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**Standing Committee
on Heritage, Infrastructure
and Cultural Policy**

Group of Seven Day Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Tuesday 11 July 2023

**Comité permanent du
patrimoine, de l'infrastructure
et de la culture**

Loi de 2023 sur le Jour
du Groupe des Sept

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mardi 11 juillet 2023

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND CULTURAL POLICY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DU PATRIMOINE,
DE L'INFRASTRUCTURE
ET DE LA CULTURE**

Tuesday 11 July 2023

Mardi 11 juillet 2023

The committee met at 1000 in committee room 1.

**GROUP OF SEVEN DAY ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023 SUR LE JOUR
DU GROUPE DES SEPT**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day / Projet de loi 78, Loi proclamant le Jour du Groupe des Sept.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We're here to conduct public hearings on Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day. We are joined by staff from legislative research, legislative counsel, Hansard, and broadcasting and recording.

Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak and, as always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin?

Seeing none, our first presenter is the bill's sponsor, MPP Todd McCarthy. He will have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 40 minutes for questions and answers, divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of five minutes for the independent member.

Are there any questions? I will now ask MPP McCarthy—you now have 20 minutes for your presentation, and you may begin.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Good morning, Chair. Through you, good morning to the members of the committee. It is an honour to be here as the sponsor of Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day. This bill was the subject of first reading on March 9 of this year, and then second reading on April 5 of this year, and I thank both the members of His Majesty's government in the House, and the members of His Majesty's loyal opposition and other members of the House, for the fact that there was unanimous support for this bill at second reading.

The idea behind Bill 78, Chair, is to celebrate the Group of Seven artists and their works in order to celebrate the unique nature of their art, which depicts Ontario and Canadian landscapes; the historical context in which their artwork was created; and to look to the future, because over the past century, Ontario and Canada have changed, and this will no doubt be true over the next century. The

fact of the matter is that the works of the Group of Seven are to be celebrated, and they can and must be debated, both in view of the history associated with the Group of Seven and having regard to our contemporary world and the future that lies ahead.

The Group of Seven was never actually a fixed group of artists, but indeed, the membership changed and expanded over time. As we look to the future, we can and should celebrate the fact that the Group of Seven can and must remain relevant both to the present and the future.

Criticism, constructive or otherwise, is essential to the idea of marking the seventh day of the seventh month in each year, and if this committee sees fit to support the bill and send it to third reading this fall, then Sunday, July 7, 2024, would be the first Group of Seven Day.

I listened carefully to all members of the House who participated in the debate on second reading on April 5, 2023, and in particular some of the debate that included comments from members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, who ultimately voted in favour of the bill at second reading. There were concerns expressed by members of the opposition about a lack of diversity in the group. Indeed, Emily Carr, an early member of the group, was really the first woman to be a member of the Group of Seven. She was associated with a group that came together in May 1920 at the predecessor to the Art Gallery of Ontario. My response here and in the House, as many of you may recall, was that criticism and debate about works of art is essential to a vibrant culture and a fair understanding of history and the context in which works of art were created over a century ago.

Now, a little bit of history: The Group of Seven was once known as the Algonquin School, an internationally recognized group of artists from the early part of the 20th century. Their works captured the magnificent landscapes of Ontario. The group originally consisted of Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris—and I pause to note again that Lawren is the name of one of the children of our Attorney General, the Honourable Doug Downey, and he was named after Lawren Harris—and Alexander Young, or A.Y., Jackson. A neighbour of mine met him as a young lad visiting the McMichael gallery in the late 1960s, and that is something he remembers to this day. He also remembers meeting some members of the 1967 Maple Leafs Stanley Cup-winning team as well, so A.Y. Jackson is right up there with my friend Bob Haggerty.

Other members of the group originally included Franz Johnston, Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald. These Canadians initiated the first major Canadian national art movement through their inspired paintings of the Canadian landscape. All of these original members of the Algonquin School were men, but Emily Carr, a female artist, is also associated with the group, as I indicated, as is Tom Thomson, who died before the group's official formation.

Tom Thomson had a significant influence on the group. In an essay entitled *The Story of the Group of Seven*, which contains this quote referencing Tom Thomson, Lawren Harris noted that he was "a part of the movement before we pinned a label on it." Two of Thomson's paintings include the iconic *The West Wind* and *The Jack Pine*.

Today, the Group of Seven proudly inspires a new generation of Ontario and Canadian artists, as many galleries and schools prominently feature and study the works of these artists and the impact they made, not only on Ontario and Canada in terms of the art scene, but also inspiring young artists internationally.

When it comes to art culture and history, in my submission to this committee, it is important to facilitate critical thinking in an educational context. By creating a Group of Seven Day on the seventh day of the seventh month each year, we can promote knowledge and debate surrounding the Group of Seven in the month of July with visits to art galleries across Ontario by students in both our elementary and secondary schools.

We can also promote tourism in our art galleries during the summer months. Across Ontario, we are fortunate to have many art galleries which feature the works of the Group of Seven. Predominant among them is the McMichael gallery in Kleinburg, where, in fact, six members of the Group of Seven are interred. The works of the Group of Seven are also featured at the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Algoma, and I believe we will be having a representative of the Art Gallery of Algoma actually here in person. She has made the trip for an 11 o'clock or 11:30 arrival time, so we look forward to hearing from that representative of the Art Gallery of Algoma. That, I anticipate, is Jasmina Jovanovic, the executive director of the Algoma gallery.

Other art galleries featuring the works of the Group of Seven include the Art Gallery of Sudbury, the Varley Art Gallery in Markham, the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant, and the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery in Huntsville, along with the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound.

Let me pause for a moment, Chair, to acknowledge the criticism associated with the Group of Seven works of art. I again preface this with the acknowledgement that criticism and debate and critical thinking are to be welcomed in a free and democratic society, particularly when it comes to art, culture and history. This must be an essential part of how we debate and discuss matters as fellow citizens in both an educational context and in terms of art galleries and the art that is displayed in those galleries. I say respectfully that recognizing and promoting a Group of Seven Day annually is part of that celebration of history, part of learning from history, part of looking to the future and debating the positives and negatives associated with any

particular issue, including a historic art movement such as this.

I remember that 1981 film *History of the World: Part I*. Mel Brooks, now in his nineties, worked into the script that quip that with the first artist inevitably comes the afterbirth, the art critic. So art critics are certainly to be welcomed, as any critical thinkers are to be welcomed.

So let's put the Group of Seven's art in proper historical context. The fundamental value associated with the Group of Seven and their works depicting Ontario and Canadian landscapes over 100 years ago was a respect for the environment and for nature. The members believed that a distinct Canadian art form could be developed through direct contact with nature. We're looking, of course, at over a century ago. The industrialization of North America in the 1920s was well under way for several decades by that time and unfortunately was associated with a lack of respect and a corresponding lack of oversight or regulation with respect to air and water pollution in general industrial development.

1010

Teddy Roosevelt, a former President of the United States who came to office in 1901 after the assassination of President William McKinley, was an early 20th-century conservationist who recognized the crisis associated with unbridled and ruinous intrusions upon natural habitats, including the Grand Canyon. In this province, we have a present-day Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, but Teddy Roosevelt was really the first conservationist and the first protector of parks, including wildlife natural habitats and wetlands. He was forward-thinking in that regard. It is my submission that the Group of Seven had a high regard for the natural settings within Ontario and Canada that inspired their art. That is to be celebrated as we are particularly concerned more than ever about the protection of our environment and being good stewards of our natural habitats, both for the present and the future.

A love of nature and a respect for nature is what drove the artists of the Group of Seven, who travelled far and wide to do their artwork and to be inspired to create the art that we enjoy today. It has been said and written that:

"For 13 years, the hearty artists rode the rails, hitched boat rides, scaled rock faces, hiked backcountry and paddled wild waters to reach the views that inspired their art.

"They camped in the forest, stayed in vacant cabins and lived off the land, often in less than ideal conditions. Their artistic journeys took them wide and far, not only in Ontario but across Canada."

This quoted description of the journeys of the members of the Group of Seven beginning in 1920 is lifted from Ontario's tourism ministry's official website, "Ontario, Yours to Discover."

There have been criticisms of the group in terms of it consisting—with the exception of Emily Carr, the first woman associated with the evolving Group of Seven—that it effectively consisted of seven white males. In this century, beginning in 2001, Kent Monkman, a Cree artist, re-created some of the paintings by Tom Thomson, for example, including *The Jack Pine*, in order to counter the absence of

Indigenous persons in the representations of the depictions of Canadian landscapes. Then, in 2004, he held a filmed performance entitled *Group of Seven Inches* at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg. So you can see, the centrepiece in terms of a gallery for the display of *Group of Seven* art, that being the McMichael gallery, welcomed this criticism and this reimagining of the *Group of Seven* works of art.

