

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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## **Official Report of Debates (Hansard)**

HE-29

## **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

HE-29

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

#### **Estimates**

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

#### **Committee business**

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Wednesday 13 September 2023

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

#### **Budget des dépenses**

Ministère du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport

Ministère des Affaires civiques et du  
Multiculturalisme

#### **Travaux du comité**

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

Mercredi 13 septembre 2023

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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**

Wednesday 13 September 2023

Mercredi 13 septembre 2023

*The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2.*

**ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin? Seeing none, it's now my duty to entertain a motion for Vice-Chair.

Before we proceed with the election of the Vice-Chair, I would like to draw your attention to standing order 119(d): "When there are two recognized parties, where the Chair of a standing committee is a member of the party forming the government, the Vice-Chair shall be a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government or an independent member..."

Are there any motions? MPP McGregor.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I move that MPP Jill Andrew be appointed Vice-Chair of the committee.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Is there any debate? MPP Stevens.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I just want to comment, through you, Madam Chair, that I think MPP Jill Andrew will be a wonderful co-Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you. Any further debate? Are the members ready to vote?

Shall the motion carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare the motion carried.

Congratulations, Jill.

**ESTIMATES**

**MINISTRY OF TOURISM,  
CULTURE AND SPORT**

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** We will now resume consideration of the 2023-24 expenditure estimates referred to this committee.

As a reminder, members may ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee. However, the onus is on the members asking the questions

to ensure the question is relevant to the current estimates under consideration.

The ministries are required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that they undertake to address. If you wish, you may, at the end of your appearance, verify the questions and issues being tracked with the legislative research officer.

The first ministry scheduled for consideration today is the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I am required to call vote 3801, which sets the review process in motion. We will begin with a statement of not more than 20 minutes from the minister. We welcome you, and you may begin.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's an honour to be here to speak to you today.

Before we get rolling, I'd like to introduce staff who are with me today: to my right, Katherine Kelly Gatten, acting deputy and assistant deputy minister of tourism, culture and sport; behind me, Tyler Currie, assistant deputy minister, and Sarah McQuarrie, assistant deputy minister.

Again, thanks for the opportunity today, everyone. I welcome this opportunity to tell you about the work that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is doing to strengthen the sector it oversees. This important work directly supports the priorities of the Ford government, specifically, those set out in the 2023 Ontario Budget: Building a Strong Ontario. These activities in my ministry focus on fostering economic growth while keeping costs down, workforce development, and improving service delivery.

Helping businesses succeed in the tourism, culture and sport sectors helps Ontario's entire economy grow, and it creates jobs and opportunities for Ontarians in every corner of the province. Combined, these three sectors are a vital economic driver for Ontario. They support hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

In 2021, the culture sector returned to 2019 pre-pandemic levels for Ontario's overall culture sector economy. Ontario's 2021 culture sector GDP was \$25.2 billion, up from \$23.2 billion in 2020 and exceeding levels from 2019. Ontario's culture sector jobs rose to 267,456 in 2021, from 240,395 in 2020, but remained a bit below the 2019 levels.

Tourism receipts generated \$36.8 billion for Ontario's total GDP, contributed \$5.8 billion in provincial taxes, and supported just under 400,000 jobs.

And in 2020, the sport and recreation sector provided an estimated \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy and accounted for approximately 33,000 jobs.

Tourism, culture and sport activities also connect us all as people across this great province of Ontario. Over the past few years, government support has helped these sectors to sustain themselves, positioning them to re-emerge as economic powerhouses.

In 2022, for example, we introduced the Ontario Staycation Tax Credit to encourage Ontario families to explore this great province. The tax credit has delivered a much-needed boost to main street tourism-related businesses across the province. In total, the credit is expected to provide an estimated \$270 million to about 1.85 million Ontario families. It built on the targeted support our ministry provided during the pandemic to help communities, small businesses and organizations cover losses and so they could rebuild.

Over the past year, we have seen strong signs of recovery across the province, many of which I've witnessed and talked to. In 2022, activity in public engagement in the tourism, culture and sport sectors reached their highest levels since the onset of the pandemic. Domestic and foreign visitors are travelling in Ontario again, which is great news. Domestic and international visits to Ontario for the first three quarters of 2022 were up from the same time in 2021. Attractions, festivals and events are welcoming in-person fans and audiences. Hotels and restaurants are filling up again.

