of an ad hoc. But as the minister said, we are looking at this more proactively at this point in time.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I'm going to hand it over to my colleague, but I would just say, it is an economic boon if you can get that up and going. It's just something that's driven—oh, I just thought of one thing. The Foleyet area in regard to the spraying of herbicides in order to manage the growth of new forests—and I'm not going to explain what that's all about; you know what it's all about: There are some concerns in that area that there are high levels of cancer rates as a result of where they live, by some of these lakes that have been sprayed nearby. Is the ministry undertaking any kind of a study or any kind of epidemiology study when it comes to the effects of what's happening to people in that area? Because there does appear to be a higher level of cancer.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I'm not sure that we've been apprised of that, Gilles, but certainly we'd look forward to seeing some of that data. The spraying program has been going on for decades to ensure that the regrowth that is necessary in the spruce forests is allowed to happen. Otherwise, it's crowded out by less desirable species—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** What have you got against poplar?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Yeah. Poplar's just not that popular, right?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Exactly. But is there any epidemiology study that's been undertaken?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, I'm trying to answer that. I'm not sure that we would have done anything because that wouldn't be our field of expertise. But I'll turn it over to the deputy to see if we've received anything to that effect.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thank you, Minister. Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark. I will ask our policy division ADM, Craig Brown, to speak about herbicides that are utilized within the ministry for forest management purposes. As far as I'm aware, I don't believe we have anything that we do for studies on health, but he might have some additional information. Craig?

**Mr. Craig Brown:** Yes, I'm Craig Brown, ADM of policy division here at the ministry. Thanks for the question.

The herbicide use in Canada is strictly regulated by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada. Health Canada recently completed a re-evaluation of the herbicide that is used here in Ontario—across the country, actually—glyphosate. The study found that it does not present unacceptable risks to human health or the environment when it's used as directed.

This reaffirmed the current use of glyphosate in forestry, including entry into sprayed areas.

0940

Regarding your concerns about the use of glyphosate near Foleyet, during application, the requirement of the Pesticides Act and regulations under that act and the Crown Forest Sustainability Act are strictly followed to ensure that pesticides are used properly and that public notice is provided.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I understand all of that, but are there any epidemiology studies being done in that area, with the amount of complaints that have been put forward by local citizens?

**Mr. Craig Brown:** Around Foleyet specifically, I can't speak to that.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, MPP Bisson. MPP Gates.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Good morning, everybody.

Niagara is home to many designated wetland areas. We saw our previous conservation authority board, which had many issues, push ideas to develop on wetlands, like biodiversity offsetting. Does the minister believe that this is a solution to increase development on our province's wetlands?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, we have our policies, and we're continuing to work on those policies, Wayne.

As they evolve and develop, when we arrive at policy decisions, the actions will be driven by those policy decisions.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I don't really understand your response. What I'm trying to find out is, do you believe that wetlands should be biodiversity offset? So you have your wetlands, and what they were doing in Niagara—what they've tried to do—was saying, "We're going to move the wetlands from here and put it over here and create a new wetland," so that you can develop. As we know, that doesn't work. So what I'm trying to find out is, do you believe that that is something that we should be doing in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, you're asking me for my personal opinion, and I'm telling you—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'm asking you as the minister; I'm not asking for your personal opinion.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** No, you're asking me my personal opinion. We continually work in the ministry on the development of policy. Our decisions will be based on where that policy lands. We're continuing to work on wetland policy in the ministry and across government. Any actions that would be taken would be driven by those policy decisions that are made.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** The big issue here is it would increase—are you looking to use our wetlands for development? You are doing it already up around Toronto and tried to do it in Niagara.

Something that's equally concerning to the residents of all of Niagara, including some who are represented by the Conservative government: We recently learned, buried in the budget, that the government will eliminate the citizen appointees on our conservation authority boards. As I previously mentioned, we had many issues with our previous conservation authority board. Does the minister believe that citizen appointees should be removed from conservation authority boards like the NPCA's, and if you do, why?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, again, you're asking me for my personal opinion, and we're going to talk about ministry policy. But those boards under conservation authorities would come under the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, not my ministry.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Well, I want to get it on record, because it was buried in the budget, in Bill 229.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Yes, it's an initiative of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, not my ministry. I'm before estimates as the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. If you have a question for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, I encourage you to approach him.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I appreciate your opinion, but I believe that it is about your ministry. I think what I'm trying to find out is—I haven't figured out why it would be buried in the budget. I don't know why we'd be doing that. But we've been very successful in Niagara. Since we've utilized citizen appointees, we've been able to correct some of the wrongs that we're doing. We've been able to stop some of the biodiversity loss. It just looks like

all you're trying to do is open up our wetlands to development and to developers. So I want to highlight that with every chance I can. If you're saying that that's not something that your ministry has any say in, I'll listen to that, but I want to make sure that it's raised at this committee.

As you probably know, we've had an incredible storm in the province of Ontario over the course of the last couple of days. I think I've asked some of this the last time I was here. The Lake Erie shore saw significant damage and flooding from the storm. In the town of Fort Erie, many people have substantial property damage and flooding concerns. What provincial programs are in place to assist municipalities from these types of storms?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we have the—what do we call it? ODRAP, is it now?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Disaster relief.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Yes, disaster mitigation, but that's a program that allows people to apply for funding after the effects of flooding. That's certainly in place.

My riding was a huge recipient of funding under that program both in 2017, under the previous government—it had a different name then—and under our government in 2019. So there is funding available in the event of a flood for people who experience property damage that is not covered by their personal insurance.

Listen, I can tell you, my heart goes out to the people living on the Great Lakes system these days with the water levels they have experienced. Particularly Lake Erie is certainly the worst because of the wave action, and this has been going on for some time. But the water levels are what they are. It's the responsibility of the International Joint Commission to monitor those water levels. I don't think anybody will argue that it's a simple matter to control them, but there are programs available to individuals and municipalities that experience flooding as a result of high water.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Thanks. Very similar, around the lines—I'm going to try and get these in, even though I think I've only got three minutes left. With climate change, we are witnessing stronger and more extreme-weather-related events in the world. What plan does the ministry have in place for damaging weather events in the future along the Great Lakes' shores?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, we've launched Ontario's first-ever provincial climate change impact assessment to evaluate climate change impacts at a provincial scale, as well as to focus analysis at a regional scale that takes into account the unique geographies, economies, municipalities and communities of those regions. Again, this is led by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, not my ministry.

On that other question: We've provided over \$7 million to date to affected individuals, small businesses and not-for-profit organizations. It's an extensive study or assessment that we're undertaking, but for more details I would say you would need to speak to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, because they are the lead on climate change action.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I appreciate the \$7 million, but I think we should have some discussion around, even with your ministry, some of the problems that we're having with the flooding and with high-wind damage are insurance costs, and people can't get insurance. So they have flooding in their homes—as you're probably aware; you probably go through this up north as well—and when you try to get insurance, you can't get insurance for—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Yes, this program is for things that insurance will not cover. If insurance will cover the damage, then you're not eligible for the provincial program, but this is for damage over and above an insurance level, or if you don't have insurance.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I appreciate that. And outside the extreme weather events, we know that some homeowners have been dealing with flooding issues for years in Fort Erie along the Lake Erie shores. Outside federal programs like the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, does the minister offer any programs—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** —thank you—for homeowners experiencing regular flooding issues? I kind of raised that as an offset, as well, on that issue.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** What people can do is they can make changes to their properties to protect against flooding. We've been very clear that we have accelerated, or expedited, the permitting process for people to make those changes to their property. We're not talking about a specific here; I'm talking about in general. But my ministry has been very clear that if someone is making changes to their property to make it more resilient and help to protect more against the impacts of flooding, that we are—I don't know how many permits we have issued in the last couple of years, Deputy, but they would be numerous where people have applied to make those changes to their property, to make that property more resilient to flooding, and we're continuing to do that.

**0950**

We're continuing to recognize that flooding is an annual event somewhere in Ontario every year, but it has the potential be anywhere on a water system in Ontario. So we're working closely with property owners.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** And the other issue I want to raise—and I'm sure you're aware of this by saying that you've had flooding and disasters in your area. Places like Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, which are right on either Lake Ontario or Lake Erie—the municipalities are being hit extremely hard along the shorelines, and I think it's important to realize that municipalities can't carry that cost, particularly with what's going on. I want to make sure I highlight—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry to say, you're out of time. Thank you.

We go to the government: Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Minister, I wanted to talk about something that MPP Bisson highlighted a little bit earlier, and I'm sure this will be of great interest to MPP Monteith-Farrell as well.

I wanted to talk a little bit about moose hunting. I know hunting is something that you and I have enjoyed. It's obviously a time-honoured tradition here in the province. We haven't seen any real substantive changes to the moose management system here in the province for—correct me if I'm wrong, but I think somewhere in the neighbourhood of almost 25 to 30 years. I know that our government has looked at this very proactively and tried to make this process of tag allocation and going out hunting much more clear and concise.

I know personally, going back 10 years ago, we had a group of hunters. We were about nine people and we would get a bull tag almost every year up hunting near Temagami, and then that's just been pared back and pared back to the point where many hunters, including the group that I used to go with, don't even bother going out anymore because it's too expensive and just doesn't make sense.

I know moose hunting in particular contributes about \$250 million to the province's annual GDP. Hunting in total, I think, is about half a billion, \$500 million, and I think a lot of people don't realize that and also the fact that we have a lot of hunters who aren't necessarily from northern Ontario. They might be from Fort Erie or Niagara, and they go up north and they spend a lot of money in the local areas.

I guess my question is, what is our ministry doing to help these hunters and make things more fair? Where are we looking at going over the next couple of years? What's been put in place now so that hopefully over the coming years we're able to see some more adult moose tags be able to be available to hunters here in the province?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Mike, and I will probably at some point turn this over to my ministry staff for some of the details, because I don't pretend to have them all just sitting right on the top of my head all the time.

Very early in our mandate, we recognized that the system in place for moose tag allocation and hunting was not functioning as effectively as it should. There needed to be some changes. One of the things we did was appoint what we call the BGMAC. That's the Big Game Management Advisory Committee, I think is what we called it; the BGMAC, without the "i."

**Mr. Mike Harris:** You're making me hungry.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Without the "i." They toured the province, did a number of consultations across the province. We asked for input. We posted it and we asked for input from all across the province, and we came up with what we believe is a much better system. We're never going to have a system that is perfect, because we're never going to have enough moose to satisfy everybody who would like to harvest a moose. That's the reality. You roll the dice, you take your chances, as they say.

You may be successful. Our oldest boy, Zachary, and his group, they were up hunting this fall and were not fortunate. They did not get a moose. However, they also had a tag back home and were successful when they got back home, locally. But they had no luck up north. Yes, it is a big expense, but it's also kind of an important event for them to participate in that.

So the system where you say you always got a tag and then you weren't getting tags, that was the lament of many people that, by hook or by crook, or whatever you want, "We're not getting the tags. And them guys, they're lucky sons of guns. They're getting tags." So we brought in a system that's points-based—if I say something wrong, I know I'll get corrected. If you're not successful, let's say, you get a point. Those points accumulate then, so those points allow you to have a better chance of getting a tag in subsequent years. Because if it's just strictly a lottery, your numbers can come up or they may never come up.

That was one of the main changes from a fairness point of view, but we had other proposals within the thing where we responded to the public's input. For example, we were going to reduce the size of hunting parties considerably, and at the end of the day, we decided against that because of the fact that this is an activity that can involve grandfathers and grandsons and everything in between, and not everybody is necessarily in the hunt camp at the same time. So we responded to that as well, to recognize that. Originally, we were talking about that you had to be within three kilometres to be considered to be in the party. We changed that and held at five.

We responded to what the people were saying, but the tagging system for 2021—now, this was not in effect for this year, the changes with regards to the allocation. We made a lot of changes. I can't think of them all: tagging for calves, bow seasons for calves, a lot of changes that we think will not only make it fair, but will ensure—which is our number-one priority, Mike. The number-one priority of everything that we're doing is, yes, we want to make it fair, but we want to ensure that when your grandchildren are out, many years from now, that we have a sustainable population. You talked about it. Because the moose population is something that, in certain areas, ebbs and flows. It will be good at one point and then not as good. It does change, but the overall population, we need and want to make sure that we have a healthy moose population, and some of those changes with regards to requiring tags that didn't require tags before are going to help us get there. We believe, absolutely, that down the road, the changes we have made will make moose hunting more sustainable and more fair in the long run.

If there's any further clarification, perhaps, Deputy, I could ask you to—it would probably go to Tracey, I would guess.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thank you, Minister. It's Deputy Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** If I said something wrong, correct me.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Certainly. I'll actually give it over to Craig Brown, our policy division ADM—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Oh, Craig. Okay, sorry.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** If you want to provide some additional information about what measures, what changes have been made—so go ahead, Craig, over to you.