The attitude that has justifiably resulted in criticisms for the absence of Indigenous persons in the depictions of our landscapes was exemplified by the 1958 autobiography of A.Y. Jackson. He noted the contrast between painting in Europe, where “everything was mellowed by time and human association.” He said, “I found it a problem to paint a country in outward appearance pretty much as it had been when Champlain passed through it” centuries before. Of course, the problem with this attitude, reflected in that quote from A.Y. Jackson, of presenting Canadian wilderness as untouched by human hands and unpopulated is it failed to recognize the fact that the areas depicted had actually been lived in by Indigenous peoples for centuries. We know this and recognize this through our land acknowledgements in the present day. This is a common feature of public gatherings, as we know.

But there was a settler-colonial culture among the *Group of Seven*, perhaps. This was explored and was the subject of debate by Canadian artist Will Kwan in his 2021 presentation at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, just outside the boundaries of my riding of Durham. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, of course, is where *Group of Seven* works continue to be displayed, although to a lesser extent than McMichael and the National Gallery.

The point is, Chair, that we can and must embrace debate and criticism associated with all aspects of our history, including the works of the *Group of Seven*. Our galleries have done so by welcoming input and presentations by Kent Monkman and Will Kwan, among others.

I have in the past quoted the late Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, of Great Britain, in the House and on at least one other occasion at committee, because he was a statesman who proclaimed that those who forget their history have no future. Let us not be among societies that have made such a mistake.

The point is not to run from our history, or sanitize it, or ignore it, but to understand it, embrace it, criticize it, learn from it and build upon it, just as the *Group of Seven*, however much it lacked diversity as we understand it today, in the present age, evolved as a group. It evolved in terms of membership over decades since its founding in 1920. We have Monkman and Kwan leading presentations on art and the *Group of Seven* in 2004 and 2021 at the McMichael gallery and the Robert McLaughlin Gallery to prove just that point.

Galleries that traditionally and presently have housed major *Group of Seven* works of art are at the forefront of celebrating history, but looking to the future. The McMichael gallery is, in fact, devoted to the *Group of Seven* more than perhaps any other gallery across Ontario.

Seven artists were inspired to paint the landscapes that they did and the way that they did it is part of embracing

change, embracing diversity and embracing the future of Ontario and Canadian art. To be very clear: We would not have had the national Canadian art movement that came about and that continues to affect, in a positive way, this generation and generations to come without the original *Group of Seven*.

So I ask this committee to welcome and embrace the concept of seventh day of the seventh month of each year, hopefully beginning on Sunday, July 7, 2024. If supported by this committee and then passed on third reading in the House later this year, we would have that as the very first *Group of Seven Day* and everything that goes with it: the tourism, the education and the promotion of our art galleries for all of our citizens and for visitors to Ontario.

I welcomed the comments of all members of the House, including some of the criticism of the opposition, in the debate on April 5, 2023, but I note that despite some of the criticism, those members wisely supported the bill on second reading and I'm very proud of that fact, that we can have unanimity in the House. I ask the committee to take that into account.

I'm not sure how much time I have—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Three and a half minutes.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Three and a half minutes. I know that we've had submissions of support and they're available for members. They include the June 26, 2023, support letter on Bill 78 from Georgiana Uhlyarik, of the Art Gallery of Ontario, here in Toronto. That should be taken into account.

“The *Group of Seven* artists have had a significant impact and pronounced influence in the development of Canadian art during a formative time in our country.... They were catalytic in creating a thriving arts community across all aspects of creativity.”

As well, we have the written submission from the National Gallery and that is something that the members of the committee would have access to as well. That is a supportive submission about the “ground-breaking vision of the artists that formed the *Group of Seven* in 1920.”

We also have support from Gila Martow, the current Vaughan councillor for ward 5 and a former MPP in this House, supporting Bill 78; Valerie Burke, a former councillor for the city of Markham; and a local artist, Lauren Walker, from Port Perry, who talks about art focusing on thinking outside the box, as the *Group of Seven* does and as she is inspired to do by the *Group of Seven* as a young artist. We also have Carol McNamara, a member of the board of directors of the Art Gallery of Ontario, who is supporting this bill and has filed a submission in that regard. I'm happy to provide quotes and share those quotes in my answers to the questions that may be posed by members of the committee. That concludes my 20-minute submission.

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The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. The round of questions will start with the official opposition if there are any questions from yourselves. MPP Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to the member for introducing this bill and for his comments today before this committee. On behalf of the official opposition, I want

to say how much we appreciate your taking into consideration the remarks that were made by our colleague the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s during the second reading debate on this bill. The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s, actually, during her remarks, referenced a dissertation that had been published by our other colleague, the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, and I think that the comments are worth repeating this morning. She said, “Through their landscape paintings the Group of Seven portrayed Canada and, namely, northern Ontario as serene, as beautiful, and a place of peace,” and I think that that is well established, well understood and there is agreement among us about the importance of acknowledging the foundational importance of the Group of Seven to the Canadian art movement.

She goes on to say, however, “The landscapes were void of the realities of colonization and its impact on Indigenous peoples.” Now, one of the other things that the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s talked about during her remarks was the cuts that were made by the Ford government to the Indigenous Culture Fund. I wondered if the member had any comments about the value of an Indigenous Culture Fund supporting Indigenous art to provide that counterpoint to the historical context in which the Group of Seven created their works.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, there’s no question—through you, Chair—that embracing, celebrating and supporting all art, including, in particular, Indigenous art, is very much a priority for me as the sponsor of this bill and, I believe, for the government of Ontario under Premier Ford. The bill that we’re speaking of has strong support, including from the Art Gallery of Ontario. I didn’t quote all of the submission made by Georgiana Uhlyarik, but recalling the comments of Lawren Harris in 1948, she writes, “These artists joined together and sought inspiration on camping trips, in the hardwood forests and along the shores of glacial bays and lakes in Ontario’s north, surveying lands scarred by fires and decades of logging. It was critical to experience these places first-hand, spend considerable time observing them in order to understand and depict their uniqueness. In Algoma the painters found ‘a wild richness and clarity of colour’ and skies of ‘singing expansiveness and sublimity.’”

So I think what we have is that part of the legacy of the Group of Seven is how the land was perhaps invaded or damaged by logging, for example, and that, I think, set the stage for our current focus on the need to protect the environment, to preserve it, and for respect for those who are the original stewards of the land, our Indigenous people.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much. In making your remarks about the value of the bill, you talked about the opportunity to highlight the historical context in which the art of the Group of Seven was created, and I wondered if you could elaborate a little bit more on how you envision that happening. What do you see taking place in the province of Ontario on the seventh day of the seventh month that would elaborate on that historical context and, in particular, as you’ve just mentioned, the environmental context in which the art was created, the reality of colonization and

residential schools. How do you see that happening on that seventh day of the seventh month, in particular around the historical context?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair: Thank you to the member for the question. It’s not just one day. The act is about making the seventh day of the seventh month the Group of Seven Day because it’s a good numeral to be able to talk about the Group of Seven on the seventh day of the seventh month, but because it’s July, because it’s summertime, it’s a time for tourism on that day and surrounding that day after our Canada Day celebrations. It’s also a date that follows the month of June, when school field trips are often the case, particularly now that we’re post-pandemic.

So the idea is, beginning in the month of June and throughout the summer, you would have school excursions to our galleries all across Ontario. You would have tourists, both our fellow citizens in Ontario who tour other parts of the province throughout the summer months and visitors from outside Ontario and outside Canada visiting, and all of this creates limitless possibilities for learning, for engagement, for celebrating the fact that, for example, as the submission from the National Gallery supporting Bill 78 indicates, while the gallery remains one of the largest repositories of artworks by the members of the Group of Seven with 2,500 examples in the national collection, there’s also works from antiquity to the present day, and the gallery has one of the finest collections of Indigenous and Canadian art in the world, as well as masterworks from numerous other artistic traditions.

This is what’s important to engagement and education, I say through you, Chair, to the member opposite, that the potential associated with celebrating the Group of Seven, who are responsible for the first Canadian national art movement which has inspired the world, is to create an entry point by which we celebrate that history, celebrate that legacy but also celebrate the present and the future.

As the gallery submission indicates, this is an entry point. People may come initially to see Group of Seven works and then they discover one of the finest collections of Indigenous and Canadian art in the world and masterworks from other artistic traditions. That is building on the legacy of the national art movement created by the Group of Seven: education, engagement, celebrating history and recognizing the fresh new approach of other artistic traditions, both Indigenous and otherwise, in the present day and going into the future.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I’m afraid we’re out of time. Sorry I didn’t give a warning. We’re out of time for this round, but we’ll have other rounds.

Now we’ll move to the independent member for four and a half minutes. MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Happy summer, everyone. Nice to see you and to be back here.