Ontario remains the largest cultural producer and employer in the country, and we continue to promote, support and increase opportunities for all Ontarians to participate in sport and recreation from playground to podium, but challenges do remain. Specifically in the tourism sector, workforce development, regulatory burdens, infrastructure deficits and regional disparities are ongoing issues and a barrier to full recovery, but our government and Ontarians are optimistic, positive and are moving forward with a positive attitude.

I'd like to take a few moments now to talk about Ontario's current economic climate to help contextualize our initiatives and achievements.

Ontario's program expense outlook is expected to grow from \$189.1 billion in 2022-23 to \$202.5 billion in 2025-26 to fund the services the people of Ontario need. Still, with this responsible, targeted approach in 2023, the provincial budget takes the province's plans to balance budget 2024-25 three years earlier than expected in the last budget.

The budget made commitments that target growth in tourism, culture and sport and to businesses and communities that depend on the sectors. These include:

- modernizing Ontario's film and television tax credits;
- redeveloping Ontario Place into a world-class tourist destination;
- creating new provincial green spaces;
- building transit, including year-round weekend GO rail to Niagara;

- bringing back the Northlander, which will boost northern Ontario businesses;

- harmonizing wine taxes—setting a single 12% in harmonized basic tax rate on wine is expected to reduce winery tax burden by \$4 billion per year;

- doubling the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund; and

- measures to help small business grow.

Our ministry has a plan to continue our support for the tourism, culture and sport and recreation sectors in this province while working within existing funding limits.

The printed estimates show that the ministry's combined operating and capital consolidation allocation aligns with the planned 2023-24 expense reported in the 2023 budget. The ministry's combined operating and capital consolidated allocation has decreased from \$1.7952 billion in 2022-23 to \$1.7463 billion in 2023-24. This \$48.9-million decrease consists of a \$121.1-million decrease in operating funding, a \$7.2-million increase in capital funding and a \$64.9-million net increase in operating and capital consolidation adjustments.

Our ministry's allocation continues to support government priorities of rebuilding the economy, investing in infrastructure, developing our workforce, increasing affordability and service delivery excellence to all Ontarians, and I'm glad to highlight some of the ways we're working to accomplish our goals. I will provide an overview of each of my ministry's sectors, beginning with tourism.

Tourism is a vital economic driver for Ontario, and I think we all know that. In 2019, tourism generated \$36 billion of economic activity and just under 400,000 jobs and careers in Ontario.

We're proud that provincial funding programs helped many tourism operators impacted by the pandemic safely stay in business. Our targeted support included \$100 million through the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program; \$1.5 million in 2020-21, \$0.6 million in 2021-22 and \$0.5 million in 2022-23, through the Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund; \$19.5 million through the Celebrate Ontario and Reconnect Ontario festival and event program in 2020; \$49.5 million through Reconnect Ontario in 2021, \$48.1 million through the Reconnect Ontario 2022 program; and \$100 million through the Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant.

#### 0910

While more people have begun to travel in Ontario, rebuilding consumer confidence is key to continue economic growth, and again, our partners are seeing that happen.

Ontario Staycation Tax Credit: During the pandemic, my ministry was there to provide the support necessary to ensure the sector would be able to return to full strength. Our response to the crisis was informed by our continuous stakeholder consultation, including 14 ministerial advisory councils, more than 20 town hall meetings, an external task force on tourism sector recovery and sector-specific, industry-led working groups. We listened and we developed effective solutions to fuel recovery to the tourism industry.

The Ontario Staycation Tax Credit provided Ontario residents with a 20% return on eligible 2022 accommodation expenses, and it was well received. The tax credit is expected to provide an estimated \$270 million and supported 1.85 million Ontario families for 2022. The tax credit was intended to be a one-time limited support for the industry to incentivize domestic travel, and it worked. Now, with tourism and hospitality activity at its highest level since the start of the pandemic, it is projected that the sector will rebound to pre-pandemic levels by 2025.

To help Ontario's festivals and events sector recover, we also provided temporary increases in support through the Reconnect Ontario fund. Reconnect Ontario has been rebranded as the Experience Ontario 2023 fund, with an allocation of \$19.5 million. Within this allocation, the program will continue to support the viability of the festivals and the events sector. Some \$4.63 million has been allocated to the marquee event fund and other major event initiatives, such as Luminato.