**Mr. Craig Brown:** Hi, Craig Brown, ADM of policy division at the ministry. I apologize for the noise. There's a bit of construction happening outside my window here at Queen's Park.

The minister covered off the changes pretty comprehensively, and we have made a number of changes for 2020 and 2021, the hunting seasons, and they were informed by BGMAC's recommendations. Some of those changes were further restrictions on calf hunting to ensure that more calves have a better chance of reaching adulthood. As the minister said, we are moving from a moose tag draw to a points-based system that will give preference to applicants who have applied but were unsuccessful in getting a tag for the greatest number of years, as well as fee restructuring for licences and tags to make it fairer and more consistent.

**1000**

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Mr. Brown, if I may, was there also a northern preference point that was instituted for hunters in northern Ontario?

**Mr. Craig Brown:** Yes, you're correct, member.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Maybe you could elaborate a little bit more on what that means for hunters in northern Ontario versus some of the hunters who might be coming up from southern Ontario to harvest moose in the north.

**Mr. Craig Brown:** The approach was designed to ensure that people who reside in northern Ontario do have a better chance of securing a tag and can participate in hunts that are closest to their communities in the north, instead of those opportunities passing on to community members from southern Ontario.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It's also my understanding that there was quite a bit of Indigenous consultation that went into the recommendations through the BGMAC committee, obviously, that fed into the ministry. Would anyone be able to maybe touch on some of that consultation as well?

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** I'll leave that with the deputy.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thank you, Craig, could you speak to the Indigenous consultation, please?

**Mr. Craig Brown:** We did engage a number of Indigenous organizations on our proposal. Of course, the approach that we take in the ministry when we are developing policies is we do reach out and connect with Indigenous communities, First Nations and Métis communities, across the province. We did do that in this instance.

This is a significant policy for the ministry, and there was broad interest across the province. We did connect with several communities directly as well as provincial treaty organizations across the province and ensured that their feedback was considered and addressed through the proposal that was developed.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** That's great. Thank you very much. How much time left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have about eight minutes.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Eight minutes. All right.

I'm going to pivot a little bit and go back to the forestry sector. I know that we had a chance to talk about this when we first appeared here at committee, I guess going back almost two weeks ago now, as we had our constituency week last week over Remembrance Day—which was nice, to be able to be home and partake in some of those ceremonies. I know they were a little different this year, but it's always one of my greatest honours as a member of provincial Parliament, even going back to my father's days when he was Premier, being able to attend those ceremonies and to lay a wreath in remembrance of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for us to be gathered around this table here today.

Let's talk about the Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program. I know that being a Home Hardware owner in a previous life, obviously you dealt with lumber quite a bit. We did have a chance to talk about how the forestry industry has impacted your region, Renfrew country and the Ottawa Valley, over the last—I think it's almost 200 years, realistically, when you go back far enough. Obviously, things have changed a little bit since J.R. Booth's days. The way that sawmills run and the way that forests are harvested is not the same as it was back in the 1800s and early 1900s.

I was wondering if you could touch on how your ministry is helping to foster innovation and what this specific piece of the forest sector strategy will mean to forestry workers and folks here in Ontario.

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** Well, thank you, Mike. First, I'll touch a little bit on your opening remarks there about Remembrance Day. It's always a very special time for me and an emotional time, quite frankly. I don't know exactly how many, but because of my age and where my father would be, I'm probably one of very few people who sit in the Legislature today whose father would have actually been a World War II veteran. There just aren't that many, because your parents would have to fit into a pretty tight age category today. I'm sure there are others. But when my father was a member of this Legislature, there were many colleagues of his who were also World War II veterans, quite frankly. There are obviously none today, but that was a pretty common theme and it was a pretty uniting theme for those members at those times. We owe those people, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, an unrepayable debt of gratitude. Thank you for raising that.

On the forest sector changes, one of the things we did was we brought in a new program to help spur innovation. As you know, one of the pillars of our forest sector strategy is fostering innovation, markets and talents. One of the things we recognize that we need to do and that we can do is modernize the operations within the forestry sector. If people are willing to—first of all, we've got to show them that we have confidence in the sector, and our forest sector strategy clearly delineates that because we're talking about future growth in the sector. If you're talking about a sector that you are going to shrink, like the previous government shrunk it dramatically—if you're talking about shrinking a sector, you're not going to spur investment in innovation or otherwise. You're going to be spurring people to say,

“How do I get out of this business so that I have a little bit of something to retire on myself before I lose everything because of government policy that doesn’t support our sector?”

We began with working on that forest sector strategy, and innovation is one of the pillars of it. We brought in what is a new forest sector fund; we used to have the Forestry Growth Fund, and we’ve brought in what we call FSIIP, which is the Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program. I was pleased to be up in Nipissing—it would have been prior to COVID, because we were there live. It would have been probably last—I’m not sure exactly when; maybe last February or this February, February 2020, and we kicked off our FSIIP program, which is designed precisely to do that, to foster that innovation in our sector.

One of the first recipients of funding under that program was in southern Ontario. In fact, the first, Oxford Pallet, is now looking at maintaining over 60 well-paying jobs and at least 20 new jobs and increasing their output by somewhere near 50%, because they’re going to innovate, bring in higher technology systems, which is going to increase their production dramatically. That’s what happens when a sector says, “We now have a government that has our back. We now have a government that supports our sector.”

So, what am I willing to do now? Not me as the minister, but me as a person involved in the sector. Now I’m willing to invest. Do I have a partner? Yes, you do have a partner. We made a loan that can become 50% grant if they meet all their targets over the period of the agreement. They’ve now had to enter into an agreement with MEDJCT, the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, which oversees the program. My ministry is the one that will work with the industry directly, because my ministry knows that industry better than any, as to where we will make those investments—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** —but then the whole funding comes out of the MEDJCT ministry. It’s really something that is going to be completely focused and dovetails exactly with the strategy that we’ve initiated as our forest sector strategy. So there’s not going to be any, “Does this really fit?” No, our strategy makes it fit.

I know you’ve got another question, and I know you’ve only got a few minutes, so go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I wanted to touch just quickly—I know we don’t have a lot of time left, but I think when people think about the forestry industry, they just think northern Ontario and the wild blue yonder. They don’t really understand the impacts that it has on other parts of the province, as well.

I was able to join you at that announcement at Oxford Pallet, which is about only 40 minutes from where I live in Kitchener, and—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** It was a longer drive for me, by the way.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It was a much longer drive for you, that’s for sure. But it’s great to see investments in some of

the tertiary industries around forestry. In Kitchener proper, we have quite a large Columbia Forest Products operation, as well, which is really interesting, and of course there’s a great heritage of cabinetmaking and woodworking. We still need to get those raw materials from northern Ontario, of course, and eastern Ontario, but—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Southern Ontario is where those products actually get used.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** And that’s very true. So I’m glad that you’ve taken that into account and you’re providing some money where the mouth is, so to speak.

I think we’ll wrap up there, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You’re out of time, so that works.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Perfect.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** We’ll go to the official opposition. Ms. Monteith-Farrell, you have about two to two and a half minutes. You may want to introduce a question.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I’ll have all day to think about it, then.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Yes. Excellent.

This is close to home in my riding, so we’re changing gears again. I’ve asked for a briefing on the Hogarth and Caland pits, the former Steep Rock mine site near Atikokan, Ontario. That’s a days-gone-by ecological disaster that the province now has to pay for and maintain, because it has the potential to actually poison an entire watershed. I’d like an update on how much the ministry is investing this year in managing the former site on the Steep Rock mine site.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, you’re just going to have to give me a second, there, MPP Monteith-Farrell.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** You don’t have that memorized? Oh, no.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** No. Unfortunately, it was the one question where I was like, “If she asks that question, I’m not going to know.” But we’re getting there.

I don’t have a number for how much we’ve invested there on here, but we can certainly get that for you. I’m going to pass it to Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark, and she’ll answer it.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thank you for the question. I will first of all ask Amanda Holmes, who’s our CAO, to see if she’s got the updated numbers on hand. If not, we may have to get back to you, but we can tell you basically every year how much we’ve spent in total. We may just have to look it up, but I’ll see if she’s got that on hand. Amanda, would you have the numbers for Steep Rock on hand?

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** I’m just trying to find it. Thank you for the question. I’m just trying to locate the numbers for this fiscal year, but it will take me a minute.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I apologize. We are out of time. We’ll now recess until 3:30 p.m.

*The committee recessed from 1014 to 1537.*

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good afternoon, everyone. We’re going to resume consideration of vote

2101 of the estimates of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

There is now a total of one hour and 17 minutes remaining for the review of these estimates. When the committee recessed this morning, the official opposition had 17 minutes and 21 seconds remaining. With that, I turn it over to MPP Monteith-Farrell.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** This morning when we left off, we were talking about the Steep Rock site. I was wondering if you had any chance to look into that.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I can turn that over to the deputy, MPP Monteith-Farrell.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thanks, Minister. Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark.

We have the numbers, and I'll ask Amanda Holmes, our chief administrative officer, to provide that information.

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** Good afternoon. I'm Amanda Holmes, the assistant deputy minister for the corporate management information division and the chief administrative officer for MNRF.

Yes, we have had the opportunity to look at the question related to the planned expenditure for the current fiscal year. As you know, the former Steep Rock mine is one of the most significant environmental hazards in the province. The Steep Rock mine is a long-term commitment and will remain an ongoing liability, which will require extensive rehabilitation work and monitoring for the foreseeable future.

The Steep Rock mine site is large and complex, stretching across more than 5,200 hectares. There are a number of legacy issues and concerns from mine operations, including abandoned structures; hazards; acid rock drainage in surface water runoff, impacting pit lake water quality; soil and groundwater contamination; and over 80 water-control structures on-site. Ongoing work includes monitoring water quality and terrestrial aquatic ecosystems, conducting studies of the state of soil and vegetation, monitoring maintenance and repair of dams, and securing unstable materials and structures at the site.

The overall objective is to successfully rehabilitate the site to mitigate any potential impacts on human health or the environment. If no action was taken, the open pits would continue to fill with water and overflow back into the natural environment by 2070. The project envisions taking steps to improve water quality before impacting the surrounding environment.

In 2021, the ministry is planning to spend \$2.873 million—almost \$2.9 million. This work for the current fiscal year involves completing dam safety assessments for six dams that are part of the Steep Rock lake system. This work was initiated last fiscal and includes a site inspection and survey of each dam site, a failure mode and effects analysis, detailed structural stability analysis and foundation assessment, and updated emergency preparedness plans. This work will allow the ministry to then move to other required steps, such as pre-feasibility studies, environmental assessment and other design work to either rehabilitate or replace these dams in future years.

In addition, the ministry is continuing studies to determine the remediation plans for the contaminated soils

and groundwater, including pre-feasibility and draft designs as well as pilot scale testing of remediation options. As well, we are continuing this year with mine tailings natural cover research, with a focus on small-scale field trials of vegetation cover on several areas of the site. And there is continued removal of site debris, with a focus on old tires and metal dumps.

Under the adaptive management approach for the site, specific project activities will be adjusted over time as new information becomes available to maximize results at the site.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you. It's great to hear that it's being invested in, because that's a beautiful part of the world, and we would hate to see it poisoned with that mess that was left there.

The next question is about a dam on the Black Sturgeon River. It is called dam 43, and it's a very contentious dam—for years. There wasn't an environmental assessment undertaken when it was under the Ministry of Natural Resources. And then this summer—and this is where I'm teasing out where MECP comes in. I said in my opening remarks that the responsibility when the dam started to fail sort of fell to MECP to do the decision-making about whether that dam would be replaced. Métis Nation is quite interested in having that dam removed, as are some hunter and angler organizations in the area. Their idea, which falls under the Ministry of Natural Resources, is fish habitat. They believe that that requires that dam to be removed so that the walleye—or pickerel, as we call it in our part of the world—are not blocked from spawning the way they were for years. In the Black Bay, which is on Lake Superior, that was a traditional fishing ground where fishing families lived, and their livelihood was in that. That was wiped out when this dam was put in, and so there are a lot of bad feelings about that.

The minister was asked about it and was saying that it was an emergency, that it would cause harm. But how do we mitigate that? If a dam is going to be replaced, how does your ministry—and what money or investment is made into looking at ways of maybe making a dam structure that is there more hospitable to fish habitat and spawning?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, that would be an engineering assessment, MPP Monteith-Farrell. I know the Camp 43 dam on the Black Sturgeon River was deemed to be in need of urgent repairs to avoid failure. Those repairs began in late spring and are nearing completion.

But as to that assessment, determining how that's made, I'm going to pass that to the deputy, because I'm not an engineer and I'm not going to try to be one for the purpose of these hearings. I will pass this to Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thank you, Minister. Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark.

Just so I can clarify what you're looking for: You're looking for what kind of work can be done with the new dam in terms of creating fish habitat?