Thank you very much, MPP McCarthy, for bringing this very important idea and concept to committee and to Queen’s Park. We all know how important arts and culture is in our society and our day-to-day life and how it makes the world a much better place. We know we need to support

artists more. Many are living below the poverty line and they do phenomenal work to lift our spirits, to showcase beauty to the world, so we want to invest in more of that. Actually, the number one reason people come to Toronto is a surprise. It was a surprise to me back when I was first at city council and I found this out—it's not for sports, it's for arts and culture, and the more we invest, the bigger the payoff. I think at one point it was for every dollar we invested, there was a \$17 spinoff effect on that, on the economy and the city.

So I'm glad you're bringing this. I think it's fantastic. My questions to you: What was the chronology for this idea? Where did it come from? Can you take us through the history on that?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, for me personally—through you, Chair—it's a lifetime journey. Obviously, like everyone else, I would go on school excursions to various venues in the province of Ontario. Having grown up in the GTA east, the McMichael gallery was one of the places that I attended as a student. My mother brought my brother John and I there one summer day. The joy of going on a non-school day in the summer with my mom and my brother was in and of itself a great experience. But knowing that you were at something uniquely Canadian and something very historic was very important. That's part of the learning experience.

1030

And then, we're a country that loves, say, for example, our Toronto Maple Leafs and our Montreal Canadiens. But I discovered over the years that the Group of Seven was a particularly well-known and well-regarded group of artists, and that it wasn't art that was stuffy and inaccessible, but rather art that belonged to all the people because it was about Ontario and Canada and landscapes that we could all relate to. It was celebrating something uniquely Canadian. Knowing that it put us on the map internationally, that's something that I began to discover then in high school and university.

And then, as a parliamentarian, thinking about how I might best contribute with a private member's bill, I was inspired by the fact that there would be ripple effects of a Group of Seven Day—obviously to celebrate something uniquely Canadian, something that is over a century old in terms of a national art movement that inspired artists around the world, but also the idea that once you move on something like this, it has the ripple effects of tourism, education, debate and engagement and, quite frankly, it's good for the economy. When people travel, when people spend their tourist dollars, whether they're Ontario residents or residents from outside Ontario, around the world, that's good for the economy. Tourism is a driver of economic growth. And with that comes revenue that funds the government's ability to fund the arts.

So this is all connected. A celebration of something uniquely Ontarian and Canadian, a celebration of art, a celebration of history, a place where individuals and families and schoolchildren can go to and enjoy and tourists can enjoy and learn about Ontario. Many in Ontario may learn more about art as a result. I mentioned in response to the question earlier that this is an entry point. People may

come for the Group of Seven because it's the most well-known art, and then they discover all types of different artistic traditions, including Indigenous art.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): One minute remaining.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: And that is what we need to do: create an entry point. Believe me, I'm as much of a hockey fan as anybody else, but we're more than just a hockey culture, we're also about art and history. And our ability to celebrate that with a special day has many, many positive ripple effects as a result, including, as I say, education, engagement, tourism and the economic prosperity that goes with it.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And your favourite Group of Seven member?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I have to say Tom Thomson. I have to say his particular works of art have always inspired me. Maybe it's because I was introduced to them early.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great; thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Smith, please go ahead.

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Chair: First, I want to congratulate you for bringing this to the table. Fair warning, I live in Thornhill. We're home to five of seven of the Group of Seven, so I'm a proud roamer of those streets, so to speak. And we can talk about that a little bit more.

I appreciated the fact that you brought to the table how much of a Canadian experience—the landscape of the Canadian experience was to the Group of Seven. It's kind of heartening for me because they actually took what was known as the radial, which was a form of transit—one of the first forms of transit, actually—along Yonge Street to get to northern Ontario. It must have been a very long drive, so to speak, and they must have camped out for a very long time just to get all of these possible pictures or sketches. So I truly appreciate what you're bringing to the table.

I also live within steps of MacDonald's house and I played with my son in the location where Tangled Garden was conceived and created. So it is kind of heartwarming to see this happening.

I guess my question to you is, we have days or months that recognize so many different cultures, so many different events in Ontario and in Canada. Why do you feel that this day should be categorized or why do you feel it should be given a specific point in time to be celebrated?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair, to the member from Thornhill: It isn't just going to be about one day, but there's a certain magic to the Group of Seven as a number—even though it wasn't a fixed group of seven, as I've already indicated; it involved and included additional artists over time. But there's a certain magic to matching that number, the Group of Seven, with a day and a month of the year, so that's why I proposed the seventh day of the seventh month. If passed, it would be, I guess, the seventh day of the week; Sunday, July 7, 2024, would be the first Group of Seven Day.

But also, although we had to focus on one day for the purposes of a proclamation in celebration of the Group of Seven, it is about the entire summer months, promoting

tourism. It is about the month before, which promotes field trips by our young people from our elementary and secondary schools.

I did want to point out, too—and I referenced this in my opening submission—two individuals from the member’s community. A former Markham councillor, Valerie Burke, spoke of this Tangled Garden that the member speaks of. In her submission, she writes, “The Group of Seven awareness day is especially significant for historic Thornhill village, because the majority of the Group of Seven artists lived in Thornhill. J.E.H. MacDonald was inspired his beautiful Thornhill garden and painted the spectacular Tangled Garden,” of which the member from Thornhill speaks, “which is proudly displayed at the National Gallery in Ottawa.” That’s Valerie Burke, former councillor from Markham.

Current ward 5 Vaughan councillor Gila Martow, who was also the member for Thornhill’s predecessor for the riding of Thornhill, also wrote in support of the bill:

“The city of Vaughan hosted the ARTonBOXES program where Vaughan high school students competed, and the results were outstanding!

“Two of the chosen art pieces were Group of Seven-themed: One was a heritage house and the other a rocky landscape with trees.”

Gila Martow writes about her late mother, who was passionate about art. Some of her favourite memories of her mother include their annual visits to see the Group of Seven collection at the McMichael art gallery in the historic village of Kleinburg, one of Vaughan’s non-Wonderland tourist attractions.

Gila, having lived on the Thornhill side of Vaughan for over three decades, serving the community in many roles, including as an optometrist, an MPP and now a local councillor, is enthusiastic about our Bill 78 proposal. She says that this can and will “raise awareness of the Group of Seven and their strong ties to Thornhill (which five of the artists called home at one time).” She looks forward to doing all that she can to help promote this wonderful initiative.

So not only is the member for Thornhill currently an excellent member and an excellent parliamentarian, she follows in the wonderful footsteps of former MPP Martow, whom I believe the Chair served with over many years as well.

Ms. Laura Smith: It’s an economy, as well, the arts. It nourishes us in so many ways. But it’s also necessary that the arts fill other boots, as well, and the arts have definitely suffered during COVID. We’ve seen this. I was just watching a report last night where they talked about movies—not that I can cross-compare movies and the Group of Seven, but movies are now happily at a point where attendance is now at a 2019 level, which is fantastic, because we’re getting past certain points in time.

What do you think this will do economically for the communities that house the Group of Seven? Or what do you think this could possibly do for the economies of scale for Ontario in general?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): A minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair, I thank the member for the question. There’s nothing like being in person. We did what we had to do during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, but the only alternative—I’m sure you could do a Zoom presentation at one of our art galleries, but the ability of young people and all of our students and families to be able to attend in person at our galleries, to see them in person, to see the 2,500 works that are displayed at the National Gallery in Ottawa, to see the wonderful works in Kleinburg at the McMichael gallery, to honour the memory of six of the members of the Group of Seven, to be there in person? There’s nothing like it.

1040

Of course, with in-person activity comes spending, because the admission is not free, nor should it be. But all of the tourist activity creates economic activity, which creates economic growth, and that creates the government’s ability to stand alongside the self-funding that occurs among these galleries with government funding through all sorts of grants, whether it be the Trillium fund or the Resilient Communities Fund. That’s where the taxpayer dollars come from: economic activity and economic growth.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. We’ll now move on to another round of questioning for the official opposition. MPP Shaw, you have seven and a half minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Good morning. Congratulations on this bill. As has been said before, we supported the bill at second reading and we are still in support of the bill. But I appreciate you saying you will embrace debate and criticism, because that’s our job here: It’s to make bills in this House better, and so that will be what I’m attempting to do here today.

I grew up in Toronto. We’ve all talked about our connections with the Group of Seven; there is no schoolchild in Toronto who didn’t visit the McMichael gallery. When I would take the subway, just before Bloor, if you look out the window on the left-hand side, there is the Studio Building, which was at that time in disrepair, and that was the studio Lawren Harris actually funded and where Tom Thomson did a lot of his work. So there’s a lot of legacy here in Toronto that we can be proud of.

I would say that I think, MPP McCarthy, you have a unique opportunity to use your bill to recontextualize, as we’ve been talking about, the work of the Group of Seven and the history that was occurring, then and now, at the time of their work. I think all of us have a responsibility to do what we can to take steps towards real, true actions when it comes to truth and reconciliation, and I believe that your bill is a good opportunity to do that.