This year's budget also highlighted a commitment to help grow regional economic opportunities across the province to build prosperity everywhere, for everyone. I mentioned the budget items that focused on regional development, including the Ontario Place redevelopment, along with the relocation of the Ontario Science Centre to Toronto's waterfront. The budget also targets the creation of a new provincial green space and rail service to Niagara and the north—which is well received and people are really thrilled about it—as part of this year's \$19.1 million that has been allocated to support the regional tourism organizations. This commitment will bolster regional tourism, including in the Niagara region and northern Ontario, as we work to help local tourism recover to pre-pandemic tourism levels and beyond. More than \$11 million in ministry strategic investments in northern tourism in 2022-23 will help tourism experiences and support northern tourism and promote economic growth.

I will now turn to Ontario's culture sector and the work we have been doing to support the vital industries that showcase the best Ontario has to offer. In 2021, the culture sector returned to 2019 pre-pandemic levels for Ontario's overall culture sector economy. Ontario's 2021 culture sector GDP was \$25.2 billion, up from \$23.2 billion in 2020, and exceeding levels from 2019. Ontario's culture sector jobs rose to 267,456 in 2021, from 240,395 in 2020. It still remains a tad below the levels of 2019.

From 2018-19 to 2022-23, the government has made historic investments of over \$1.1 billion in arts and culture through ministry programs and its agencies. We're pleased to see strong signs of the culture sector recovery across the province, and we are committed to supporting this continued growth.

Cultural tax credits: The film and television and interactive digital media industries continue to thrive in Ontario. In 2022, the Ontario film and television industry contributed a record-breaking \$3.15 billion and 45,891 jobs to Ontario's economy.

Ontario assists the film and television, book publishing and interactive digital media industries with a suite of five

cultural media tax credits administered by Ontario Creates, an agency of our ministry. We have budgeted more than \$906 million towards the five tax credits for 2023-24. The 2023 budget and the 2022 economic outlook and fiscal review announced measures to modernize Ontario's film tax credits.

In 2023-24, the government has extended the eligibility for the film tax credit to productions released exclusively online, as announced in the 2022 budget and introduced a screen credit requirement, as announced in the 2022 economic outlook and review. These changes will help improve the competitiveness of the Ontario film and television industry and increase the visibility of Ontario, its creative talent, its highly skilled workforce and the diverse locations this province provides, with an estimated \$58 million in additional support to the industry in 2022-23 to 2025-26.

The government is continuing to work on the other measures to modernize Ontario's film tax credits announced in the 2022 budget and the 2022 economic outlook and fiscal review. Our investments will attract more projects, create jobs and develop skilled talent that will stay and work in Ontario and boost the economy.

Through Ontario Creates, Ontario provides targeted economic development investment to the province's vibrant and diverse music industry. The Ontario Music Investment Fund maximizes return on investment and creates more opportunities for emerging artists to record and perform right here in Ontario. The 2023 budget maintains existing funding levels, allocating \$7 million to that fund.

Another ministry agency, the Ontario Arts Council, plays a vital role in promoting and supporting the development, production and presentation of the arts. From 2018-19 to 2022-23, we invested nearly \$340 million in Ontario's professional and not-for-profit arts sectors through OAC. The OAC's 2023-24 allocation will be \$60 million.

I will now speak about Ontario's sport and recreation sector. In 2020, the sport and recreation sector provided an estimated \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy, which accounted for approximately 33,000 jobs and careers. We will continue to promote, support and increase opportunities for all Ontarians to promote sport and recreation, from playground to podium.

Through the Ontario sport recognition policy, the ministry requires provincial and multi-sport organizations to have in place policies regarding harassment, screening, inclusion, discipline and dispute resolution. Ontario continues to discuss with sport ministries across the country the establishment of independent third-party mechanisms, including processes for the reporting and resolution of maltreatment allegations.

We also continue our leadership role on concussion awareness, building on the progress we made with the implementation of Rowan's Law. On September 28 of last year, we released the fourth Rowan's Law progress report, profiling the province's leadership in the field of concussion safety. Ministry stakeholders and academics tell

us that Rowan's Law is making a real difference in changing the awareness and the response to concussions. I took part in the February FPT conference on sport, physical activity and recreation, where I advocated for a pan-Canadian harmonized approach to concussion safety.