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Yes, because it was identified and the ministry invested in a large environmental assessment. It was identified in that assessment that this was a hindrance to that fish habitat. My concern is all that work and money was spent, and yet we haven't maybe looked at this as an opportunity.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Right, okay. Thank you. I will pass that over to Jennifer Barton, who is our ADM for our regional operations division, to provide what information she can of what's going on with that project. Certainly, if there's information that we can circle back with you on, we can do that as well.

**Ms. Jennifer Barton:** Thank you, Deputy. It's Jennifer Barton here, assistant deputy minister for regional operations. I appreciate the question from MPP Monteith-Farrell.

Unfortunately, MPP, I'm not sure we have any specific information right here at our fingertips related specifically to the science behind fish and how we handled the Black Sturgeon River dam related to the fish habitat. We could look into that and get back to you, if that's helpful, but unfortunately I don't have anything right here at my fingertips.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Well, it would be good to have if it exists, because this was a significant fishery and is quite significant to the area and, like I said, quite of interest to the Métis Nation that this habitat be re-established. So whatever information you have, I'd appreciate it.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** We will endeavour to get that to you. Our hearings are going to end today, but that doesn't prevent us from providing you with that information post our appearance here.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you.

All right, moving on. We have in schedule 23—oh no, not that one. I don't want to ask. This is the one I want to ask. I have so many. I have to choose, because I'm running out of time.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** A plethora of possibilities.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** I know, and it's so exciting to be here and, like you said, such a rare opportunity.

In the forest strategy for Ontario, it includes a call for investment in Indigenous economic development. I'm interested in seeing how much will the MNRF fund, or increase its funding, to support that goal in the forest strategy.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, if it's not in the forest sector strategy. I wouldn't know the—there are no amounts in the forest sector strategy.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** No, I know.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** That's something that would be an annual budgetary decision and through our multi-year plan. I don't think we'd have what the forecasting is for that amount, but it's a commitment that we have, and we will certainly ensure that we are providing what we need to carry on that exercise with Indigenous groups. But I don't have a—

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** So nowhere in the estimates is there any amount of money addressing trying to meet that goal?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** We could ask Amanda. I'm not sure.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Okay, thank you, Minister. Deputy Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark.

We have funding for various initiatives. Whether it's just tied to this and we can sum it up, I'll have to ask our chief administrative officer and ADM of corporate management information division, Amanda.

Amanda, do you have that information that we're able to summarize that, or is it mixed up in a number of other places? Is it something we can come back to, or provide after, as well?

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** Amanda Holmes, chief administrative officer for MNRF. Thank you, Deputy.

Yes, I think a couple of things: One is that the commitment, or the actions, as it relates to the forest sector strategy and any potential for new initiatives or efforts under that pillar of the forest sector strategy would be something that maybe my colleague Sean Maguire could speak to, in terms of some of the plans. But I think the Minister is quite right that that is currently under our fiscal planning and budgetary process in considering what our 2021-22 allocations and plans would look like.

With respect to anything this fiscal, we do have a number of initiatives, transfer payments and other arrangements that might get to some of what you're looking for, but they are embedded in different lines under different program areas, and so we would have to tease that out. But depending on the interest, that's something we can take back.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you. It would be interesting to see how that is blended into the work of the ministry. I know there are stakeholders who are interested in what that looks like for them, because there's a lot of interest, like you had indicated.

1550

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** We'll endeavour to get that, for sure.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Okay.

I'm happy that this morning my colleague from Kitchener was bringing up the Remembrance Day events. I was chatting with some veterans at Remembrance Day events in Thunder Bay, and we were talking about initiatives for veterans and how they appreciated the break on fishing licences for veterans. Seniors, generally, are happy with the break they get on fees for outdoor activities, but they wanted me to ask if they're going to get a break on their hunting licence as well.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** That's not something that we've actually discussed. Hunting is such a singular thing. It's a tag; it's an allocation.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Well, there are fees involved with applying, though, right?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, if you get a deer licence, you apply for a tag. There's no additional cost if you get a

doe tag. You're in the lottery sort of thing, but the privilege to hunt deer is the same for everybody.

Fishing is a little different. It's an ongoing activity. You might fish 10 times, you might fish 100 times or you might fish 200 times, so it is a little different. That's not something that we've had a discussion on, and I would probably—

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Food for thought.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I would probably say that it's not something that we've considered at this time.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** All right. Thank you.

We mentioned beforehand investments in transfer payments and different types of investments related to the forestry sector. In discussion with stakeholders some folks were asking what the metrics are—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** —that you use at MRF. You were talking about what you use to evaluate return on investment of those transfer—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** You mean under the FSIP program, where we would make a loan or a potential loan that could turn into a partial grant?

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Exactly, yes.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I think I'm going to pass that to the deputy, and she may pass that to those who deal with this on a daily basis. It'll be a better explanation than I could give—

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Thank you, Minister. I'm going to ask Sean Maguire, who's our assistant deputy minister for forest industry division. He knows the program well and can provide some explanation of that.

**Mr. Sean Maguire:** Thank you, Deputy, and thank you for the question. This is Sean Maguire, assistant deputy minister for forest industry division. The metrics vary on return on investment depending on what the investment is. Each time we do a forest sector innovation investment program, a grant or a loan, what we do is we look at the project itself, and then we look at what their plans are and how that's going to benefit Ontario and meet the goals of the program. We then build that into the agreement and the arrangements that we have with the grantee, and then we monitor the agreement and we hold them accountable to do that through the issuance of the money in the program.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** And just to follow up on that: How are people chosen for this type of investment?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** There's an application process, but—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** And with that, I'm sorry to say that you're out of time.

We'll go to the government. Mr. Pettapiece.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Thank you, Chair. It's great to be here today, and thank you, Minister, for being here, and your staff for helping us out with this committee. It's great that your ministry has been called before the committee because, as you say, it's been a lot of years since this ministry has had the opportunity to explain the great work they're doing.

Minister, I'm going to ask you a question about a couple of little animals, and fortunately it's not about dogs. I still get teary-eyed about that dog you were talking about this morning in that movie, so it's not about dogs again.

Minister, the forestry industry is a vital part of Ontario's economy. We've heard from stakeholders and experts that forest pests like the spruce budworm and jack pine budworm place our forests at risk. I wonder, sir, can you tell us about the actions the government has taken to protect Ontario's forests from infestation and destruction by these pests?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, thank you very much, Randy. That's a great question, and that is an integral part of forest management and our forest sector strategy.

When I look at the strategy, I'm reminded that we have 71.1 million hectares of forest in Ontario, of which 27.7 million hectares—just under 28 million hectares—are crown-managed. Of that, we harvest about 0.1 million hectares a year, which is less than one half of 1% of the crown-managed forest in the province, but we lose approximately 1.6 million hectares to fire, insects, diseases and windthrow.

Diseases and insects are a big part of that, so forest pest management—we lose a lot more to fire, insects and pests than we ever come close to harvesting. People think that you're up there and you see the harvest and you see the end products—you want to build a deck; hopefully, you're using good Ontario lumber for that deck, or anything else: studs for your home or anything else. But there's a lot more forest destroyed by pestilence, fire and weather each and every year.

I had the opportunity to fly over—and I think you were with me on that one, Deputy. It was a great opportunity and educational for me. You fly over these vast tracts of land in northern Ontario. I mean, it's just water and trees. You can identify with that very, very well: water and trees, water and trees. Then you see these areas where—we were in a Twin Otter, which is a great, great—one of Canada's best ever—not inventions; we didn't invent the plane. But the building and the engineering of that workhorse, that Twin Otter, is something special.

To be flying over there—and then you see these areas of brown; the colour of the spruce is not green, it's brown. It's very dark green, mostly, but I said, "This is the area where we've been attacked by the jack pine budworm?" It's just amazing, the areas that are attacked by it. One of the challenges is the older those trees get, the more susceptible they are to that pest. So a good harvesting program that harvests trees while they're healthy and robust is important.

But I was absolutely amazed. We were doing a combination of things on that trip, and I was seeing the fires and the damage that was done by fires, but also seeing the areas of the jack pine budworm—because we have a spraying program to try to combat, and I'll talk about that shortly when I actually read this note they've given me. We have a spraying program to combat the pestilence. That's quite extensive; it's not cheap, but it's absolutely necessary, because if we can save those—particularly if it

attacks a forest that is not an aged forest, we can prevent the spread of it and salvage that.

Ontario's forests, as I said repeatedly, contribute over \$15.3 billion to the provincial economy. It's responsible for approximately 147,000 direct and indirect jobs.

**1600**

Pests like spruce budworms and jack pine budworms have the potential to cause large-scale losses in our forests. Those losses would negatively affect many regions in Ontario. In December of last year, 2019, my ministry posted a discussion paper on the Environmental Registry and consulted with First Nations communities, seeking feedback on proposed measures to improve forest pest management in Ontario. In our proposal, we present a foundation for monitoring, research and response to the threat of forest pests. We also invite feedback on measures like risk assessment and communication, so we can ensure that our response to this threat is coordinated, deliberate and effective.

Responsible management and stewardship of our forest resources protects the environment, grows our economy and creates opportunities in our workforce. To fulfill that obligation, our government relies on the scientists and specialists in our various divisions. Those experts help determine how best to protect our forests and the biodiversity within them, how healthy our ecosystems are and what we can do to improve our stewardship of Ontario's natural resources.

Guided by those experts and the input we've invited with our discussion paper, we will be developing a pest management strategy. That strategy will help to equip the ministry to respond rapidly to infestations when necessary and protect Ontario's forest resources for future generations to enjoy.

The crux of that is that it can be a losing battle, but we're kind of taking the idea that we did with forest fires this year, that we're going to be aggressive, proactive and hit these infestations as hard as we can to protect this natural resource. We believe—under our forest sector, we know—that it is sustainable for generations to come, but managing forest pests is a big part of that. We can't ignore the fact that we lose more to that than we do actually harvest in each and every year, so being able to manage that is hugely important.

I hope that answers Randy's question.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that answer. I think that as you were flying over the north and over the province—I think we all notice how big a province it is. Texans always say how big their state is; they have no idea how many Texas we could put in Ontario.

Certainly the job of managing our resources is immense. It's a big, big issue, and it's so important to our economy. Certainly managing anything that can damage our forests and trying to get ahead of it is so important. I can see that the figures you gave about how devastating these insects are to the forests—that's incredible. That's a big part of the forest. The forests are very large. It's great that your ministry has taken a proactive approach on that.

I think you know I'm attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and something we try to do, or our farmers try to do, is to look at the problem and assess what damage could be done, and certainly apply the proper insecticides or pesticides to mitigate the problem before it starts, so I do appreciate your answer to this.

I guess I would like to pass the remaining time on to our next questioner.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, thank you very much. How much time do we have?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have about 10 minutes.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Oh, yeah, that's about right. Okay.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Well, I'm glad there's consensus on this matter.

I'm taking indication that MPP Cuzzetto is the next person. MPP Cuzzetto, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. As you know, I live in a lakefront community here, and—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I've been there.

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** Yes, I know—and I have Lake Ontario to the south and the beautiful Credit River that runs down the middle. As well, I have the Rattray Marsh, Port Credit and Lakeview in my community.

Your ministry is responsible for protecting and the stewardship of Ontario's natural resources, including water, forestry, fishing and animals. Invasive species pose a significant threat to Ontario's biodiversity and recreation activities and tourism. What is your ministry doing to prevent these harmful effects of these unwanted species in our communities?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** That's a great question, Rudy. The Credit River runs through your riding, and I've just got to throw in a little plug there: In Ontario Out of Doors, there's a story that they did with me just asking some questions on what I think of hunting, fishing etc. But there's a great picture—not that I make the great picture, but I'm in the picture holding a big salmon. You were with us there that day, Mike, when we were collecting eggs in the Credit River down in your turf, Rudy. That was quite a day. In fact, the Premier has told me repeatedly it was one of the most enjoyable couple of hours that he's had as Premier, being with us there on the Credit River doing those salmon.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** That's a good call.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** It's a lot of fun. We do some fun things in this ministry. But it also points out—Rudy, we're now talking about invasive species. I've just got to put a plug in for this ministry. When you think about it, we're like the forest: one half of one per cent. We're about one half of one per cent of the entire provincial budget, and you're sitting here seeing the number of different things that are the responsibility of this ministry and the 2,800-some odd people who work for us here, just the impact that this ministry has on people's lives. It's that quiet, unassuming, under-the-radar ministry in so many ways, but the impacts and the way that we're involved, the

things that we do and how they directly involve people's lives I think is a real plug for this ministry, which, by the way, is much older than the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health. When this country and this province were first formed, one of the first ministries was of course the Ministry of Lands, and that is the forebear to the Ministry of Natural Resources. So it's one of the oldest ministries out there. I've very proud to be the minister of this great ministry.