I wanted to ask you if you were familiar with the Indigenous Group of Seven, which was formed over 50 years ago, and that their work was in the same context that we are talking about historically and also contributed significantly to the representation of our Canadian identity, as you described today. So are you familiar with the Indigenous Group of Seven, and do you see a role for celebrating that group within this bill?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair, I thank the member for the question. As I’ve indicated, this bill,

having the title that it does and the focus that it does on the seventh day of the seventh month, is to both celebrate the first national art movement for Canada and for Ontario, but also to celebrate and learn about different artistic traditions and, in particular, Indigenous art traditions.

It's an entry point. As the member's question implies, the Group of Seven doesn't need an introduction in terms of our students and our individuals and our families who are well familiar with the Group of Seven being uniquely Canadian and uniquely about Canada. But it's that entry point that gets our fellow citizens in the door, so to speak, to learn about what they might not know about, which is the Indigenous Group of Seven; which is some of the presentations by both Mr. Kwan and Mr. Monkman, who held their presentations at the McMichael gallery, home of the Group of Seven. The very gallery that honours the Group of Seven embraces that input.

And so, when you have an entry point, when you utilize perhaps the best-known national art movement for Canada that is best known by most Canadians—probably as well known as the dates that the Toronto Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup a long time ago—it's so much a part of our culture, so much a part of our education. It should be utilized as an entry point for further artistic education, including the Indigenous Group of Seven, and the key is that the Group of Seven evolves. It can include Indigenous art; it can include a unique Indigenous Group of Seven, as it should, and we celebrate that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I do find the seventh day, seventh month kind of catchy. I also would like to remind all of us, if you're not aware, that we have in the Legislature the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which is that incredible carving that has only recently been installed. It's something that should have happened many years before, but I'm happy and I'm sure we're all happy to see it there. That teaches us about love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility and wisdom.

I also would like to remind everyone that here in the committee room, right above us, there are art installations that are from Norval Morrisseau and other Indigenous artists. There's also a very poignant art installation which are the children's shoes that are a reminder to all of us of the continued atrocity of finding children in unmarked graves who died during the residential school shame of this country. Again, I'm repeating, and I think you're supporting, that we cannot continue to erase the existence of the colonial history of this country that has led to such horrific discoveries. So I thank you for that.

I also wanted to say that we talk about the past Group of Seven, whether it's the Indigenous Group of Seven or whether we're talking about this Group of Seven, that artists continue to create work and they continue to struggle in the province of Ontario and around the world. But, certainly, in the province of Ontario, we know that the government has cut funding significantly to the Ontario Arts Council; I believe they've slashed completely the Indigenous Culture Fund. I don't think that exists anymore. So those were two ways that this government could substantially support art and artists in this province.

I think that your bill could be a unique opportunity to call for that, to recognize that our cultural expression through art—and also, as being mentioned here, as an economic engine, if you will, for the province—needs to be supported. Just as Stellantis and Volkswagen need to be supported, so do our artists in the province. I just want to make sure that we're aware that the median income of Ontario artists in Canada was \$23,500. In fact, it's not surprising to know that the median income of Indigenous artists in Canada is \$16,000. That's a significantly low income to be creating the kind of works that make us proud of our country and serve us well to tell our history.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Just a one-minute warning.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Again, my question to you would be, while you're celebrating this important history, would you also be using this as an opportunity to advocate to your government to reinstate funding or reinstate the Indigenous Culture Fund and stop the continued cuts to the Ontario Arts Council as part of the celebration of art that has come before us and that we would like to see come in the future?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair, thank you for the question. What I do know is that in my riding of Durham, which includes the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, I was very proud to present the confirmed funding of \$137,000 for the Scugog art council just in the past few weeks. That was well received in my community. That is made possible because of the leadership of our government to an independent agency.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): We'll move on to the independent member. MPP McMahon, you've got five minutes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I think you mentioned a little bit about schools and your trip as a child with your mom and your brother to the McMichael gallery. The member, my seatmate here, mentioned that most Torontonian children went on field trips to the McMichael gallery. I know my kids did. But I grew up in Collingwood, and we didn't. We did study, obviously, the Group of Seven. We didn't go to this gallery in Owen Sound. I'm wondering if it was around then at the time—eons ago, when I was a child.

But I'm just wondering if you have ideas for outreach to schools, for arts and culture and to learn the history of this famous group. Also, you mentioned about how much they valued Canadian landscape and nature, forests, water—all our great resources. So in addition to knowledge for kids to learn about the artists, to learn about environmental stewardship as these artists modelled, if you had any ideas for, specifically, that day, July 7 of next year, of what Ontarians could and should be doing and what we can be doing for outreach to schools and what kids could be doing?

1050

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you to the member—through you, Chair—for that question. I'm in the committee's hands, because the hope is that—we're just under a year away from what could be the first Group of Seven

Day. What would that look like? If this committee supports this bill, then when we return on September 25, at some point hopefully in the fall this bill is presented for third reading and a third reading vote, and hopefully then it becomes law with the signature of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Then we would have many, many months to prepare, working with all of the galleries that house Group of Seven works; all of the schools, both the elementary and secondary schools, to begin engagement. The first Group of Seven Day will be Sunday, July 7, 2024. It's not just one day, and it's not just about the Group of Seven; it's about all art forms in Canada. It's about protecting our natural environment, any way that we can promote and engage through our school system.

I certainly intend to be an ambassador, if this bill is passed, for getting into our schools, both the elementary and secondary schools in my riding and anywhere else I'm invited. I would encourage every MPP in their communities—and there are 124 of us—to get out there to the local gallery, but also to your local schools, make the pitch to have a focus on this in June in whatever way we can engage our young people. I know when I speak to my children, my nieces and nephews, the students in my community, they are all focused on the environment and conservation and preservation of our natural habitats. If that's the way to engage our young people, with this Group of Seven bill and education about it and engagement about it, then it would be the lead-up over many, many months to the spring of 2024 and the first Group of Seven Day.

Even if we're talking about schools that don't have a field trip to one of the galleries, there's no reason why they can't talk about the environment and talk about the natural habitats portrayed by the Group of Seven artists and other artists, including Indigenous artists, to learn and engage. Then maybe those students would take their own summer trips with their families as they travel Ontario in the summer months.

This is about creating ripples of hope, tiny ripple effects where we create the window for engagement, and then that leads to incalculable and positive impacts on issues of art, history, truth and reconciliation, civic engagement—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 50 seconds left.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: —and, indeed, environmental protection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. Have you been talking to all these galleries that showcase the works of the Group of Seven, or some of them?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Yes. I and my staff have reached out. I think I've indicated I was aware of and was happy to receive the national art gallery submission on July 6—the National Gallery submission on July 6 of this year, and the June 26 submissions from the Art Gallery of Ontario. And then I engaged with Carol McNamara, who is a member of the board of directors, and received her submission, along with Gila Martow from Thornhill. And I did want to acknowledge the young artist Lauren Walker from my riding, as well—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): I'm sorry. We're out of time for this round.

We'll now move to the government side for seven and a half minutes. MPP Smith?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much, through you, Chair. I appreciated the conversation that continued. Just about a 10-minute walk from here we've got the AGO, which features some incredible Indigenous art. And the McMichael gallery, which is probably about 30 clicks depending upon what route you take, in York region, has a tremendous value of Indigenous art that has been featured there literally since I can remember. I frequent that location quite a bit, and I went to an incredible exhibit not too long ago that was mixed media. But I believe there have been literally over 1,500 different presentations of different Indigenous artists through the years, and they have a vanguard of different programs, different artistic values through that medium or through Indigenous artists or people who identify as Indigenous artists. I truly value the different locations that we can visit all over Ontario that will provide this kind of view for not only the artistic community, but to provide it to our future generations and our future artists.

I should also point out that I've been very happy to attend Indigenous festivals and arts programs because our government does support these programs. Through the Reconnect program, we've provided some very good funding that provides subsidies to Ontario's cultural attractions. That includes Indigenous arts and tourism events and exhibitions that do continue on in Ontario, and that's with value. So I just wanted to get that information on record.

I also wanted to talk about what MPP McCarthy thinks this will do for other Canadian artists, be it Indigenous or not Indigenous—what he believes this will bring for future Groups of Seven.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair: As I've said, it's an entry point. The door is open, perhaps, because of the best-known national art movement, and then when one attends the galleries, one is introduced to all types of art forms and artistic traditions, including Indigenous. So it will actually indirectly create engagement for other artistic traditions, and that's a good thing.

I can share with you my own experience—the Art Gallery of Ontario here in Toronto, steps from Queen's Park. I visited it as a student at the University of Toronto St. George campus in my younger days. I visited it later, after my wife, Kathy, and I were married, with my in-laws. Then, last year, as we began the 43rd Parliament, I was invited as a new MPP by Jay Xie, along with my wife too, to visit the AGO.