We're moving forward with the establishment of a new, modern framework for professional and amateur combative sport in Ontario. The Combative Sports Act would allow more events to be held safely in Ontario, while reducing the barriers of risk and driving business. If proclaimed, this legislation will enable more amateur combative sports to operate safely and legally in Ontario.

We recently proclaimed sections of the act that establish the Ontario Combative Sport Advisory Council. We will rely on expert advice from that advisory council to provide added assurance that combative sports rulesets are safe and align with international standards.

We will continue to support sport event opportunities throughout the province through the Ontario Sport Hosting Program. The ministry allocates \$3 million annually to the program. The province committed funding to support 16 national and eight international amateur sport events as part of the 2023-24 Ontario Sport Hosting Program. Intake I is currently accepting funding applications for events as part of the program's intake II application period. That's part of the total of over \$51 million our ministry has allocated in 2023-24 to support sport, recreation and community events.

**0920**

The Ontario Games program provides communities with hosting grants totalling \$1.54 million annually. Every two years, Ontario hosts five Ontario Games that provide an estimated \$15 million in economic impact to local host communities throughout Ontario. Upcoming games are:

- in 2024, the Ontario Winter Games in Thunder Bay;
- in 2024, the Ontario 55+ Winter Games in Orillia;
- in 2024, the Ontario Summer Games in London.

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

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** I will conclude a little bit early, Chair.

I thank everyone today for listening to the presentation.

I'm very proud of what our ministry does in serving the many thousands of people in Ontario throughout our sector. I'm also very proud of our staff and the work that they do and continue to do to provide those services and make things better.

The success of the tourism, culture and sport sectors is directly linked to the economic success of Ontario. We have confidence in our strategy, we have confidence in our sectoral partners, and we are delivering valuable programming and services that Ontarians depend on. There is still more work to do so that these sectors perform even better than we are and what we project. We take this role very seriously.

Again, I'm extremely proud of our staff and what they have done thus far, but they, like me, will continue to do more.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much, Minister, and welcome to your staff.

We will now begin questions and answers in rotations of 20 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 10 minutes for the independent member of the committee, and 20 minutes for the government members of the committee, for the remainder of the allotted time.

As always, please wait to be recognized by myself before speaking. All questions and comments will need to go through the Chair.

For the deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers and the staff: When you are called on to speak, please give your name and your title so that we can accurately record in Hansard who we have.

I will now start with the official opposition. MPP Stevens.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity. And thank you to Minister Lumsden for your presentation.

I do have a few questions pertaining to the Experience Ontario grant.

Over the summer, stakeholders revealed grant reductions from the Experience Ontario grant. As reported, many festivals received no funding where they had previously been funded, like in Sudbury, Orillia, Toronto, St. Catharines etc., and were given notice far too late. They have come to me and told me this.

I come from a community that prides themselves on festivals. As you know, St. Catharines has the Niagara Folk Arts Festival, the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, and there are many, many more.

Understanding that the program had been revamped, I'm looking for clarity on what happened this summer. The ministry has responded that there is a higher demand than previous years.

Can the minister outline the actuals for this grant provided over the last three years?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Sorry; the actual—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** The actuals allocated to the grants.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Requests?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes, requests.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Thank you for the question.

The Experience Ontario 2023 program, as most of us know, provides support for festivals and events, with a tourism economic impact target to motivate visitors to visit small and large communities alike. In 2023-24, the budget for the program was \$19.5 million, with \$4.63 million allocated to the marquee fund initiatives, leaving \$14.87 million for Experience Ontario applications.

Before I pass it on to my colleagues, I'd also like to point out a couple of key things. These are one-time funding opportunities year after year, so when festivals and events build their budgets and the Experience Ontario money is generally allocated to help, festivals and events increase and get better. That's what this is about, to improve their impact in their community. That's what that allocation is for and that's the purpose of it.

In total, 282 applications were successful in this round of funding and will receive the funding, anywhere between \$5,000 and \$125,000. I think it's also important to point



out before I hand off that this year we received 680 applications for festivals and events across Ontario. That totalled \$52.51 million in funding requests for a program that has a budget of \$19.5 million.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Can I just highlight something on that? Would you mind?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Go ahead.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you. What I want to highlight here is that some festivals saw cuts within their communities and that's what we're trying to get to.