Invasive species: That's a huge issue these days, whether it's invasive species as animals or by plants. We hear this many times. One of the big ones here today, for example, is phragmites, how they're taking over lands across the province. Years ago, some of you might remember when purple loosestrife was taking over. I had a conversation with Sarah Rang at the Invasive Species Centre not that long ago. By the way, we provide a significant amount of money for the Invasive Species Centre, and we just invested more in that recently. So that's where we feel the importance of this. But she was talking about the purple loosestrife and how they found a natural way of combatting it, and they're doing experimenting, for example, on being able to find a natural way of combatting phragmites. If you can do that, we can help to solve a growing—no pun intended, because this stuff does grow—problem across the province of Ontario.

And then we have all kinds of different invasive species. Mike, you would be very familiar with this. One of the reasons we embarked on our new baitfish strategy was to ensure that a species from one area of the province wouldn't be transported and used as bait in another area of the province where it wasn't native, which can upset the ecosystem and the balance of nature. So by ensuring that the baitfish stays at home, so to speak, we prevent that from having an impact in other areas of the province.

One of the newest ones, and I know when I first actually raised this with a couple of members on the other side, they kind of chuckled, and that's wild pigs, because they didn't really see this as being an issue. It's a massive issue in the United States and a big issue in Saskatchewan in particular, wild pigs. Some of them were domesticated and then escaped or were released. If pigs are released, they go back, they become more of what they were before—the tusks, they grow hair. It's quite remarkable, as they evolve. They are extremely resilient, can winter in Ontario, no problem. If they can winter in Saskatchewan, they can certainly winter in Ontario. It's becoming a much, much more prevalent problem here in the province of Ontario. So we're very closely monitoring, and we've asked people to make sure that any time there's a sighting of wild pigs to ensure that we're contacted so that we can take the necessary steps, because once a population establishes itself, it's very difficult to deal with.

**1610**

I know that they found now in other areas, for example—because people have said, “Well, why don't you issue tags and allow people to go hunting wild pigs?” Well, that actually works in the reverse, because they're smart. If a pig or a number of pigs are shot, the pigs

become very nocturnal, very protective, very evasive, and they actually grow and they reproduce more rapidly because they feel that they're threatened. So the only way to deal with them is to eradicate the entire population in the area that they've taken over.

I don't know this 100% for sure, but do you remember a couple of years ago when we had the E. coli outbreak that was traced to the romaine lettuce in farms in California? The intel that I received after that was that that was wild pigs in those fields. They'll get out there—they're extremely smart and extremely difficult to deal with. It was traced back to wild pigs in those lettuce fields.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have two minutes left.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** So this kind of a threat here in Ontario is something that we absolutely have to take seriously.

I've got some notes here; maybe I'll refer to them here—oh, yes, in the US, they cause an estimated \$1.5 billion in damage and control costs every year—\$1.5 billion. If you think about it, our fishing industry is a little over \$2 billion a year. These wild pigs are causing more than a billion and a half dollars' damage in the United States every year, because the damage to crops—I mean, they're pigs. They have ravenous appetites. We've all seen how they behave. The impact that they can have on crops is absolutely catastrophic, so we are on this, watching closely.

Anybody out there who is listening—and we've done some questions in the House. But this is something that requires the vigilance of everybody out there. If they have a wild pig sighting, it's absolutely imperative that they contact their local ministry office to ensure that we are aware that there are wild pigs in the environment, because we've got to deal with them as quickly as possible.

That's just one new invasive species. There are so many more, but I know that Peter is going to tell me very shortly that I am just about out of time. We might get back to some of the questions from MPP Monteith-Farrell that we were unable to answer earlier.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, Minister. There's a total of 40 minutes remaining for the review of these estimates. This time will be split as 12 and a half minutes to the official opposition, 12 and a half minutes to the government and 15 minutes to the independent member, should that member show up. If not, the 15 minutes will be split between the parties.

MPP Monteith-Farrell, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** In the interest of teasing out the relationship between the MNRF and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—it's causing concern in that we're in a transition period. That's one thing that has to be recognized. But the changing of conservation authorities over to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, but keeping the protection of wetlands and flooding and protecting our natural environment within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is problematic in some places. Stakeholders have said that they don't understand it—and

the money involved with that. When we see your budgets go down, is that because it's put there? There's no way of really following that money. There are problems around that.

In this budget bill, Bill 229, schedule 6 was put in there with significant changes to the conservation authorities' role, makeup and governance. In your flood management adviser's report, which the Ministry of Natural Resources paid for, there was reference to conservation authorities. That is something that we find problematic and that stakeholders are finding problematic, because in 1946—that's how far back conservation authorities—that's when they were created because of severe flooding and hurricanes and destruction—there was a realization that they were required to follow watersheds. Municipalities have this area of interest, but we also have unorganized townships that have flood plains and wetlands, so that's why the conservation authority was created.

The ministry, under natural resources or under the MECP, does not pay for very much of conservation authorities. They do regulate them, but it's a small investment. In Thunder Bay, I think it's \$125,000 a year, yet they have science and nine staff and obviously way more than \$125,000.

We have a significant wetland in Durham, Durham Creek wetland. I'm sure your email box is filling up, as is mine and many other MPPs'. Looking at that, what is the role of MNRF? It is a provincially significant wetland and has a designation, but you as minister have the authority to have that reconsidered. So that's where we have a problem. We have a problem in that we need to ensure that wetlands and flood plains are protected from development. How do you reconcile that? How do you reconcile the protection of wetlands, the habitat, the flooding?

In southern Ontario, unfortunately, you folks have used up 70% of your wetlands with development. That's problematic because, with climate change—and that's another issue that we all are interested in, in all departments. As your government has said—I've heard it in the House several times—every department has that. Weather is getting more severe, and we need that protection of people's property, but we also need the wetlands, as they're significant, if you've ever seen the experiments that kids do, filters of toxins that go into our Great Lakes. So how do you do that in your ministry—fulfill that role with this kind of changing legislation?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Judith, for that question. I know you're referring to the Durham Live proposal and Duffins Creek. I can tell you that the MZO, ministerial zoning order, that's been part of that development is a result of the city of Pickering and the region of Durham asking for it. None of that would happen without the request from the municipality.

1620

But let's go back to what you were originally talking about: the infancy of conservation authorities. That's right; they do go back some time, but if you look at the scope of their responsibilities at that time, it was a lot more like what we're actually trying to get them back doing

today, that core mandate of flood management, flood forecasting and talking about the issue of managing water and its impacts. One of the constant refrains of municipalities and elected members of municipal councils across the province of Ontario is the mission creep that has become the mantra of conservation authorities, where they are continually expanding their reach into the municipal decision-making process and actually preventing municipalities from that ability to develop and grow.

A municipality only has one way of raising revenue, and that's through municipal tax assessment. There might be some—the city of Toronto has a few more tools in the tool box, but for the most part, it's property assessment. When you're talking about the population growth forecasts here in the province of Ontario over the next number of years—people have to have a place to live and they have to have a place to go to procure the things that they need as a part of living. That may seem to you to be some kind of a contradiction, but you have to be able to provide the services for the population that's coming. Regardless of what conservation authorities do or not, these are the forecasts of every legitimate group that forecasts what the population growth for the province of Ontario is going to be over the next number of years.

You're constantly in a world of making sure that you can balance the needs of the people with the responsibility to protect the environment. In the case of Durham Live, you should see the video that the town of Pickering has put out, indicating what the requirements for any developer—they're going to set the terms that that developer will have to live with. The city will set those terms and they're going to be quite stringent when it comes to the protection and/or reallocation of wetlands with that development. I think you should have a look at that plan that the region of Durham and Pickering have put forward, because that's a very—

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** But we also have the municipality of Ajax that is opposed to this development. The role of the Ministry of Natural Resources is to protect something that—there are other areas that can be developed. Everybody wants to live on the water—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** It's our role to make sure—

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** That's why we have 70% gone in southern Ontario and why we have significant flooding.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** That's why we have to manage that balance all the time. For example, MPP Gates asked a question about what somebody could do to their waterfront to protect it from flooding. When we give them a permit to do something, they're impacting the environment. But we're doing that because we have to find that balance between allowing them to make those changes to the natural flow of that property, that river or that lake, the natural water levels or whatever—they're making changes to their property, which has an impact on the environment. But we're making that decision because that's part of the balance we have to ensure that people have to protect people and property as well.

We're not leaving; we're here. It's always a matter of making sure that you're finding that sweet spot, that

you're protecting the environment, recognizing the impacts that you can have, but also allowing people to—

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** But when we are allowing development on those areas, and if wetlands are re-designated or their specifications are taken away—that designation came for a reason and it was to protect it, because it was significant to the province. Nothing has changed on that, except that someone wants to develop on that land. As the Ministry of Natural Resources—you're not the ministry of development; you're the Ministry of Natural Resources. How do you not see that this is problematic that you're taking away the ability of conservation authorities to have that kind of arm's-length look at things, rather than—because the watersheds and environments don't go on municipal lines; they cross municipal lines. So I think it's important.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** But a property or a tract of land could be designated, and if another set of eyes looks at it, they may feel two different ways. I mean, you can have 10 people look at something and see 10 different things. The fact that something was designated—I think no matter what side of the equation you're looking at, some people would say, "Well, that should have been this" or "That should have been that."

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** But putting these kinds of changes to the conservation authorities in a budget bill so that there is no chance for public input and a for sort of teasing out—because there are questions. Stakeholders have questions on, if there are orders, how do they fit into the system? How is it assured that that natural environment is actually being protected?

I think that it should have been a bill unto itself so that it could have gone to committee and so that it could have had input from parties that—all those voices that you referred to, Minister. I think that would have been a better approach.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** And that's your political view, and I respect that. I respect that, and that's why sometimes we disagree in that place, in that other part of this building, Judith.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Exactly.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** That's part of the nature of what you and I are engaged in, and I respect that you have a different view on it, so thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Twenty seconds.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Twenty seconds; well, I think that's it.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. That being the case, I will go to the government. MPP Khanjin?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you, Minister Yakabuski. You mentioned a few times during this committee the incredible amount of resources we have in this province that often people may take for granted. Part of those resources, of course, are in the aggregate sector. I was thrilled when you chose to announce the aggregate consultation when you came to Barrie and announced the launch of those consultations. I just wanted to ask you—it's been a while since you held those consultations. I

understand you got a lot of feedback. If you could speak to the feedback you received, but also just exactly how these changes in the Aggregate Resources Act that you've made are going to benefit the rest of our province, especially when we have ambitious goals like creating more rapid transit, creating more affordable housing, creating more jobs, all while protecting our natural resource sector and, of course, our environment. If you could speak a little bit towards that.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, thank you very much, MPP Khanjin. Yes, I was happy to be down in Innisfil when we made those announcements of the changes that we were planning. Aggregate automatically brings out differing opinions from differing sources, but the one thing that no one can argue is that aggregate is absolutely necessary to build just about anything. You can't build a road, you can't build a house, you can't build a school, you can't build a hospital, you can't build anything, essentially, without aggregate.

That's the nub of the matter sometimes, because in order to be able to—as I said, we're talking about 10 million more people in the greater Golden Horseshoe area over the next 20 years. Those people have to live somewhere, and we have to be able to provide not only the housing for those people—plus I know that Judith and her colleagues and, I know, the Chair are always telling us we have to build more affordable housing in places like Toronto and others. Well, we can't build that without aggregate, and we can't build the roads that get there without aggregate.

Aggregate is a finite resource. It is where it is. You can't say, "Oh, aggregate, I want you to be here." The aggregate has been there for millions of years, and it takes millions of years to create it. So when we have an aggregate deposit, we have to ensure that it is set aside, protected—because if you do something over that aggregate deposit, you're not getting that aggregate deposit in subsequent years. So we have zoning. We deal with aggregate by zoning it as aggregate, and then when the projects that we all require are moving ahead, we have to be able to access that aggregate. We have to be able to get it and bring it to where the projects are.

**1630**

Everybody wants aggregate; they just don't want an aggregate operation anywhere near them. That's the challenge. Aggregate is where it is, and in many cases, the aggregate was there long before—well, the aggregate has been there long before any of us were there, but the knowledge of the aggregate and the designation of the aggregate has been there long before there was any population base there, too. When the aggregate is needed to be extracted, it's always a challenge. But we don't have any choice. We need aggregate, we must have aggregate, and we must be able to access it in order to move forward.

As I said, the next 20 years or so is going to see massive growth here in the province of Ontario, but at the same time, we have a responsibility as government to do everything we can to ensure that aggregate is resourced, extracted responsibly. That's what we're doing here in the

Ministry of Natural Resources. My ministry is the one that's responsible for monitoring and policing—if you want to call it that—the aggregate industry, so that when they are extracting the aggregate, they are following the rules and regulations that we lay out for them.

It's not always going to make someone happy, because it's an active process. It is not something that is benign. Extraction and producing of aggregate is an active process. It can be noisy. It can be dusty. But we have limits on both noise and hours of operation, dust levels that must be maintained, so that the public can have a level of comfort. That doesn't mean that someone who is near an aggregate operation is going to be happy about it.