Ms. Laura Smith: Did you just say Jay-Z?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I may not be pronouncing it right: J-A-E, surname X-I, who's associated with the AGO.

So we were invited to have a tour and enjoyed it very much. Of course, I went to see the Group of Seven works that I'm familiar with, but then I was introduced to so much more. So even for me, that was a refresher and an entry point and an opening to so much more. That's what it's about. The engagement that results from that, the learning

that results from that has many, many positive ripple effects. That's what I'm talking about.

That was August 2022 when I was re-engaged with the AGO. I take that back to my riding, and in my travels in Durham riding, I happened to meet for the first time one of my constituents from Port Perry, Lauren Walker—not the same spelling as Lawren Harris—L-A-U-R-E-N Walker. She writes, “Art is created by those who think outside the box,” as I referenced earlier. “It reflects infinite freedom and possibility to those who dare to dream. A movement is created when like-minded people come together and challenge convention. The Group of Seven has that very impact and we strive to honour their legacy here today. Their work sparks our imagination and inspires us to dream bigger and bolder. We must honour those who have created such an everlasting mark on our Canadian culture. In doing so, we can inspire other artists to pursue their creative goals. The Group of Seven showed us that the only path to follow is the one you create for yourself. Dare to dream!”

Ms. Laura Smith: I like that statement, daring to dream.

With that, I'm going to ask you what is possibly my final question. I'm going to put you in a time capsule, and you're going to wake up and it's going to be 100 years from now. Do you think we'll still know who the Group of Seven are at that time? And what do you think this bill will do for that?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair, to the member: Thank you for the question from the member for Thornhill. In 100 and 200 years from now, there will be the Group of Seven that we knew beginning in 1920, and I believe there will be many Groups of Seven, because that's what this can and will lead to, if passed, I believe. The entry point, the opening of the door, the opening of the window, bringing in the ability to see and appreciate and celebrate different perspectives, different art forms—that is what is uniquely Canadian.

When we embrace the past and celebrate what the Group of Seven brought us, we, I think, create the opportunity for infinite numbers of new members of the Group of Seven who will bring a uniquely rich perspective to the celebration of art and culture in Ontario and Canada.

1100

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you, Mr. McCarthy. Time?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have a minute and 15 seconds, if you wish.

Ms. Laura Smith: I was going to actually ask you—I know you already described your favourite artist and the actual work, but what inspired you to bring this bill forward?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair: So many things. I mean, obviously it's not right for me to pick a favourite, but I did concede Tom Thomson, and my great-grandparents introduced us to Georgian Bay as a place to visit in the summer and had a cottage there. And so, anything that reminds me of the iconic Georgian Bay landscapes always is something that I treasure in my heart, but there are just so many influences.

What it really comes down to is just how well known and accessible the Group of Seven art movement is to so many people who I know. It belongs to the people; it belongs to the citizens. It's not some narrow, elite group that's associated with it. And it expanded, and continues to expand, and it inspires younger artists.

Ms. Laura Smith: And they were controversial at the time, as well, because they were using colours that did not necessarily depict work that was being utilized. Were they avant-garde, would you say?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Through you, Chair, I would say that's true. They were progressive, avant-garde and they were doing something that hadn't been done before.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. The time is up. Thank you very much for your presentation.

ART GALLERY OF ALGOMA

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now move on to our presenter, so I'll give you a minute, MPP McCarthy, to leave the table. We're going to hear in a few minutes from the Art Gallery of Algoma, and Jasmina is here. You can make your way up to the front, Jasmina.

As she's making her way up, I'll just remind everyone that we just have one presenter in this group, but the presenter will be allotted seven minutes for an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses—sorry, just one witness today—divided into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member of the committee.

When you're ready, just state your name for Hansard's purposes and you can begin.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning to everybody. I'm very pleased and honoured to be here. This is my first time doing something like this, so you have to forgive me if I do not follow the right protocol. That's my apology right away.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We'll let you know.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Well, that's good to know.

I will spell my name, if that's what you would like—or just pronounce my name?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Just say your name.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Oh, just say it? Okay. Jasmina Jovanovic, executive director of the Art Gallery of Algoma in Sault Ste. Marie, northern Ontario, one of the beloved places that the Group of Seven cherished and visited many times. As everyone in the room and beyond knows, a lot of artwork that they created has “Algoma” in its title, so Algoma certainly represents one of the significant points in the careers of all of the artists.

I did write a submission, but I'm not going to read that. I'm just going to touch upon certain points that, I think, are valid, especially in light of—I'm sorry I wasn't here for the beginning of the presentation.

But what I would like to start with is that the Group of Seven is not losing the status of being current in the art world at all, especially from the perspective of our visitors.

We host every summer, as per the demand of the visitors, a Group of Seven exhibition in one of our galleries. We just opened another rendition of this exhibition at the end of June and our first week of art camp, which is children from age five to age 13, was sold out. They do a theme every year, and the theme of at least one week of the camp is landscapes and the Group of Seven. If you go even on our Facebook page, you will see a picture of kids sitting on the floor in the gallery and sketching. So they are fully alive and they are fully present on the arts scene, at least in Algoma.

Our visitors come from all over the world. The highest number of visitors is obviously from Ontario. The next one would be from Canada and, very close to that, from United States, because we are a border city. So all of these people are coming to see the Group of Seven. Also, why they love to come to Algoma is to also see the actual places and the nature that inspired these artists to create these masterpieces. We are situated in a place that is accessible and also close to those locations, so they can have day trips, same as the Group of Seven artists did.

What the Group of Seven artists did: They had a boxcar, and the boxcar was their living quarters. It was taken into the wilderness and then left over there. They were left for a couple of weeks or three weeks at a time. They were taking field trips and day trips to different locations, exploring the wilderness. That was untouched nature and, for the most part, it still is. When people take the Agawa tour train these days, they can see and enjoy the scenery that the Group of Seven was inspired by.

Also, we had a program that involved having an art instructor for groups on the train. On the way back, when people absorbed the beauty and feel inspired by the nature, they could try to do small watercolour sketches on the train with the supplies we would provide for them and some of the images that they had in their package by the Group of Seven. That is very popular and interesting—it used to be. This year, we are not doing it. COVID made a lot of changes, and we are still on a trajectory of recovery. But I'm sure that something like that will come back.

What I also wanted to say is that I fully support July 7 as the Group of Seven Day. It is catchy, as I believe someone already mentioned. But also, it happens to be the day that the Art Gallery of Algoma was incorporated in 1975. That is our birthday. I fully support that date.

Interjection.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes. Also, what I would like to say is that when the gallery was incorporated, the first exhibition, there was no building for the gallery at that time. This is the only public art gallery between Sudbury and Thunder Bay, the only public art gallery in Algoma region. It serves Algoma region, but it also serves Michigan and Wisconsin, the bordering states there. Michigan is bordering, but it's close. What I wanted to say is that they had exhibitions in empty spaces around the city and—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sixty seconds remaining, so go ahead.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Oh my God, I have so much more to say.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sorry.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: The first exhibition was the Group of Seven. The person who officially opened the art gallery, newly built after five years of fundraising and getting money for the new, purpose-built building, was a later member of the Group of Seven, Alfred Joseph Casson. So we have a long tradition of hosting Group of Seven exhibitions, different programming.

As was mentioned in the previous discussion, it does influence people beyond Ontario. We just received a donation of a landscape piece from Manitoba by a Manitoba artist, and his quote is, "It thrills me to think that as people move through the gallery, looking for the Group of Seven, some of those same searchers are going to land on 'Winter Palace'"—which is his painting—"and I hope it evokes a response to a particular landscape being communicated through painting. Another artist, a later time, but the same passion for the landscape that defines it."

1110

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I appreciate your presentation. There's opportunities for questions and answers. If it's okay to start with the official opposition again, MPP Sattler, you're up for seven and a half minutes. Go ahead.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Ms. Jovanovic, for coming to the Legislative Assembly today to offer your support for this important bill. Your comments are very much appreciated. I want to say, I think it was about three summers ago, I had the opportunity to go to Sault Ste. Marie for a summer vacation, and took the Agawa Canyon train ride and did exactly as you said. I observed the scenery and was inspired by the thoughts of the Group of Seven artists painting that beautiful landscape all those years ago.

I also appreciated your commitment at the gallery to engaging youth. You talked about summer camp programming. I wondered if you could expand a little bit more about what opportunities you see to further reach young people and, in particular, young people from diverse backgrounds in exploring their own artistic passions through the recognition of the Group of Seven Day, if this bill passes and next year, next July 7, we're formally recognizing the first Group of Seven Day in this province.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Thank you. I will try to be as concise as I can. The opportunities are pretty much endless. There are different angles that we can look at. There is a historical angle, there is an aesthetic angle, but there is also an environmental angle, connecting with the Indigenous art and Indigenous communities which are present in Algoma as well. I think that there are so many connecting points that we can use, and we are using some of them already.