Right in your own community, Minister, in Hamilton, a great event, a shining example of tourism leading to great economic impact, the Hamilton Supercrawl, which you're aware of, would receive only \$65,000 from Experience Ontario. What I'm wondering is, this program had a grant close to \$300,000 previously and the level of support that was provided even before COVID-19—so that's what I wanted to point out. Why such a deep cut for these festivals?

It's similar, I've heard, in my own region. Niagara Grape and Wine Festival also received almost triple the amount—or less amount than what they've gotten in the previous years. We're just wondering, what economic impact will that have on the businesses that are actually right there in the city of St. Catharines or Hamilton, or the economic impact on small businesses?

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** If I can speak, my name is Katherine Kelly Gatten. I'm the acting deputy minister. I'm also the assistant deputy minister for tourism and culture.

Maybe I'll start with your question around the funding allocations and what's happened over the last few years. The ministry recognized the hardship experienced by the sector through the pandemic and so there was additional funding provided in both 2021 and 2022. This was essentially a temporary increase for the sector, which really needed support.

What we've seen more recently with respect to tourism and what's happening in the province is that things are recovering, we are rebounding, and things are getting better. Where we are with the budget this year is actually not a cut. We are now back to our regular allocation, which is \$19.5 million. Festivals look different now than they did during the pandemic. When the pandemic struck, organizations had to pivot and offer many virtual events. We're now getting back to what things used to be like before the pandemic, so our allocation has returned to that level. It's essentially not a cut, and that is one piece of our funding and one piece of our support for tourism in the province.

This year in 2023-24, we're also supporting tourism through almost \$20 million for regional tourism. Also, we have launched a \$500,000 program that is active and accepting applications right now. It's the Tourism Development Fund. Those are other supports that are available.

Now, maybe if I can move to the question around funding amounts and those who were funded at a level that was less than what they previously had received: I think the

minister talked about the demand on the program. We were now back to our allocation of \$19.5 million. There were requests in for over \$52 million. We had to evaluate those. The demand was really high, and we were able to fund 282 festivals and events across the province. The applications that we received were carefully reviewed and they were assessed against criteria—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** I think I'm going to get to your—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes, go ahead.

**0930**

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** Unfortunately, because the demand was so high and we were working within a fixed allocation, we could only take the money so far. It's a very, very competitive program. Due to the significant interest and the desire to support as many events as possible, some grant amounts were reduced in order to support as many events as possible. So I think the decision to fund all or part of an applicant request was based on the application, the assessment and the available funding within the program.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** That's great. Thank you for that information. I really appreciate it.

Go ahead, Minister.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Chair, if I would, the other part of your question was timing. There's no question that we have already started, almost immediately after the announcements and the decisions were made, to move the timing back. We understand that a lot of these festivals and events need to know sooner, and that was a question that you said—that they didn't find out that they were getting the fund or a grant until much later. In some cases, their events had started.

What we have done is we've already addressed that issue. We're moving everything back to be able to allow people that are successful to find out they are the beneficiary of the grant. Therefore, they can move forward knowing that is part of how they're going to build their festival.

One other thing we've got to point out here is these are one-time grants. Any festival or event, to make an assumption—and I've spoken to a number of people who run these events and festivals—to put it in their budget, to say it's a lock is a mistake. We have to get people to understand that, because things change. This is a great example of how things change from what was available, back to the budget we're at, and the number of people—\$52.25 million in requests for a \$19.5-million budget; that's what we had to deal with. The timing will help, without question.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Madam Chair, through you to the minister, I understand that you're saying it's a one-time grant, but I'm looking at—maybe I'll ask you this question: Have there been any studies or impacts on how reduced tourism dollars to the organizations I've spoken about, in different communities—have there been any studies from the organizations that saw cuts to their grant funding this year? Have you had any studies

on what impact it's having on these festivals? Even though it's a one-time grant, these people still are not expecting a 75% cut on the grant they got before COVID. I'm just wondering, have you done any studies on the impact of reduced tourism dollars to the organizations.

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** Thank you for your question. I would say that we're still very early on in this year's funding cycle. Many of the events that were funded have not actually taken place yet, so it would be premature to do any evaluation at this time. Part of the requirements of funding is that applicants report back to the ministry with the results and the impact of the events and the funding that was provided, so this is about economic impact and the economic impact that these festivals and events have on their communities and have in the province. That reporting will be coming in once the cycle is complete.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Great. Thanks.