But there are also the people who earn their living as a result of the aggregate industry; not just the industry itself, but everybody who is in those construction companies that are building those roads and building those buildings, whether they're office buildings or hospitals—new hospitals here in the province of Ontario, of which we're doing much of that—new schools in the province of Ontario, of which we're doing much of that. That construction industry provides all of those good jobs. The truckers who move it—so many different things are interconnected. But we have to be able to access that resource.

As I say, I have a number of aggregate operations in my riding. I'm far from the biggest. I know Caledon and Kawartha Lakes are some of the biggest aggregate producers in the province, and so they see the impacts of that even more and more.

The other challenge is, from the point of view of the environment, as we drive things farther and farther away from where the population base is, we're going to have a greater impact on the environment by having to truck that resource farther and farther in order to build these homes and the affordable housing that my colleagues are continuously encouraging us to do more on. That is clearly something that we are seized upon.

We've actually made some changes to the industry. I think I can go through a few of them here. You'll see that we've done things that, again, strike that balance to ensure that we're going to have the resource, we'll be able to build, but it's going to be done responsibly. We've enhanced water study requirements to better define the elevation of the groundwater table, and it must be completed by a qualified water professional.

We're requiring new applicants to identify if the proposed site will be in a wellhead-protected area, and if so, how activities on the site will be managed to ensure alignment with applicable source water protection policies.

We have a more robust application process for existing sites wanting to extract aggregate from below the water table. They have to go through an environmental assessment.

Additional operating requirements related to recyclable aggregates, scrap storage areas and the prevention of flyrock to minimize impacts: These are new changes that we've brought in to help mitigate some of the concerns

that people living in the areas of an aggregate operation might have.

Additional reporting on site rehabilitation for all sites—and one of the things that's in our Aggregate Resources Act is that when an aggregate site is depleted, it must be rehabilitated. There are some tremendous plans. You may have even been in with me, Mike, at a couple of our AMO meetings where some of the communities have come forward with plans for rehabilitation and parks and areas of recreation on former aggregate sites that can be done. One of the requirements under the Aggregate Resources Act is that those sites must be rehabilitated. When the resource is extracted, we've got to bring that back to a natural, natural-looking—it can't be just that you leave and there's the old pit lying there for the next 100 years. No, it has to be rehabilitated. That's another one of the changes.

And we're aligning technical study requirements with land use planning and provincial plan requirements.

The policies contained in the provincial policy statement and provincial plans—i.e., the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Niagara Escarpment Plan—recognize the importance of protecting both aggregate resources and prime agricultural areas for the people of Ontario, because if you can't feed yourself, you won't need the aggregate because you're going to starve. So we've got to protect our farmland too.

Under the provincial plans such as the Greenbelt Plan, where mineral aggregate operations are proposed in prime agricultural areas, an agricultural impact assessment will be required to demonstrate no adverse impacts or that any impacts will be minimized and mitigated where possible. Our regulation requirements will mirror those roles.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** It's important to note that aggregate extraction itself is not considered to be a threat to drinking water quality. Our new regulations include requirements for applicants to identify any activities associated with on-site activities that are threats and to follow applicable source water protection policies.

In addition, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks requires permits to take water, which provides further scrutiny on the aggregate sites to ensure water impacts are avoided.

In striking a balance between supporting continued supply of much-needed aggregate resources, protecting the environment and managing the impacts of aggregate operations in our communities, these priorities are paving the way for a thriving, well-managed and environmentally conscious aggregate sector that will provide benefits for everyone for years to come.

I may pass it back to MPP Khanjin, if she has any further comments.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** MPP Khanjin.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you, Minister. I'm glad you pointed out the facts on how you are protecting environmental resources in the aggregate act. You spoke about recovering quarries and where aggregates come

from, and we have a good example in Halton where they've converted and they're doing a lot of work there with the former quarry. It's certainly an example we could use across the province. I thank you for balancing that need of the economy and the environment when it comes to your file as well, and the aggregate sector.

Chair, do I still have some time?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Twenty seconds.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Okay. Well, then I guess I don't have much time. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you very much. Seeing as we don't have an independent member who could use their allotted 15 minutes, the remaining time will be split as such: seven and a half minutes for the official opposition and seven and a half minutes to the government. With that, Mr. Gates.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate it. I won't use the full seven and a half minutes, but I just wanted to say that I firmly agree with my colleague that attacking the NPCA through the budget, I can tell you without a doubt—and you have some Conservative MPPs that represent in Niagara—all of Niagara is up in arms. We went through absolutely a terrible, terrible situation for a number of years, particularly around biodiversity and our wetlands. So I want to get that out. I think it's a big, big mistake. I think my colleague hit it right on the nail: If you want to have discussion on that, take it out of the bill and bring it in as a different bill so you can have people come and talk about that.

1640

But the one thing I want to ask—and I might have misunderstood, and I know you get upset when I say stuff that's not completely accurate. But I think he said this, and I just wanted to ask you about it. This is why I asked my colleague to get this done. I think you said the "reallocation of wetlands," when it came to the Durham project. Can you explain what that means?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, that would be the reclassification of a property that may have been classified as a provincially significant wetland and there's an application or a request to have it reclassified.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Is that the same as trying to move a wetland? Is that what your reallocation would mean? In other words, you have a wetland that's here, and this is what we had in Niagara—just so I can explain it. This is the problem that we had in Niagara, and it was in Niagara Falls, by the way, my riding. But it took in all of Niagara, because it was done by the NPCA. So you have a wetland that's in Niagara Falls, and what they do is they say, "What we'll do is we'll replace that wetland that had to be in the environment for over 100 years, and we're going to move it over somewhere else and create a wetland." Is that kind of the same thing that you're talking about?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Has that been done, or was it done in the past, or what?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Luckily, we had a lot of environmental people that fought that issue. One of the reasons why we have citizens' groups on the NPCA is for that very

reason. That was one of the reasons why they changed the makeup and it's no longer councillors that were making those decisions. We now have citizens that sit on that board. With the budget, that's what you're doing. You're taking the citizens off that NPCA and replacing them again with politicians rather than people who are more attuned to our environment and wetlands and the importance of wetlands. That's what I'm trying to figure out: if that's what you were saying. That's all.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Aren't politicians accountable? They can be unelected, can't they?

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Pardon?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Politicians can be unelected, so—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** As a matter of fact, and that's a good comment, because 28 out of the 31 were. So that's a great comment. That's why I'm trying to say that this is why it's so important. In Niagara, I'm telling you, there's COVID, there's long-term care and some of those issues. This issue has everybody in Niagara extremely upset. My suggestion to your government—I don't give a lot of suggestions to your government—

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I know you're trying to help.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I'm always trying to help, but this one here, you should take it out of the budget, and if you want to bring it back in a bill and have it at committee and have hearings on it, that's what you should do. Our environment is too important to our kids and our grandkids, and I appreciate your response.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Noted. I will pass that comment on, but it's not part of the bill—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** It's not your pay scale. I get it. I understand that.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Well, it's not even that: It's not my ministry that is—that section of the bill. But we'll certainly pass those comments on.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I appreciate it. Thank you very much, as always.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. MPP Monteith-Farrell?

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** I'm going to just ask some money questions again, and you might not be able to have these numbers or explanations on hand, but maybe something that you can bring back. On vote 2103-1, natural resource management program, on page 70 of the estimates, why is the sustainable resource management total budget of \$282 million projected to be \$24 million less than last year's estimates?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I will definitely pass that on to the deputy. I got the page number. That's about it.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Yes. Thank you, Minister. Deputy Rolf von den Baumen-Clark. I will ask our chief administrative officer, Amanda Holmes, to look up that item and provide an explanation on that number.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** So she's going to provide that in writing?

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** Amanda, can you do that now? Would you have that information at

hand so that you can provide that explanation, or will we need to follow up?

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** Good afternoon. Amanda Holmes, assistant deputy minister, corporate management and information division.

I was just trying to refer specifically—you were saying \$24.1 million lower?

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Yes.

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** Can you repeat the page number on the estimates? Sorry.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Page 70.

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** Okay.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** I don't want to get it wrong for you. I don't think I'll have that at my fingertips.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** All right. Thank you. I'll ask another one and get it into the record, then.

On vote 2103-1 on page 72, explanations for change from 2019-20 estimates, what exactly were the \$13.2 million in service modernization efficiencies?

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** I will pass that on to the deputy as well.

**Ms. Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark:** All right. Thank you for the question. Amanda, do you have that number in front of you, and are you able to provide an explanation for the \$13.2-million service modernization efficiencies?

**Ms. Amanda Holmes:** Yes. Hi, it's Amanda Holmes, assistant deputy minister, corporate management and information division.

This number is made up of a couple of things, actually. Our service modernization efficiencies for the 2019-20 year relate to our TEI exit, so this was the exit initiative, a voluntary exit initiative program that was offered to—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry to say that you're out of time.

We go to the government. MPP Harris.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I know we don't have a whole lot of time left, so I just wanted to quickly touch a little bit more on a couple of things in regard to invasive species. But before we do that, I just wanted to thank everybody from our team at the MNRF and all the staff who have worked very hard over the last little while to put this together. I know the minister probably would like to have a couple of minutes to thank you, as well, so we'll make sure we leave some time for that. It's the first time in 15 years that we've been here, so it's pretty exciting to be able to come forward, have some questions asked and be able to talk a little bit about some of the good things that we're doing within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

I just wanted to go back quickly on a couple of the invasive species things. Obviously, we have the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, and I know that we've continually funded that over the last few years. I was wondering if either you, Minister, or the deputy might be able to provide us with some of the numbers in regard to funding specifically for the Invasive Species Centre. Really, that will be my last question, and then, Minister, whatever time is left on the clock will be yours to do as you please with.

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** Thank you very much, Mike. We do fund the Invasive Species Centre. I think this year we provided \$850,000 to the Invasive Species Centre, and recently we increased that amount. I don't have that off the top of my head, but I know that I did have a conversation with Sarah Rang up at the Invasive Species Centre; they were extremely happy to receive that word. Quite frankly, it goes to a tremendous program, one that is ever-growing in the province of Ontario.

With COVID, one of the things that it reinforces is just how small the world is and how fast something can travel across the world. Well, the same thing is applicable to invasive species because of the trade that takes place between countries that a century ago were not connected in any way, shape or form, quite frankly. Today that trade has shrunk the world tremendously, and species that live in one part of the world and have natural enemies in that part of the world, if they're transported to another part and have no natural enemies—animals just don't attack something because it's something new on the menu. If it's not something that that species sees as prey, it doesn't attack it, so we've had insects that have come to this country that, quite frankly, have no natural predators, because the birds and other things that would eat insects don't bother with that one because it's not on their list. So the work that the Invasive Species Centre does, not just here, but everywhere—it's a challenge everywhere, so we are grateful for the work that they do in providing that.

**1650**

You're also right, MPP Harris, and my PA, and I want to thank you for your work, not only the assistance on estimates but your ongoing work as my parliamentary assistant. COVID has changed a lot of the things that we've done this year or haven't done this year, but, nevertheless, we expect to be back more at that kind of thing and doing the kinds of things throughout the province that make us even better as a ministry.

I also do want to thank the staff of the ministry who have been here throughout the seven and a half hours for your ongoing work. I know the background work that you've done to be prepared for this, to be able to assist not only myself but members of the committee here, is tremendously valued and I want to thank each and every one of you for providing that service. It is absolutely appreciated. It makes these hearings go better. We want to be able to provide information for members of the committee, opposition or otherwise, on the information that they ask for. Anything that has been asked that hasn't been provided to this point will certainly be provided in writing in one form or another.

And I want to thank the members of the committee for participating and the very professional way that you conduct yourselves here. The questioning has been relevant and civil, and I do appreciate that for everybody. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Hon. John Yakubuski:** And I want to thank the Chair for—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Aww, you're good to me, Minister.

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I'm not sure that I heard the gavel come down even once, except for the beginning and the ending of the meetings, so that means that you've done a great job and the members have respected your leadership, Chair. We knew what our boundaries were and we were not going to step outside of them, because we didn't want to hear that gavel. So thank you very much as well, and the staff on the committee as well.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You are good.

With that, colleagues, this concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Standing order 69(b) requires the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. I think everyone has been here, but I'm going to go over the notes nonetheless. I will ask if members are ready to vote, and when it's clear that you are, I'll ask, "All those in favour, please raise your hands." The Clerk will count the raised hands. I will then ask, "All those opposed, please raise your hands." The Clerk will count the raised hands. I will then declare the vote. Unless someone specifically asks for a recorded vote after I've asked whether the members are ready for a vote, the breakdown of the vote will not show up in Hansard.

All of you on Zoom, you can hear me? You're ready to—excellent. Everyone is ready to vote? Good.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** We need to be able to see you to see your hand when you register to vote. If you can turn on your video, MPP Skelly? Well, I think we'll go forward.

Are members ready to vote? Okay. Shall vote 2101, ministry administration program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It is carried.