As I said, every exhibition that we mount about the Group of Seven, we engage school boards. We produce not just the program for the school tours when they come; we also have a hands-on hour for the youth to create something. We then mount exhibitions some years of their work, and that means a lot to them because they can see their art on the wall. That is an enormous encouragement for them, to be recognized, even at the age of 10 or 11, and

that their artwork is on display at the main gallery in the city.

If we have this date as a starting point, as an entry point, as MPP McCarthy mentioned, I think that that would give us more opportunity to engage different youth groups. You are absolutely correct that it is the youth who have to be engaged with this. We work the best we can to do it, but I think having a date when we can say, “Come and celebrate the Group of Seven”—not just that day, but that whole week we dedicate to the programming and engage young people to create a mural. We also did that for Ontario Culture Days one year. We created murals of Algoma based on photographs and also had the exhibition of the Group of Seven’s actual works.

I think that environmental component is another one. As I said, it’s hugely important. We can definitely bring that forward further and connect with school boards, with universities, with the college and different groups. We work very closely with youth from the Indigenous friendship centre in Sault Ste. Marie. We can try to find a connecting point for dialogue between the Group of Seven and Indigenous teachings, and there are those connecting points. I think that opening that dialogue gives us great opportunities to figure out how we can engage youth and how we can keep the legacy going but also keep making it contemporary so it lives long after us.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for that response. In light of what you talked about with the environmental component and the environmental connections that can be made with young people: There was an exhibition that Museum London recently curated with the Art Gallery of Guelph called *The Drive*. It was focused around the work of Tom Thomson called *The Drive*, which really focused on the logging in Algonquin Park, which was a real counterpoint to the pristine landscapes that we often think of with the Group of Seven. In that exhibition, they curated the work with other contemporary art depictions of resource extraction, logging etc., and they talked about the need to use this opportunity to advance ideas of ecological sustainability and environmental justice.

I wondered if you wanted to comment on how Group of Seven works can be used to advance those ideas of environmental justice as well as reconciliation and the realities of colonization.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I would also like to then point out that we all love and know the landscape pieces that depict this beautiful untouched wilderness and nature, and for the most part, where I live, you can see that.

I’m not from Algoma. I lived for many years in Winnipeg, and of course I am also an immigrant, which you can tell because of my accent and my name, but—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): You have 40 seconds remaining.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Oops.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Go ahead.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: —but what I want to say is that they also did paint places of mining, logging and places that even don’t exist today. Those paintings are the testimony of how we, as stewards of the land, don’t always

do the best thing to it. I think that there is a lot to be said about that.

The McMichael gallery is working on an exhibition that we’re hoping to get next summer. It will be travelling to several venues, and it is about a place called Cobalt, which was a mining place. It depicts the images of the first industry and ruining the landscape too—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much.

We’ll move to the round of questioning from the independent. MPP McMahon, you have four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you so much for coming, Jasmina—especially you coming from so far away. I only have four and a half minutes to question you, but I’m really enjoying your presentation. I did not know about the Art Gallery of Algoma; I’ve never been there, but I’m going to put it on my to-do list, obviously.

Your submission is just chock full of great information. I feel like you had more to say in your initial presentation, and I just wondered if you wanted to add and tell us more about your gallery and the work you do up there that you were going to do in your presentation.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Thank you for giving me that opportunity to do that, because there is a lot to be said. It is a huge part of our mandate, because we have three streams in our programming mandate, and one is Group of Seven/landscapes. They’re all interacting at the end of the day: The second one is environment, and the third one is Indigenous art. So all of these three components really can—they’re touching each other, and they can definitely be explored further. We are working on building a bigger gallery, because we are short on space and we cannot present as much as we possibly could, so we are hopeful that will happen and then our programming will enhance all of these components and the interaction between them.

1120

Someone was mentioning about tourism, I believe, and that is a huge component for us as well, because our tourism season starts in June and ends around Thanksgiving. During those months, we are really the ambassadors of Canadian art and culture for many people. We have visitors from Asia, Australia, New Zealand—very surprising to me, not knowing that before I started working there. So now, I feel that I really have the grassroots experience about all of this and about the admiration of people, especially people of Ontario, for the land and for the art of the Group of Seven. I think that will never be gone.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Awesome. And you run camps in the summer, and, I guess, school groups come through—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes, yes. This academic year that just finished, we had about 3,000 students from—we don’t do grade 1, but let’s say grade 3 to the end of high school. So that’s pretty good for our community and the size of our space and gallery.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And they’re primarily coming from Sault Ste. Marie and neighbouring areas?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Well, the Algoma District School Board, and just throughout the region of Algoma.

We produce in-person and online programming, so it's accessible to the kids who wouldn't be able to come and the students who wouldn't be able to come because of the cost; they have to make special field trips. But this way, we are enhancing our offerings to communities such as Chapleau, Hearst and Wawa, farther north in Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thirty seconds remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So you're working with the other school boards across Ontario?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That's fantastic. All right, thank you so much.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the government side. MPP Martin had her hand up first.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much, Ms. Jovanovic. Thank you for coming, and for bringing all of your good work in Algoma to us and telling us a little bit about what you do there.

You mentioned the Manitoba artist David Owen Lucas, and his inspiration of the landscapes and thinking that his work will be seen alongside some of the Group of Seven artists. I'm wondering—as you said, you spent some time living in Winnipeg—if you've also heard of the artist Simon Hughes.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes.

Mrs. Robin Martin: The National Gallery has a portrait they describe as inspired by the “browns, oranges and playing with the styles of ... painters such as the Group of Seven.” He happens to be my husband's cousin—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Wow.

Mrs. Robin Martin: —and he's been very successful and has some installations here in Toronto. So I'm hoping that the Art Gallery of Algoma is also going to include some of his works coming up.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Oh, sure. I did not exactly follow his career, but I did meet him. I remember when he was a young and upcoming artist—I'm getting old. There was an exhibition of young artists from Winnipeg and he was one of them. So I remember his piece clearly, and I met him at that time. I'm very glad to hear that his career is progressing from there.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Yes, his work is mostly Canadiana-inspired: lots of icebergs, aurora borealis and those kinds of things, but also, apparently, taking colour palettes from the Group of Seven.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Which we hosted last summer—that was popular—from the McMichael. It was an exhibition called *Homage*, by Jon Sasaki, where he grew bacteria. He swabbed the brushes, the palettes, the boxes that the Group of Seven artists took on field trips. He did the swabbing of those, put the swabs into the petri dish and grew bacteria and then took photographs of those. You would be surprised to see how each artist had very different bacteria, because these very large, colourful photographs of the petri dishes were just looking amazing.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Fascinating. Very interesting.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes. It is an ongoing inspiration for contemporary artists.

Interjection.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Art and science—exactly, exactly.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McGregor, please go ahead.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you to our guest for coming here all the way from Sault Ste. Marie. Actually, we have a member on the government side from Sault Ste. Marie; he's our chief government whip, which basically means he tells us what to do and where to go all the time. He knew you were coming today and wanted to share just a “hello and welcome to Queen's Park.” I think he said he was going to see you tomorrow—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Tomorrow, I have a big opening; that's why I have a suitcase with me. Tomorrow evening, yes, he will be talking at the opening of the exhibition, a new body of work about the environment by Dr. Roberta Bondar, who was born and raised in the Soo and still keeps ties with the Soo. She followed three migratory birds and their fight for survival in this exhibition. The images are absolutely gorgeous. The exhibition will be up until October 15, so you're all invited to come. I don't think you'll come tomorrow, but if you want, you are welcome.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We'll see if we can make a committee trip out of it.

To talk about that, and also kind of along the lines of the importance of Sault Ste. Marie to the government and to Ontario, can you talk a little bit about the Group of Seven—obviously we know they were the first exhibition at the Art Gallery of Algoma. Can you talk a little bit more about the importance of the Group of Seven to the Soo identity and what this bill would mean to protecting and enhancing that identity?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Oh, absolutely. What you will read in my submission is that, in particular, A.Y. Jackson was the one who was coming back. He owned a log cabin on the shores of Lake Superior, just outside of Wawa—Michipicoten Bay—and he formed relationships and friendships with local people. So there are still people who are alive and who remember him and know him. We have copies of some letters that he was exchanging with people—when he is coming; what he will need. So it is kind of woven into the community, the whole concept of the Group of Seven.

There is the Algoma Art Society, which is still active—75 years. There are photographs of Group of Seven members, especially, again, A.Y. Jackson, painting with them, with the artists at the time, on the shores of Lake Superior. So it is kind of woven into the community. These artists are not people who have big careers outside of Algoma, but they love art and they find inspiration in the Group of Seven every day. And having something like this, and the opportunity to mark what they are doing as important, I think would really give them an additional boost and encouragement to keep going.