When members of the Legislature inquired on behalf of the festivals—the ones that were left wondering about funding—your ministry replied that they should spend the money now and then they would be reimbursed retroactively, if they were eligible. In my personal opinion, that's not very good business practice. As you can imagine, some of them were just feeling the same.

My question would be: There have been concerns raised about changes in application dates and notification timelines, as I mentioned. What steps is the ministry taking to ensure that these processes are streamlined and provide event organizers an ample amount of time for planning their festivals?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through the Chair: The answer to that is, we are already undertaking that responsibility and moving things back so that the timing is much more effective for those events and festivals and their planning, and they will understand and know sooner. In the conversations I had with larger, medium and small festivals throughout Ontario, in my travels in the last month, it wasn't a complaint; it was just more of reflecting back on their business and saying, "It would really help us if we knew—even if we didn't get it, it's better to know that we're not getting it than plan on that we are." Moving the timeline backwards to allow everyone to know sooner is going to be a great benefit to everyone. That still doesn't mean that everyone is going to get what they ask for or that they will qualify, but it will allow the business model of small, medium and large events—to be able to prepare and move forward, knowing whether they're getting a grant or not.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Just highlighting on that—through the Chair, to the minister—can you share how many organizations were told to spend, anticipating funding later, that did not receive funding or funding that was expected?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Well, I want you to clarify what you mean by "expected"—"expected" because they got it before, in previous years?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** No. They've already been told that they're going to be getting some funding,

right? I'm just wondering if you can share how many organizations that were told to spend, because when they were asked—they were told that they were to spend the money now, when they got the money, and they would be reimbursed retroactively for money that they spent towards their festival, if spent, if they were eligible.

I'm wondering how many organizations were told to spend, anticipating funds by the ministry. Am I being clear?

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** I can take the question.

Notifications were not sent out until July 27 of this year, but festivals and events eligible for funding could have started as early as April 1 of this year. So I think whether you receive notification later in the cycle—it is still retroactive to this year.

I'm not sure that I'm aware of situations where applicants were told and encouraged to spend money before notification letters went out. There was a very long and rigorous review process based on the number of applications we had. Applications didn't come in until the end of April, and then notifications went out at the end of July. They were being reviewed—I'm not sure that they would have been told to spend the money. Funding would have been eligible—had they received funding through the program, it would have been retroactive to the beginning of the fiscal year.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** So you're saying the ministry didn't reply that they should spend the money now and then they would be reimbursed retroactively after, if they were eligible to get that grant? Does that not relate to any organizations?

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** I'm happy to take that back, but my understanding is that that would not have taken place. Just because you are eligible doesn't mean you're going to receive funding. You have to be evaluated, assessed, and then we have to work within the allocation that we have available.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** How much time do I have left?

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you.

I'll just jump right into, then, the accountability in hockey.

The PSOs have been very good in establishing standards for funded sports bodies but terrible at reviewing them for compliance, let alone enforcing compliance. That is a responsibility of this ministry that you oversee. In 2023, we dealt with more hazing reports and buying and selling of teams and profits in amateur hockey.

How much did the ministry give the OHL and the GTHL this year, whether directly or through parent organizations?

0940

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Is there anything more in the question?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** No, that's that question. I've got a few follow-ups on it.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through you, Chair, I just wanted to make sure that—you looked like you still had something to add on.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** No, that's fine. Thank you for that. Thanks for the respect.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Okay. Before I turn it over for further comment to my colleague: I worry when I hear the allegations of selling and buying—we're talking about, as you very well know, a very broad spectrum of minor sports—in all sports but especially in hockey. There are a lot of associations through the province of Ontario that run—and I'm making a minor assumption, and I'd like you to confirm: Are you talking specifically about the GTHL?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** The OHL and the GTHL, yes.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Well, the OHL—are you talking, again, about the junior OHL?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Are you talking about selling? No. You've twisted my words now, so—

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** I want to address that there are allegations out there that there are things going on with the buying and selling of teams, and they are allegations.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** That's right. So that would be the GTHL that a whistle-blower has basically brought forward.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Right, and I do know this: About three months ago, having had conversations with the leadership, they underwent an independent third-party investigation done by two retired police officers. One was an investigator. We're waiting on the results of that, based on the allegations that were made that there was buying and selling of teams taking place, and said teams in the GTHL had said no. That investigation is ongoing, and I have yet to hear anything back, but I'm looking forward to what I would refer to as the experts' finding with respect to the allegations.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** It's quite concerning that the—through you, Madam Chair—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Yes, 40 seconds.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Oh, sorry.