Shall vote 2103, natural resource management program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It is carried.

Are people ready to vote? Okay. Shall vote 2104, public protection, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It is carried.

Shall vote 2105, land and resources information and information technology cluster program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It is carried.

Shall the 2020-21 estimates of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It is carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2020-21 estimates of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. It is carried.

We will now recess until 5 p.m.

*The committee recessed from 1657 to 1703.*

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE, SPORT,  
TOURISM AND CULTURE INDUSTRIES

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** The committee is about to begin consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries for a total of seven and a half hours.

I'm now required to call vote 3801, which sets the review process in motion. We'll begin with a statement of not more than 30 minutes from the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, followed by a statement of up to 30 minutes by the official opposition, then the minister will have a further 30 minutes for a reply. The remaining time will be apportioned equally among the two parties, with 15 minutes allotted to the independent member at the committee.

I understand, MPP Jill Andrew, that you're with us. Can you identify yourself as MPP Andrew and state that you are in Ontario?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Good afternoon, everyone. This is MPP Jill Andrew, and I'm in Toronto, Ontario.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you very much.

Minister, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you very much, colleagues, for your invitation to speak to the estimates of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

As you know, COVID-19 has hit the sectors aligned with this ministry hard, and given the indeterminate length of time of the pandemic, they will likely have a longer road to recover than most other sectors. While investments we make through the ministry paint one picture, we are responsible for a double bottom line, so our social imprint, combined with our spending, illustrates the entire picture. It's never been more important to demonstrate this than now, with so much at stake.

I'm joined today by my deputy minister, Nancy Matthews, as well as numerous associate deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers who execute on the decisions of the government and whom I'm proud to work alongside. If I may, before I begin, Chair and colleagues, on behalf of all of the partners across Ontario in each of our sectors, I would like to thank the public servants who have guided the ministry through this tumultuous time. With emergency measures and restrictions targeting much of the sectors that we support, this small but strong team has worked tirelessly to support our partners, and I want to express my gratitude and my pride to them.

Today, I will lay out my remarks in the following manner: where we were, where we are and where we're going.

As you are all aware, the estimates this year are just that. A global pandemic has forced all of government to shift its focus from day-to-day operations to responding to a full-blown health crisis, economic crisis and a crisis for society as a whole. Before I begin with planning and spending during the pandemic, let me start with where we were.

Prior to COVID-19, this ministry saw six ministers from two different political parties in a short period of time. The political instability, in my opinion, diminished the true strength of the ministry, making it easy to overlook the potential and possibilities that could be delivered upon throughout all of the programs, policies and agencies across the ministry.

Consider this: Through sport, festivals, events and our volunteer and not-for-profit initiatives, the ministry represents the largest volunteer sector in the country. We recognize them in many ways, too, from the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards to the prestigious Order of Ontario.

Every dollar we invest into a festival or event yields a \$21 value in return on investment for the host community. Think about Hamilton's Supercrawl, Windsor's Bluesfest and Ottawa's Jazz Festival. They are as much about good business sense for this government as they are about good music.

Through our investments in sport and culture, we have supported athletes to top podiums, musical acts to top charts, and our film and television productions have topped ratings—not just in Canada but around the world at the Olympics, at the Emmys and on billboards. Think Rosie MacLennan, Schitt's Creek and Shawn Mendes.

Through our 18 agencies and attractions, we are in every single community across Ontario. From the shoreline of the St. Lawrence to the underground mines of Sudbury to the majestic falls of Niagara, we are responsible for the places that mean so much to so many Ontarians and to those who choose, in safer times, to visit Ontario as their preferred tourism destination. The crown jewels are literally stored at the Royal Ontario Museum, Science North, and in the incredible galleries at the AGO and McMichael.

Where we were required leadership and bold action to better integrate these soft and hard assets in a coordinated manner to maximize the potential of each of the sectors represented and their complementary parts. Think of it this way: A major sporting event is also a tourism opportunity where culture, mostly through live music, is on display. Three different parts of the ministry seamlessly working together in the community deserved a more integrated approach by their Ontario government.

Consider it another way: Tourism generated \$36 billion, heritage and culture \$26 billion, and sport and recreation just over \$12 billion in 2019. Together, that represents \$75 billion in economic activity while at the same time contributing to a sense of community, a pride of people, a pride of place. All told, this economic imprint is larger than the forestry, mining and agriculture sectors put together in Ontario and larger than the gross domestic product of Manitoba, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in every town, village and city in Ontario, making us love where we work, where we live and where we play. That's why the ministry, under Premier Ford, was re-branded to heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries: to better reflect the dual mandate of the ministry and its commitment to the double bottom line.

Pre-pandemic, work began to not only protect our investments, but to deliver on a value-for-dollar approach that clearly demonstrated balancing economic development with enhancing our cultural fabric.

#### 1710

The printed estimates that you're reviewing were delivered this past May. It shows the ministry's \$1.65-billion budget includes:

- a \$24.7-million allocation to ministry administration;
- a \$61.1-million investment into sport, recreation and community programs;
- \$101.7 million to tourism and culture capital programs;
- heritage, tourism and culture programs received \$94.8 million;
- Ontario Trillium Foundation program is estimated at \$103.5 million;
- Ontario cultural media tax credits take up the bulk of our ministry's budget at \$704.3 million; and
- our agency programs run at about \$240.3 million.

Ninety-three per cent of the ministry's budget is made up of transfer payments. That's about \$1.28 billion. Overall, the ministry's combined operating and capital consolidated allocation has increased by \$151 million, from \$1.5 billion in 2019-20 to \$1.65 billion in 2020-21, but that's just part of the overall story.

As part of our mandate, the ministry funds 250 festivals a year, 176 heritage organizations, 376 public libraries, 166 community museums and 12 cultural heritage organizations. Our mandate also includes support for the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, the new Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund, the Ontario Music Investment Fund, and a multitude of provincial sport organizations, including 66 PSOs, 112 after-school program providers, as well as Indigenous Sport and Wellness Ontario.

In early January of 2020, the ministry began planning, at my request, for the pandemic, understanding that the programs we deliver and support would be threatened. We began to review lessons learned from SARS, both through government reports and first-hand experience from ministers who served at the time. We monitored the impacts of COVID-19 and how they were dealing in other jurisdictions that had entered the first wave before we did. We also had our 18 agencies and attractions begin to meet regularly on how they could best collaborate. I appointed 14 ministerial advisory committees to receive real-time advice on how to stabilize, recover and rebuild the sectors. Since then, I've had over 12 telephone town halls with thousands of stakeholders and toured the province safely over 11 weeks this past summer.

So, where are we now? As a result of the pandemic, we are tracking at least \$22 billion of losses, and growing, of economic activity in these sectors alone. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, in the early days of the pandemic four of the hardest-hit sectors are aligned with this ministry: They're ground transportation and sightseeing tours, air transportation, accommodations and food services, and arts, recreation and entertainment. It has become clear to

me that the sectors my ministry represents were hit first, they were hit hardest and they will take the longest to recover.

Consider this figure alone: We estimate that, among the first jobs lost when the pandemic hit in March, 350,000 of the 400,000 jobs that were lost in Ontario came from our sectors. We were the canary in the coal mine during what I refer to as the triple threat: the public health crisis; the economic crisis that quickly followed; and the social crisis that will impact our recovery, due to the reality of social distancing, the inability to mass gather and the likelihood of fear and stigma of a return to dining in, attending a festival or watching your favourite hockey team, for the near to medium term, in your local arena.

Some early examples of how this triple threat has impacted our sectors:

Toronto's eight largest arts and culture organizations estimate, collectively, they will lose at least \$90 million in revenues. Film and television saw about \$700 million in direct production spending loss, and animation, VFX and post-production studios estimate a loss of \$160 million. Book publishers estimate losing \$6 million in revenues. The ministry's 18 agencies and attractions estimate revenue projections this year are below where they were forecasted by at least 52%.

In October, Restaurants Canada estimated sales losses of as much as 80% for full-service restaurants and more than 40% for quick-service restaurants would be lost. Tens of thousands of jobs were lost across the province in the food services sector, including what they estimate at 12,000 in the city of Ottawa, 33,000 in the city of Toronto and 14,900 in Peel region.

Porter Airlines remains grounded until at least February. Meanwhile, we expect that Canadian airlines will see a drop in at least 43% of their revenues. Overall, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario estimates 69% of tourism businesses have seen a decrease in revenues, and Destination Canada estimates that this is about 200,000 jobs. They also estimate that Ontario will experience the largest spending losses in the country in tourism, at \$13.7 billion, if the virus is contained. Those projections are far more stark if it is not, with a worst-case scenario of Ontario tourism losing \$23.5 billion in 2020.

Still, the continuing impact of the triple threat has yet to be fully experienced. The pandemic struck on the cusp of a busy summer season that is responsible for nearly 40% of visitor spending in Ontario. The depth and length of this crisis far exceeds any previous economic downturn, with current estimates suggesting it may be 2024 before tourism spending will recover to 2019 levels. This is devastating, and it will require all hands on deck for us to collectively navigate this storm and turn the ship around.

I said in the summer that this is what keeps me up at night and it's what gets me up in the morning, which is why we took the following measures within my ministry with the existing \$1.65-billion allocation. Immediately, we flowed \$9.7 million to more than 250 festivals and events through Celebrate Ontario for sunk and eligible costs. We invested \$9 million through the new Reconnect

Festival and Event Program to move programming online and through drive-in and drive-through entertainment. We launched the new Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund and tripled our investment to \$1.5 million. Through Destination Ontario, an agency of the ministry, we are providing \$14 million to fund hyperlocal marketing campaigns.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation recalibrated its grant-making programs for 2021 to launch the \$83-million Resilient Communities Fund to help rebuild and reposition the non-profit sector. The Ontario Arts Council launched a new \$1.6-million arts response initiative for 2020-21 to rebuild the arts sector in the wake of COVID-19. We modernized the \$7-million Ontario Music Investment Fund to focus on projects that deliver the biggest return to the province, with a greater emphasis on emerging artists and creating opportunities for them to achieve success. We invested \$150,000 to match the music community's contributions for MusicTogether.ca, and created Ontario Live, a virtual hub for all things heritage, sport, tourism and culture in Ontario.

We streamlined our Ontario cultural tax credits through Ontario Creates, and we flowed \$28 million through programs like Quest for Gold, the Ontario Amateur Sport Fund and sport hosting events. Close to \$20 million is being invested into community recreation programming, including Ontario's After School Program, Variety Village and Indigenous programming, to support a safe return to recreation and physical activities.

We announced changes for takeout and delivery of alcohol with food for our ailing restaurants. We invested \$200,000 to continue important work on concussion awareness in the name of Rowan Stringer. We flowed our allocation for community museums, public libraries and heritage organizations immediately, despite closures and modified operations. We are bringing in civil liability for our Ontario sports and not-for-profit sectors.

Now, as a result of the 2020 budget, the following additional \$325 million in commitments were made to support the sectors the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries is responsible for. As of last week, the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries will invest an additional \$100 million over the next two years for the Community Building Fund, to be administered by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to support community tourism, cultural, and sport and recreation organizations which are experiencing significant financial pressures due to the pandemic. We have announced one-time funding of \$25 million to the Ontario Arts Council for Ontario's arts organizations, to help cover operating losses incurred as a result of COVID-19.

We have also secured millions in additional funding to ensure my ministry's agencies can meet their financial obligations this year and plan for recovery. We are investing \$4.4 million to the Travel Industry Council of Ontario—TICO, as many of you would know—to support its operations, as well as waiving its oversight fee and payment waivers to approximately 2,300 travel agents and wholesalers registered with TICO. A crown achievement

for this ministry was the \$150 million for an Ontario travel tax credit to be unveiled in 2021.

#### 1720

To help companies maintain their tax credit eligibility and to help provide some stability and certainty in uncertain times, the province is proposing to temporarily extend some deadlines and amend some requirements for cultural media tax credits. We're also continuing with our commitment to redevelop Ontario Place. Again, this amounts to an additional \$325 million to bolster the ministry's \$1.65-billion investment, to bring our spend to nearly \$2 billion. This is an historic increase to Ontario's heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries—unprecedented, really.

They will work hand in glove with other measures outlined in the budget that will support our sectors, such as \$1.8 billion in the Support for People and Jobs Fund to adapt and respond to emerging needs; \$1 billion in broadband expansion to support our rural and remote communities; \$300 million that was recently announced to cover supports for businesses in hot zones, to cover property taxes and energy bills; \$180.5 million for skilled trades sector development, which will help our hospitality and culture sectors; \$60 million for one-time costs for PPE for small business; \$60 million for a Black Youth Action Plan; \$57 million for the Digital Main Street; and \$10 million for Indigenous-owned businesses.

This adds to the \$6 million to electrify Ontario's campsites, \$5 million to support agricultural and horticultural societies, support for francophone businesses, cancelling the wine tax increase and freezing beer rates, looking at other options for food service and hospitality, and establishing a market for iGaming.