Mr. Graham McGregor: I've got to admit, I'm a little embarrassed about this one, committee; I'm not as familiar

with the Group of Seven as I should be. And I should be, because I know what they mean to our provincial identity and our national identity. I did the school trips as a kid and learned about it, certainly, at school, but a lot of that is kind of—actually, earlier, Jay-Z came up. That's probably a little bit more familiar to me. He's got a song called Show Me What You Got—which is a segue. If I or somebody else or anybody that's watching at home wanted to learn more about the Group of Seven and either introduce themselves or reintroduce themselves—that's another Jay-Z line, “allow me to reintroduce myself”—what would they do? What's a good way for them to start? How can they approach this and really dive in and show their appreciation?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I think they should start with a visit to the nearest gallery.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There you go. Fifty seconds left, if you want to add any more to that.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I would like, at this point, then, to say that we hosted, during the pandemic, bus tours—usually about six or seven bus tours of Rhodes scholars from the United States. Some of these people had never heard of the Group of Seven. The Group of Seven was the main focus of their visit to the gallery. We provided the art instructors so they could attempt to paint in the style of the Group of Seven. I was giving them a presentation. The change and the transformation from when they come in, and they just look, “What is this?” to leaving and expanding their knowledge, even trying something different that they have never tried before, I found that very rewarding.

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The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. Sorry about that, but time is up on this round.

Now, going to the official opposition for seven and a half minutes. MPP Shaw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Madam Jovanovic, for being here. I appreciate your enthusiasm. You're doing great, by the way. I thought you were nervous, but you did fantastic—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: No, I actually wasn't. I just apologized because I don't know what I'm doing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know what? No one would know. It looks like you're a pro at this.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the connection with your art gallery and the Group of Seven and in the context of the Indigenous community, because you are in the north. You know that that's the Anishinabek territory. Then, there was a lot of intersection, and now there is. I just wanted to share with you that we had a ceremony in the Legislature not that long ago, a month or so ago, in which Garden River First Nation—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Oh, wow.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, that's in your community.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes, yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: They travelled here to the Legislature. We had a ceremony in front of the Legislature. Also, it was a very significant event where the Royal Ontario Museum repatriated or gave back a 200-year-old tomahawk that did belong to that community. The ROM at the time said that this is the beginning of them repatriating a

number of artifacts. They had some Cree artifacts that went to Manitoba as well.

I wanted to say that this event was an important recognition of the intersection of Indigenous culture and the way it was treated and recognized then and how we can change and improve and that we need to learn from the past and that we can do so much better going forward. I had mentioned to MPP McCarthy earlier that I think this bill is a unique opportunity now to embrace and engage the Indigenous culture and the history of Indigenous artists in Ontario, then and now.

So I'm wondering if you would like to take a few minutes to explain to me or share with me some of the collaborative work that you're doing. You mentioned it, but you can do it in more detail. I realize that the museum and artifacts are not the same as visual arts, but there must be some similarity, if you wanted to talk a bit about that.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes, you're absolutely correct that it isn't the same. What we have in our collection are the artworks by Indigenous artists. We don't have enough. I will state that right away: We should expand, and we're working on it to expand the presence of the Indigenous art in our permanent collection. Our permanent collection is probably—we are just finishing the digitization and cataloguing of everything, so we'll know an exact number probably within a year, but it is between 5,000 and 6,000 pieces for a very small gallery.

There are some very significant artists. We have Norval Morrisseau. We have a local artist who painted in the style of Norval Morrisseau, but he developed his own, who passed away a couple of years ago: John Laford. We worked with John on several exhibitions.

His daughter is also an artist, and she teaches Anishinaabe and Indigenous culture and art. So all year, in 2022-23, we had a series of workshops that she was doing for the general public and then some specifically for Indigenous friendship centre children. They were all sold out. We started with four, and then the next month was another four and another four, because there was demand and they kept being sold out.

We also received and we are restarting just now to work with the Indigenous youth through the Indigenous friendship centre to create a mural on the outside wall of the gallery. We got the funding through Ontario Arts Council. The unveiling or celebration of the mural, rather, will be on September 30.

Last year, on September 30, we had a full house. MPP Romano was there and he said a few words—among other people. She was doing a free-for-everybody feather-wrapping workshop. We also had schools. We also had, on another day the week before, a session for teachers on their professional development day. They wanted to learn more about Indigenous culture.

So we are working as much as possible. She works part-time for us, and I think for us, it would be really good if we would actually be able to hire a full curator of Indigenous art.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It sounds like you're doing fantastic work, and I want to congratulate you; I'm sure you have volunteers, a board of directors and other staff—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You're doing fantastic work. You did mention that you have this mural that sounds wonderful that—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: That's coming up, yes. It will be—sorry for the interruption. The mural will start with a series of workshops that she will be doing with the youth, inside, in the studio, teaching them the concepts of woodland art and teaching them more about the culture and how to be proud of their culture and their heritage, and how they belong together in mainstream art and culture, as everybody else does. Then, they will develop this concept for the mural, and the actual painting of the mural will happen later in August.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Great. So what I wanted to say—congratulations, it sounds exciting, but I also wanted to highlight or underscore how important in the arts and cultural sector government funding and government support is. We shared our concerns many times that this government—despite this funding and your congratulations—have cut significantly the Ontario Arts Council funding. They did completely eliminate the Indigenous Culture Fund. You're a perfect example and evidence of why this is so important and why we need to continue to support the arts and arts organizations.

I just wanted to follow up with you. You mentioned that you're still recovering from COVID, the COVID trajectory. You mentioned something that I would like you to talk more about, which is the full-time curator of Indigenous art. It seems to me that that is something that would be important, given how much ground we have to make up for how often we've ignored, sidelined or, in many ways, tried to erase the contributions of Indigenous art and culture in our—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): There's only 30 seconds left.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I apologize—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Okay. We just finished that feasibility study for the new building, and part of the study was an Indigenous consultant, and that is the recommendation that came through the study, that we should hire a full-time Indigenous curator.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate that information.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): We'll now go to MPP McMahon for four and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much. Honestly, this is fascinating, all your information, stories and this feasibility study with, hopefully—touch wood—the potential for a full-time curator for Indigenous art. So thank you for all you're doing.

I just had a question about the significance of the Group of Seven Day and what it means to you, personally, with all your work with the gallery, all your great work—the gallery itself, as you said, was incorporated on July 7—and what you would like to see, best-case scenario. What

would happen that day, “when” this is passed? We're going to be positive.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Well, I can envision different programs for this day, but generally speaking, I think that should be a day of celebration, celebrating being Canadian, celebrating our nature and preserving our nature, helping with climate change, engaging youth, and also, considering where we are, having something happening outside, because they painted outside. They went into the wilderness and painted outside, so I envision that day that we would be kind of all over. Our gallery is situated in the park on St. Marys River. I envision that day being very visible in the Soo, in the park, with different stations promoting different art techniques and different art-making and being open to everyone. And considering that it is the tourism season, I know that a lot of people who are not from the Soo would be participants of that.

1140

I think that the Group of Seven artists definitely deserve the recognition of having a day when their art is recognized, especially since, as someone mentioned, they were not really welcomed at the beginning and they had to fight for what they believed in. I think it's time for them to be recognized for who they are.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Great. And do you see yourself and your gallery working with other galleries in Ontario and beyond about this day? Like, collaboration?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I guess time will tell, because we are working with other galleries, obviously, on the Group of Seven exhibitions or related, inspired by the Group of Seven—we have been. But once we know more about this, then definitely, we are always open to collaboration and working with others, and also making other people aware that we exist. We are up north and we are actually in the land of the Group of Seven, so we would love to partner with other galleries.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Is there anything you would like to see us as MPPs, 124 of us across Ontario, do to help you with this new day and have a celebration, in your wildest dreams?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Sixty seconds left. Sixty seconds to answer that question if you wish.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: In your wildest dreams.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: What I do see is the support, not just financial, but also support with people, and the presence. The presence is important. I think for us to have the government celebrating with us would be very important, and it would be important to the artists as well.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Right. Thank you so much. Thanks for coming in. Safe travels home.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much. I'll move over to the government side, to MPP Smith, please.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you, and through you, Chair: Jasmina—if I can call you Jasmina—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes, of course.

Ms. Laura Smith: —I want to thank you for doing the long haul this morning. We truly appreciate everything that you've brought to the table. The energy that you've brought is effervescent; I think it says a lot when people think so passionately about their work, and I appreciate that. I think that you deserve a gold star, or at least a really nice cup of coffee, after this for doing and making this effort.