It's quite concerning, then. It is why I was looking for clarification on the issue, which is not just the dollar figure in question, because a primary whistle-blower has told us that the GTHL—about buying and selling teams; would not comment to the independent investigation. I'll wait for further clarification.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Of course, the GTHL falls under the Ontario Hockey Federation as their responsibility. We cannot be an entity that gets into the weeds of what's going on—the federation, their report and our follow-up with respect to the federation. But regarding that report, we will see that when it's done.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much. That's the end of this round.

Over to MPP McMahon for 10 minutes, please.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** We'll be speedy, because I have half the time—lucky me.

Thank you for your presentation, and thank you to my colleague for asking those great questions. You shaved a few off my to-do list.

I want to focus on spaces, first off. Is the province focused on leveraging projects with municipalities around arts assets that are in municipalities' hands right now? That, and then also looking at using existing infrastructure for adaptive reuse for arts organizations and how you would support that—I think of bricks-and-mortar spaces for them, for their offices, their organization as a whole, but also rehearsal space, performance space and that. It's tight, especially in a city like Toronto. What kind of partnerships are you doing with municipalities?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Though you, Chair: On the first part of your question, could you be more specific, please?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Yes. Cities or municipalities often have spaces that arts organizations can use and do use right now, but the arts organizations can't fully—they need support from the province.

Then for adaptive reuse projects, I think of Young People's Theatre. They were going to build a brand new theatre. They had a commitment from the previous government and then did not get that commitment of funding, so they got creative, smart. They raised a ton of money, and they repurposed and renovated their existing building. I think of Ireland Park as doing the same. There's already a building that was PortsToronto, which is—actually, it was originally the Canadian malting headquarters. It also helps us achieve our climate goals.

What are we doing to support these organizations and work with partners—developers, municipalities—that have these spaces already existing, instead of building new ones? It's more fiscally responsible. Are we doing anything on that front?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** It's a great question—Chair, through you. I've got a couple of different answers for you.

Specifically, I've got some experience both in Theatre Ancaster—trust me, it has nothing to do with performing; just knowing people and what they have done and what they did in theatre in Ancaster to develop the arts through their programming, which is as strong as anywhere. They worked out of the high school for the longest time in Ancaster and then went ahead and created a model to create funding through donations to build their own facility.

I'm not aware and I have not been approached by any entity out there that is saying, “We are looking for help with space,” specifically—it may come through one of our funders, but I have not heard directly.

Again, using a couple of examples only because of what I happen to be familiar with, typically those community-run programs, which are so important throughout—you put them all together and they make a massive impact in Ontario, and they do in their own communities, like Theatre Ancaster does, and as happens in Hamilton as well.

But as far as—is it a retrofit concept? You're thinking of old space—

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Yes.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** —to be created new?

Well, it would be interesting to have conversations with the people who are interested in doing that, because my first—again, using experience to provide answers to people—is, what is their plan, what is their strategy, what have they done, versus saying, “We need more space”? I will give them all more credit that they’re not just doing that, but they are in fact identifying potential space that they can move into and utilize or split with somebody else, based on usage, to grow the arts culture within their community; if it happens to be from acting to singing to dancing doesn’t matter, because they’re all important.

I think at this point, saying the big picture—what are we planning on doing? We can’t plan on doing anything if we don’t have conversation and consultation with those who are interested to do what, again, Theatre Ancaster wanted to do, started seven years ago and completed through a very vigorous process of raising funds, finding opportunity and location, and making it happen.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** We’ll look forward to those conversations.

The cost of living for gig workers, in many cases, is outpacing their ability to earn, often without benefits. Artists are one of the biggest parts of our gig economy.

What investments have you made to ensure artists and other gig workers can flourish during these challenging times?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** That’s a great question.

We had a meeting just the other day in our office—and one of the representatives represents ACTRA, and we had the conversations around what the strike is doing and has done to the industry, both domestically and internationally. In that conversation, it was interesting to note that he said their membership, obviously, are still working, because the domestic strength in film and television is still very strong and there’s a lot going on—not as much as there could be, but there’s still a lot going on. Those who are members of ACTRA, as an example, are finding it a little bit tougher. Some of them have had to say, “We’re going to take a part-time job, wait till things return to normal, then go back to an industry that we want to try to break into.” That’s a large group of actors. We’re not talking about the upper 10%; we’re talking about everybody else who may be seen onscreen, as a backdrop—that not necessarily rely but are pursuing that career, but also work in a secondary job. A lot of them have had to find another job until they return to what they would call normal.