But these investments are just the start, because of where we are going. Starting in the next few weeks, the ministry will be consulting widely on a five-year strategic plan that will help our sectors and our agencies and attractions recover, rebuild and re-emerge in a post-pandemic environment on a global scale.

Over the next five years, Ontario will engage in long-term planning in the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. We will build this plan out over the next 18 months, three years and five years, continually assessing these four metrics:

(1) Meeting the double bottom line: Each program we offer will be expected to foster a cultural output and meet financial accountability objectives.

(2) Our programs will aim to be attainable for all Ontarians, regardless of income or where they live.

(3) Our programs will aim for equity, particularly for vulnerable populations.

(4) Our programs will work across the ministry and with a whole-of-government approach to ensure complementary funding streams and initiatives like those I've recently mentioned are aimed at growth and better integration of all sectors.

This will help develop the following 15 initiatives, the first being the redevelopment of Ontario Place, which will

be central to the recovery of heritage, culture, recreation and tourism for all Ontarians post-pandemic.

As we eye recovery, we'll be focused on community building, so we will reinforce the work of the Ontario Trillium Foundation's \$103-million budget with an additional \$100 million in the community building fund over the next two years to help support not-for-profits that deliver important results in our communities, like your local cadet corps, children's theatre, seniors' workshops, mental health supports, special abilities programs, sport initiatives and so much more.

Honours and awards in Ontario will be modernized so we can best recognize those who selflessly contribute their time and their expertise to the betterment of their fellow Ontarians. We will work to support Premier Ford's vision for more volunteerism.

In sport, we will strengthen the relationship between the ministry and our provincial sport organizations. Our goal will be to help sport recover post-pandemic, to encourage children and youth to be active, and to best equip our high-performance athletes for podiums around the world. Also in sport, we will leverage our relationships with our professional sports organizations to rebuild confidence after a prolonged pandemic.

In festivals and events, we will be extending our reach, post-pandemic, to compete for global events when it's safe to do so. This will include a more robust sport-hosting program, combined with a more ambitious and redesigned Celebrate Ontario. Yes, that means we will work with Canada Soccer to land a bid for the FIFA World Cup, and we are engaging with the Commonwealth Games Federation for a potential bid for Ontario in 2027 or beyond.

In culture, we will continue to expand our film-friendly locations, and we will work with eastern and southwestern Ontario on film strategies to increase production. The ministry will continue to engage with the Ministries of Labour, Training and Skills Development and Colleges and Universities to leverage a new \$180-million investment to retrain those hardest hit by the pandemic, including in our tourism, hospitality and creative sectors.

In interactive and digital media and video gaming, we will continue to pursue opportunities, including iGaming, the proposal with AGCO, which we consider a distinct advantage for video gamers in Ontario.

Our five existing tax credits will remain stable—that's our publishing tax credit, film and television tax credit, production services tax credit, computer animation and special effects tax credit, and interactive digital media tax credit. We will build a strategy with the Ontario Arts Council to preserve and protect Ontario's core cultural institutions with an additional \$25 million in new funding for one year to complement its existing \$60-million budget, and we will build out a plan for live music venues and performance arts beyond the \$7-million music investment fund.

In tourism, we continue to support our regional tourism organizations, first with hyper-local tourism initiatives, including local marketing campaigns, eventually domestic staycations, and then, finally, renewed international visits

when it's safe to do so. We'll do this through marketing campaigns, and of course, next year will be the year of the staycation, with our Ontario travel tax incentive that would be valued at 20% of receipts.

Destination Ontario, with the RTOs and other tourism organizations, will develop a plan to kick-start tourism in our gateway cities, Ottawa and Toronto, while also establishing a rural and remote tourism strategy. We will continue to create tourism trails throughout Ontario, like music cities and playhouse trails, for Indigenous tourism, francophone tourism, craft and culinary, LGBTQ+ and film trails, among others. They will be tasked with a 365-day year-round strategy that will be highly competitive and ambitious. We will modernize the Ontario tourism information centres to amplify our pride of people, our pride of place and, now, pride of local product. Finally, we will continue to work with all ministries across government to support hub communities in tourism, to ensure housing, training, transportation and other critical infrastructure are considered when building out our plan.

In the next two months, we will begin a consultation process with industry and sector partners on how best to achieve this vision, starting with a white paper. The white paper, like the ideas I just shared, was built around our consultations over the past eight months through the 12 telephone town halls I hosted, along with the 14 ministerial advisory committee reports, my 11-week tour and submissions made to the economic affairs committee. The discussion around the white paper will take place over a four-week period leading up to Christmas, and that feedback will inform the five-year plan that will be costed and released by mid-winter.

This work will be done in conjunction with two teams I have appointed, the first looking at long-range planning and branding around our programs and our investments; a second will drill down into protecting and building community capacity for all of our sectors at the local level.

As you can see, the estimates are just a small part of the broader picture, and while it's a good first start to talk about where we were, it really doesn't depict where we are now or where we're going. Both aspects of the double bottom line will grow, and I invite all of my colleagues and all Ontarians to take part in conversations over the next months on how we can recover, reconnect and eventually rebuild these sectors post-pandemic.

This is an uphill battle, even with historic investments. That's because of the lack of comfort that many Ontarians have in resuming their old activities, and I won't sugar-coat it. For instance, according to a recent Ipsos survey, 60% of Ontarians are reluctant to book a stay in an Ontario hotel or eat out in a restaurant for at least the next six months; another 68% will not go to the movies or attend an outdoor concert; 78% will not attend a professional sporting event; and, finally, an astonishing 80% are unwilling to travel on an airplane at all in the next six months.

As we begin to work out our five-year strategic plan, I ask all colleagues to think about where you live and why you choose to live where you live. Think about your

favourite restaurant that gave you great memories with your family and your friends. Think about the music that you love at your local festival; a sports team that you cheer on every season, even if they can't pull off a playoff run; the theme park you took your kids or your grandkids to; that beautiful trail or lake that brings you serenity; your city airport; the bed and breakfast that you've always wanted to stay at; a movie or a play that you and your friends wanted to see together. All of those create jobs, but they create so much more. They create lasting memories. They create the reasons why we live where we live. They create the reasons that this ministry is involved in every community across Ontario.

**1730**

It's all about home, and right now, home is worth protecting. It's worth fighting for, which is why I hope members of this committee and all members of the Legislative Assembly band together in working to support these sectors, which we want to make sure come through COVID-19 bigger and stronger so that the Ontario that we know and love, the Ontario that we all decided to put our name on the ballot to stand in this Legislature for, exists in a post-pandemic society.

Colleagues, I look forward to your questions. I look forward to your statements. More than anything, however, I look forward to your ideas. My team is here. They're committed to working with you. They're here today to make sure that your voices are heard and integrated with our planning as we move forward. They're here today to listen to our stakeholders, our industry partners, for whom some days it was very difficult to get up and put on a brave face when they weren't able to welcome visitors into their restaurant, when they weren't able to open their theme park, when they had to shutter their movie theatre, when they had to tell their children that they couldn't go out and play soccer or hockey. Every day, these are the stories that we hear, and every day, this team at the ministry stands up and bravely fights for their people, the people who they've always supported in good times, but the people they really need to support right now in the bad times.

Look, colleagues, I'm very passionate about this, and I know many of you are as well. I think it's important that we really look at this together. This could be one of the finer moments of this Legislature if we work together to support these important points in the community.

I'll just look around here today. I had the opportunity to go to Burlington with MPP McKenna. I had the opportunity to spend some time with MPP Gates a couple of times in Niagara Falls, and MPP Pettapiece had me out in Stratford. I had the opportunity to make a couple of announcements with MPP Pang. This is an opportunity for us to be proud of the places we call home, to amplify that, to bring them together. They're good people out there.

Everything that we do in this ministry should be about hope. Hope has been in short supply for a lot of Ontarians, but it has been in shorter supply for those who have been shuttered. Some of them were able to reopen, then were shuttered again—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Two minutes left.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:**—and there are still a number of them who remain shuttered. So working together, presenting a calm, bold and united front as a Legislative Assembly, is incredibly important.

Chair, I appreciate the opportunity here today. I know we're short on time. I look forward to hearing constructive ideas from my colleagues, and I look forward to advancing these as we move forward. It has often been said that there's no monopoly on a good idea, so we're all ears and ready to hear them. We're happy, obviously, to discuss the estimates as well. However, they're a bit out of date, sir.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Minister, thank you very much. Before we proceed to the official opposition, I want to acknowledge that MPP Pang is present in the committee room this afternoon. Thank you, MPP.

We go now to the opposition. You have up to 30 minutes for a reply. MPP Andrew, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you very much, Chair. I will not be doing my 30-minute reply; I will be going straight into questions, if that's okay with you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Yes, it is. It's your time.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Perfect.

I would like to thank the minister for her comments. I would also like to deeply thank the minister and the ministry staff for their hard work. I hope you and your families are keeping as safe and as healthy as you can during this turbulent time.

My first question to the minister: On page 4 of the ministry estimates briefing book, it states, "The ministry has supported its sector partners as they have been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by:

—expediting the release of funding to public libraries, community museums, regional tourism organizations, and agencies and attractions that had to adjust or reduce their operations and close their doors to protect public health."

But, on October 15, 2020, the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario released a report noting that your government was sitting on \$9.3 billion earmarked for the pandemic. That figure includes \$6.7 billion specifically earmarked to combat the pandemic, I understand, and \$2.6 billion in contingency funds.

My questions are:

How much of that \$9.3-billion COVID recovery money has since been allocated to your ministry?

How much of that \$9.3 billion has been allocated for the Ontario Arts Council, and not only arts organizations or institutions, but the actual lives of individual artists and cultural workers, since the \$25-million one-time investment does not include artists?

How much of that \$9.3 billion has been allocated for youth programs, and how much of that \$9.3 billion that the Ford government—your government, Minister MacLeod—is currently sitting on has been allocated for the Ontario Music Fund?

I am particularly interested in how much of that \$9.3 billion is allocated to BIPOC artists—Black, Indigenous, POC artists.

In your opening statement, you mentioned the Black Youth Action Plan; I would appreciate if you'd let us know if there is particular money earmarked in that plan that's going to flow through your ministry for culture.

I am also interested in knowing if you or your ministry has considered artists and cultural workers who are disabled, who are deaf, who are 2SLGBTQIA+, and the specific dollars—the specific dollars—within your ministry out of the \$9.3-billion COVID money and/or your budget—and I'll get to that a little later on. If not today, tomorrow.

How much is that? How much of that is going to address the groups that I have highlighted?

And certainly not last, but my last question on this particular round is how much of that money is going to be invested in Indigenous culture and arts? As we know, the Indigenous Culture Fund was slashed. I'd like to know if this government has any intentions to reinstate the Indigenous Culture Fund?

So those are several questions. I believe I can continue, Chair—can I, or do I have to wait for responses?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You can continue, but if you want a response from the minister—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Wonderful. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):**—you're going to have to give her time.

Before you proceed, just a point to all those who are present here, and I should have said it earlier: As a reminder to all participants, all debate should be directed through me. Should you wish to speak, please raise your hand and I'll acknowledge you and provide you with the opportunity to speak. I find that the members who are on Zoom are at a bit of a disadvantage. If you're in the room, it's easier to spontaneously say to a minister or say to a member, "I need further explanation." So if you're on the screen, raise your hand if you need to intervene, and I will intervene on your behalf. But, please, speak through the Chair.

With that, MPP Andrew, I turn the floor back to you.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you very much, Chair. Well, I would appreciate if the minister would provide some responses for the initial questions that I have raised. Thank you.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Oh, okay. Thanks very much. It really meant a lot to me, MPP Andrew, that you thanked my ministry staff. They have not taken any time off since the pandemic hit. It's almost like their hearts just keep sinking, because every day we get worse news for our sectors. Let me talk about a little bit of money that flows, and let me make it personal to your own riding.

Since the pandemic hit, we have flowed, through the Ontario Arts Council, \$561,000 into your community through Agence Canadienne; b current Performing Arts company; one of my favourites, Canada's Ballet Jørgen; CANVAS Arts Action Programs; Choirs Ontario; Théâtre la Tangente; the Literary Press Group of Canada; Toronto Chamber Choir; Toronto Children's Chorus; Toronto Downtown Jazz Society; the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir;

Toronto Palestine Film Festival—that was cool—and grants to individual artists. Again, totalling \$561,492.

Through our Heritage Organization Development Grants in your community, the well-known Queen's Own Rifles Association received \$1,545. Through Celebrate Ontario, despite the fact that none of these events were able to proceed as planned in your community, we supported the Toronto Jazz Festival with \$100,000, Toronto Triathlon Festival for \$9,575, and Toronto's Festival of Beer for \$93,147. We felt it was important to continue flowing that funding for sunk and eligible costs in order for these events to come back bigger and stronger next year. We recognize the value. As I said as we started out earlier on, for every dollar we traditionally invest in a festival, we would get \$21 back.