Endeavours like yours, Algoma, are part of the arts sector, which provides such significant work to not only Sault Ste. Marie, but the entire community of Ontario, if I can refer to it. They make places an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. One of the primary goals of the Ontario Arts Council was just that, so that they could continue or allow investments in our communities like Algoma. The council was funded, and this was stabilized funding of \$60 million for the 2023-24 year, and I just wanted to make sure that everyone's aware that that funding was provided and stabilized.

But getting back to some of the points that you talked about, on the bill and how this exhibit will be possibly an entry point—you'll have to forgive me; I was trawling you a bit on the Internet just a few minutes ago, and I could see some of the grassroots passion that you have with your community. I think I saw one of the exhibits that may have just passed, Taking Chances, the student exhibit—

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes.

Ms. Laura Smith: I truly love your energy. That's amazing.

How this kind of a bill will affect those kinds of exhibits: I wondered if you have anything to contribute to that area.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I just need to know that we have the date and that we have the proclamation, and then I need probably just a few days to think about something, because I know what that would be. But without even knowing any details at this point, I know that the community would embrace that and I know that they would have very positive feedback in whatever we come up with.

Ms. Laura Smith: It would be very positive for the Soo and the area.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes. It would be very positive for people from all walks of life and people of all ethnic backgrounds. Art has the ability to connect people, so I think art should be utilized for that.

Ms. Laura Smith: And the schools that come into—and I'm looking at this and I'm not seeing just young—usually when we think of school-age children, we think of grades 4, 5, 6. But you're talking about entire age groups that may not have been exposed to arts at any time, correct?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes. And during the pandemic, it was on my to-do list, up front and centre, that we had—and it was such a steep learning curve: How are we going to do stuff online? And I contacted Algoma District School Board right away, and we started working together and learned how to do it, how to be effective. So we actually never lost contact with students, and that was exactly my point when I was talking with them: If we don't do it, we don't know how this pandemic is going to work out. We don't know when the kids will be coming back into the

gallery. But we cannot lose them; they have to be exposed to art. They can't just sit at home.

And if you think about it, we also mounted exhibitions inviting the community to do art. So art plays a huge role for the well-being of people. It played a huge role for the well-being of the Group of Seven artists. Lawren Harris was depressed after the First World War and losing his only brother. Coming to Algoma, he found the nature, and not just the inspiration but the healing: the healing power of creating art and the healing power of nature.

Ms. Laura Smith: I think you have the title of the next exhibition.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Probably.

Ms. Laura Smith: I think “the healing power of Algoma and the Group of Seven”—just putting that out there.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: That sounds good.

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes. Well, I could be persuaded to go up there, no issue; there is absolutely none.

I was actually just looking at some of the—just to give a shameless shout-out to you and your organization: You have exhibits that go beyond the realm of the brick and mortar; they're outside as well.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes.

Ms. Laura Smith: Maybe I should ask how much time I have before—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Two minutes and 20 seconds.

Ms. Laura Smith: Two minutes? Okay. I'm going to go—

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Chair, if I may?

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): MPP McCarthy?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: My colleague asked the question—I think I'm allowed to ask questions, which I don't intend to do at this point, but I can make a point of order to correct my own spelling error. So the manager of government relations at the Art Gallery of Ontario who provided a wonderful tour for my wife, Kathy, and I last August during the first few days of the first session of the 43rd Parliament of Ontario is Jay Xie. J-A-Y is the forename and Xie, X-I-E is the surname. For the record today and for the Hansard reporter: J-A-Y—I misspelled it—X-I-E. Thank you very much, Chair, for that.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, point of order.

We held your time at two minutes.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate that. We were just talking about the exterior, and I was going to talk about how you feel you—where do you see the Group of Seven a hundred years from now at the Algoma or any one of the museums or galleries where we could find the work?

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I see them still on the walls in different exhibitions and still being the inspiration for artists and still being relevant, the same as if you look at Impressionists. Will we ever forget the Impressionists? Probably not.

Ms. Laura Smith: Absolutely not.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I don't think so. So we can compare them to that in Canadian terms. And they did paint

beyond Ontario, even though they are mostly from Ontario, which is also then even more important: to have this bill to celebrate Ontario as the place where they started and their grassroots and then spreading the links from coast to coast and to the Arctic.

Ms. Laura Smith: It's interesting that you bring that up. I believe I've seen a few of the prairies, and I've seen a few cityscapes as well, because that's where they began.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: Yes. We have a drawing by A.Y. Jackson of Baffin Island, so he did travel a lot, and he was very prolific.

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes. I appreciate that.

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Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: So I think that their place—this would be just formalizing what they already hold, the place that they already hold in the hearts of people of Ontario. This would be just formalizing that.

Ms. Laura Smith: I should point out that the mayor of Vaughan wanted it to go on record that it's his birthday, too, July 7—I'm not putting any ideas in anyone's heads, but he wanted the group to know that.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): The idea is time done. Thank you very much, everybody.

Thank you very much for your wonderful enthusiasm and passion and travelling all this way down today. Thank you, Jasmina, very much for coming.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: If I can be of any service, please get in touch. You know how to find me. I cannot hide. I am on the Internet.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you very much.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I will have to leave because I have to catch the flight—

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you, Jasmina. Safe travels.

Ms. Jasmina Jovanovic: I have to be there tomorrow for the grand opening of Dr. Roberta Bondar's exhibition of photographs.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): It sounds amazing. We'll plan better committee travel next time to visit you.

The rest of the committee, I just wondered if we could go right into clause-by-clause. Would that be fine? Agreed? Thank you very much for that. I'll just give a minute for the legislative counsel to move to the table to join us.

We've received no amendments for Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day. There are three sections to the bill. I propose that we bundle sections 1 to 3 together. Does the committee agree? Agreed.

Is there any debate? MPP Sattler, please, go ahead.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much. I just wanted to make some general comments about the bill and what we heard from the presenter and also what we received in terms of the written submissions. I think we only had the opportunity to hear from a single art gallery in the province of Ontario. We know that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of galleries across this province. All of them have amazing opportunities to use this bill as a starting point to engage with their communities, to engage with students. We heard about the work that the Algoma gallery is doing to work with the school boards, not only to highlight the art of the Group of Seven but also to provide that

historical context that is so important around colonialism and residential schools, the need to move forward with reconciliation and environmental justice and coming to terms with Ontario's legacy of resource extraction and the reality of climate change.

But they can't do this work, they can't capitalize on these opportunities that the bill presents, if they don't have that stable funding from the government. We heard the member mention that there has been the stability for the Ontario Arts Council's grants, but we know that there was an additional \$5 million in COVID recovery funding that has been eliminated. Art galleries in this province are very much still in the process of COVID recovery, of attracting people back to their galleries. So we still need to ensure that funding is there for the Ontario Arts Council over and above that \$60 million that has remained flat.

We also very much need support for Indigenous artists. The current government entirely eliminated the Indigenous Culture Fund. Much of what we talked about during the discussion around this bill was about the need to recognize the contributions of Indigenous artists and to curate the work of the Group of Seven in the context of Indigenous art, as well.

Again, I want to reiterate the support of the official opposition for this bill, but also urge the sponsoring member and urge the members on the government side to ensure that funding for the Ontario Arts Council is not only maintained but increased, and that funding for Indigenous artists through such streams as the Indigenous Culture Fund are restored and also enhanced. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate on sections 1 to 3? MPP McMahon.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. I would just echo some of my seatmate's comments. It was very interesting and informative hearing from our speaker today. I really appreciate her making the trek all the way down here. We did hear their desire to have a full-time curator for Indigenous art in the collection and to endeavour to do more on reconciliation and awareness. And so, that's up to us, right? It behooves us to make the investments in that and not just talk about them: in arts and culture, in Indigeneity and, of course, in environmental stewardship. In light of being in a climate emergency, the time is now, but also this is the perfect time because the Group of Seven, that's what they were all about, appreciating and preserving nature and fighting for a better planet. Hopefully, we can do all of that with this new day. I'm excited to support it.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate or discussion? MPP McCarthy.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Obviously, we heard only from one additional witness, in addition to me as the sponsor of the bill, but I do ask the members to consider the written submissions, both from the representative of the Art Gallery of Ontario and the National Gallery in Ottawa—those were detailed statements and very helpful—and to consider the individual statements that I quoted from other various supporters across the GTA who could not be here. Their voices are here in writing, so to speak, and they should be considered.

I do thank all members of the committee for what I anticipate will be strong support for this bill.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Members, we're getting close to noon. Is it okay that we agree to sit past noon, or would you rather do the noon and come back at 1?

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott): Agreed to sit past noon? Okay. Thank you very much.

Any further debate on sections 1 to 3? Seeing none, shall sections 1 to 3 carry? All those in favour of sections 1 to 3 carrying, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. Bill 78, sections 1 to 3, are carried.

Shall the title of the bill carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The title of the bill shall carry.

Shall Bill 78 carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. Bill 78 is carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I shall report the bill to the House.

Thank you, everyone. That ends committee business today. We are adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1159.

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