1740

So that funding all went out the door throughout the summer, as did the Ontario Trillium Foundation's 2020 campaign.

Pollinator Partnership Canada: I'm not sure if you've done anything with them, but they do a pilot volunteer training program for people living in west Toronto neighbourhoods, encouraging the creation of habitat gardens. They received \$69,900.

And finally, through Ontario Creates: Given the fact that you live in Toronto—St. Paul's, you are home to some of the best film production and television production in Canada. Through multiple granting streams through Ontario Creates, your community probably received one of the largest grants through those streams, of \$2.737 million. Your riding made out quite well, receiving \$3.573 million in your constituency.

We flowed the money quickly. A lot of decisions were made. We worked within Treasury Board guidelines. That was obviously very important, and we're always very cognizant of the Auditor General. So we moved our allocation out.

I want to try to unpack the rest of the questions that you had, because there's a lot there, so I've got a lot of notes I'd like just to finish.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Yes.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you.

In terms of the \$60-million Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, you will recall from my earlier comments, as I talked about the white paper plan, which I hope you'll be part of, it's looking at how we have more equity and inclusivity in our programming streams. One of the ideas will be to how we could better retool the Ontario Music Investment Fund to support Black and Indigenous artists.

In addition to that, we want to make sure that we have equity and accessibility in sport and after-school programming. Our after-school programming provides tremendous value for dollar and assists many moms in vulnerable neighbourhoods with being able to get back into—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Excuse me for a minute, Minister. I've had a request from the member. Member?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** First off, I'd like to say I am always thankful for any dollars that go into Toronto—St. Paul's,

into my riding here, or across our fine province. However, I was asking for specific numbers as to what was allocated out of the \$9.3 billion to those various target groups, to those various historically marginalized groups that I was referring to. I know you would agree with me that—

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I was about to hit some of those.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Oh, okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And then I might interrupt you again, because as you know, there are only 30 minutes on my end.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Yes, no problem.

I want to address the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, the \$60-million fund. There's \$20 million, as you know, allocated over a three-year program. We've already made the reach-out; that is being run out of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. We do see three programs within the ministry that we feel would benefit this plan, or that maybe we would have to enhance ourselves without that. But we feel that our after-school programming that I just mentioned—the music investment fund but also through sport—there are some opportunities there for us.

In terms of Indigenous youth, there is \$10 billion earmarked for Indigenous businesses. We've already spoken with RoseAnne Archibald, the Ontario regional chief. Just last week, my chief of staff and I met with her and her chief of staff to talk about how we can build out an Indigenous culture, tourism and sport strategy. I personally believe reconciliation can be aided by children in sport together. I've personally seen it with my own child, and so I think that we want to continue to advance in that direction.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I apologize, Minister. I have a question. MPP Andrew.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Again, I appreciate the qualitative conversations, the narratives that you're sharing with regard to hopes and aspirations and potential spots where there might be collaborations between your ministry and others. I'm a huge proponent for inter-ministerial work, as you are familiar with. However, again, I'm trying to get immediate and direct answers about actual funding in the budget, which we're not seeing. So what I'm hoping is that you will agree after this session at some point in the near future—maybe you and I will sit and have a chat and talk more when there's more time.

And I will take you up on the white paper plan and finding out more about that. I know that your advisory panel for film and television has made some wonderful recommendations, along with FilmOntario, which has made some wonderful recommendations, and they're looking forward to knowing exactly when those recommendations will be acted upon by your ministry.

But moving on, would you agree—

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Is it possible to respond on the LGBTQ+?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** For sure. Why not? Thirty seconds. Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Just in terms of Indigenous and LGBTQ+ tourism, we've invested \$100,000 to each one

of those organizations over the summer so they could build out marketing strategies. We want to continue to do more with those two organizations, and so we will be building out those strategies. But those were two calls we made early on in the pandemic to get their support over the summer.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I'm very, very glad to know that some 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations may receive some supports from this government.

Moving on, as I mentioned, we can certainly agree that this has been a tough year for our beloved culture sector. I've heard many stakeholders tell me that they need help just staying afloat. Table 3.13 of your 2020 budget, Ontario's Action Plan, shows planned spending of \$1.547 billion in 2021. In 2019-20, actual spending was \$1.643 billion, in 2018-19 it was \$1.562 billion, and in 2017-18 it was \$1.594 billion. I guess I would say that you must agree that the planned spending in your budget currently for your ministry is the lowest it has been since 2016.

I'm wondering what the decision factor was in funding your sector to the lowest it's been since 2017, when the greatest need is now. Why would your government allocate the lowest spending in four years to your ministry in a year when support is needed the most?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** If you're going to mislead the committee, the estimates speak for themselves: \$1.65 billion. There was an additional \$325 million in the budget. Therefore, ergo, we're almost at \$2 billion, which is the highest number of dollars ever invested into the sectors that I represent. They've seen it on the ground. We have gone across the province announcing significant funds and we're going to continue to announce significant funds.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Minister, I'm afraid I have a question coming up for you—

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** We haven't even talked about the supports that we're providing for our agencies and attractions within the ministry, so I think you'll be surprised—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Minister?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Excuse me, Minister. I'm trying really hard to be polite.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I know.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you. Again, thank you for your words. Certainly Dave's and Wailers and various other wonderful restaurants, small businesses and live music venues that have had to shutter because your government refused to provide direct funding to help with rent relief early on in the pandemic—I'm sure they wish that they were added on the many, many lists of people that your ministry has helped thus far.

Nonetheless, we move to the Community Building Fund that you've mentioned. This is one thing that a stakeholder flagged for me. Although the Ontario Trillium Foundation is a trusted funder, their current policies do not fund organizations that have an accumulated deficit of over 15% of their operation cost.

First and foremost, I've heard from many people that they don't understand, they don't know what the criteria

are for the Community Building Fund. They are wondering when this information is going to come out, when this money will start to flow. For many organizations, the COVID pandemic has created a sizable accumulated deficit for the organizations that need that help. The Community Building Fund may not be an option for them, people have told me.

Will this still be the policy for applicants to the Community Building Fund, that they are not eligible for funding if the COVID pandemic has created a sizable deficit? As you know, since the provincial government, the Ford government, of which you are a minister, turned their backs on small businesses and on the arts, quite frankly, very early on in the pandemic and arguably still—we're just trying to get some clarification on the Community Building Fund: when that's going to happen, when the announcements are going to be made, when folks can expect support and if their sizable deficit will make them ineligible for said support. Thank you very much, Minister.

1750

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Okay. Well, that's a lot to unpack there. We did ban commercial rent evictions. We have just announced \$300 million through the Ministry of Finance to support those small businesses, in addition to a \$60-million Main Street package, as well as \$1.8 billion in terms of supports for jobs and people.

The Community Building Fund, obviously, is something that was released in the budget, so we're working out the details now with the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We're looking at opportunities in order to best support and protect. I will say, in terms of the Ontario Trillium Resilient Communities Fund—I'll just read you a few points from people we've heard from:

"To stay competitive in the most dynamic industry in the world and safeguard the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians, the tourism industry needs ... support to encourage Ontarians to travel within the province..." That's from Beth Potter.

"The funding is much appreciated during these times and helps to ensure that 'when that new normal comes about, that we are ready to go, that our region is ready to go [and] that businesses can thrive.'" That's from Drew Dilkens, the mayor of Windsor.

I could go on and on and on about the supportive comments that we've received from my sectors, from credible people who lead organizations. We're going to continue to work with them, have them at the table and make sure we support—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Excuse me, Minister.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** You're suggesting that the record budget—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Excuse me, Minister.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** No. You're suggesting that there have been reductions when there have been actually substantial billion-dollar increases.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Excuse me, Minister. I'd like to reclaim my time.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I don't know where the NDP get their math done—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** It's my time right now. Thank you.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** —but they aren't achieving it here.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you. You know what, Minister? For the record, I'm simply here as an advocate. I'm here as a voice, trying to bring the voice of our constituency and our fine province into this Zoom meeting today.

I will go back to the Ontario Arts Council. Many artists, especially BIPOC artists, disabled etc. and historically marginalized communities are asking this very question: What about the artists? What about individual artists? Where in your budget, where in the culture sector budget—because you didn't answer me the first time, when I asked for exact dollars—

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** It's \$1.8 billion; it was just in the budget.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** —where the \$9.3 billion is, what the extra money going to culture is.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** It's \$1.8 billion for people and jobs.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Where in that budget is the program, the plan, the grant—through OAC, through anyone—for individual artists, for the individual artist? Of course, we want to help our arts organizations and our institutions, but what about our individual artists who have had to stop their creativity, who are in depression, who are drowning in debt and are simply looking for funding to help them get by, to help them maintain their art, to maintain their dignity and their sense of self and purpose, and also cover the rent over their heads? Where is the support for the individual artists?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Well, we've provided support for individuals throughout this entire process. We've been working extremely hard with the federal government for both the Canadian wage subsidy, but also the CERB. We continue to deliver supports—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** For individual artists, Minister. You know as well as I know that certain freelance workers who make a penny too much cannot qualify. What is the province doing? I'm not asking about what Justin Trudeau is doing in this session. I'm asking what you're doing.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** No, I didn't say what Justin Trudeau was doing. I said we work hand in glove.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** For both of you: I need one at a time.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Sure. Look, we can either agree that we want to support people or we can politically grandstand. The reality here is that this ministry delivers programming. It delivers policies that support, and funding streams. What she's wanting is she wants to talk about the programs the finance ministry—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Minister, I apologize, but she has raised her hand and she has a question for you.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Moving on, because, again, my sole purpose here is to put on record the concerns from constituents and the concerns from our provincial culture sector: I understand from a very, very wonderful stakeholder that there have been consistent questions put forth to you with regard to

when and if your ministry is going to increase the Community Museums Operating Grant, CMOG. As you know, that has not been increased in close to 15 years. This question is consistently being ignored.

I understand that you spoke at the Ontario Museum Association conference last week and that the question was yet again posed, and it has been posed several times, including deputations—

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** And it was answered that we were looking at doing that, so—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** —and I am here as the MPP for Toronto–St. Paul's and the culture critic asking you, will the government increase the CMOG? I actually asked you about this early on—way, way early on in the pandemic. Will you all increase this, yes or no? Our museums desperately need it to be competitive, to be innovative, to be accessible, so that all Ontarians can move the way they move into the museums. Will you increase the CMOG funding, which has not been touched for 15 years and is grossly underfunded?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Well, I don't know where to start there. Again, factually incorrect. The questions that have come forth through Marie Lalonde and others who I personally met with a couple of weeks ago—this issue came up. We discussed it.

The member got one thing right: I did appear before and indicated our willingness to revamp the CMOG and look at something else. We're looking at also making sure there's some support there to digitize their collections. We created something called ontario.live early on in the pandemic to support our community museums to get their curations out. We did that for art galleries as well.

If she would like to name the individual, we can go back through our correspondence—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Ah, yes. On the note of naming the individual, Minister, I fully intended to name the individuals of all the 50 or so stakeholders who responded to my particular call for this estimate. However, I spoke to one of those stakeholders who told me that they were scared and intimidated. Their exact words were, "If we speak against her or against her government, she might do what she did to the behavioural analysts with the autism program." So the bottom line is, I've decided not to use names, quite frankly out of fear, because I don't want anyone who criticizes your sector to potentially lose the thread of funding that they currently have.

On the point of—what's it called again? Here we are: Ontario cultural media tax credits. I understand that the government will be enjoying some significant savings since your spending hasn't been the same due to the pandemic. I'm wondering if your government might consider tax credits for performers, for instance—performing arts. I'm just wondering if there's a way that that money that you're saving can be invested into culture for the individual artists: for the thespian, for the DJ, for the venue host or producer who now has no event to host and no income. Again, I'm wondering about the individual artist.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I'm just thinking about the time you and I were up at the Science Centre and you started

yelling at me in the middle of a crowd and John Tory had to ask you to settle down.

But I'll just talk about visual artists. Visual artists in Ontario will be applauding this additional \$25 million—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** That's actually a lie. That's a lie, Minister MacLeod, and I would ask you to correct your record.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I'm not—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'm sorry, Minister. To all involved, neither of you can use unparliamentary language.

With that, Minister, if you would continue.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Sure. Look, I think that, by and large, stakeholders work very well with the ministry. I've got a strong team. We've had some very difficult challenges over the past number of months. We're proud—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I have a question. I have a question.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Yes, and the question is, member?

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you. Let's turn to libraries a bit here. I understand from our library stakeholders that libraries have not been accurately funded. They haven't seen any increases for—I believe it's 22 years, if I'm not mistaken.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** They just received a—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Member—

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Yes, member?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** —and Minister, that's all the time that we have available today.

The committee is now adjourned until November 18, 2020, at 3:30 p.m.

*The committee adjourned at 1759.*





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