From a support perspective, we’ve met with them, we’ve talked to them and targeted where, in fact, the Ontario Arts Council can help that situation and/or other entities. But we didn’t get asked in this meeting the question of, “How can you help us? We need something.” They seem to be within their reserves, being able to make it work, but they’re also watching the clock.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I have two million more questions, but I have to limit it to two, so we’ll have to do speed questions because I only have three minutes left.

**0950**

The first one is on housing. Are you working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on employee housing, creative ideas in tourist zones? I think of Blue Mountain. They’re building their own housing. Are we expecting big organizations—I mean, Blue Mountain is huge. I’m sure even they are not wanting to do it, but they are compelled to do it for their employees and for their livelihood.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Again, Chair, through you, it’s a great question. It’s something that we’ve talked about with Blue Mountain; we went over what their plans are. It is a plan that agriculture has done a great job with over the years, of finding on-site residences for the workers who come up for six to seven months and then go back when their work is done.

I know Blue Mountain and I know others—we’ve had these conversations of what they are thinking of doing, because the other side of that coin is: When we talk about jobs in tourism, one of the concerns, and I heard it in Kingston a week ago, is that when the season is over, people leave. Trying to keep seasonal opportunities available in tourism is going to come about because of the growth in tourism. There are going to be other reasons, and they, as a group in RTO9 in this conference I spoke at, talked about how they are going to find solutions. They are going to expand what they do within their region to have jobs available because there’s work there, instead of having workers say, “Oh, my six months are done.”

We all know students—and I’m sure we all did it ourselves, because I did. They work for the summer and then university starts, and “I’m off.” But it’s those who are interested in getting into tourism as a career that presents a wonderful opportunity for them to stick in those regions, whether it’s being a chef, whether it’s being a tourist guide—

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

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** It’s learning a business. Those are really important things—

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Fabulous.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** —that we have to continue to cultivate and work with these sections of Ontario—

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you. Sorry to cut you off. I have one minute.

Last question: With regard to Ontario Place, why not leave the science centre where it is—it’s a gem in its community; it has all the economic and vibrancy benefits in that neighbourhood—and look to do something like create a freshwater institute showcasing the Great Lakes, with academia, with museums and all kinds of interactive activities down at Ontario Place, right on the water, talking about how valuable our Great Lakes are, and so have two different, kind of, ecology centres?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through you, Chair: I think you’ve partially answered your own question that Ontario Place as a site is vibrant. It draws people, from a tourism perspective, and will have access to transportation, so it is the perfect home for the new—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you. I'm afraid that's all the time we have, Minister. Thank you very much.

We'll now move over to the next round, to the government for 20 minutes. MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Chair, I would like to thank the minister for this panoramic overview of all the activities of the ministry. I really appreciate the details because we need to know all the details of what this ministry's work is doing in different aspects of bringing tourists and promoting the economic growth of Ontario in those sectors.

As I myself witnessed, major sports events took place in Mississauga recently, such as the 2022 Ontario Summer Games, the 2022 Ontario Paraspport Games and the 2023 World Rowing Indoor Championships, as well as all the festivities we see in Mississauga every week in Celebration Square, with different cultural activities, which is drawing lots of attention to Mississauga. Mississauga is now becoming a go-to place the whole summer for people from outside Mississauga, which is exactly the purpose of those funds: to bring more tourism to the place where the festivities will be, and inspire those businesses and promote their businesses.

Can the minister let us know about the benefits and support for sports hosting, specifically?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through you, Chair: Yes, and thank you for all the previous work you did within our ministry. You know very well of the impact of sport in community, whether it's hockey tournaments, whether it's the larger Canada Games, or even an international cricket event like the GT20, which just took place in Brampton a couple of months ago. That had an interesting impact on the community. It showed the community and the rest of Ontario that the sport of cricket is one not to be taken lightly on a number of fronts—first, being able to engage young people, whether they're new Canadians or not; that it is a sport that is tough, that demands a lot, like other sports do, and like we want to drive our youth into recreationally and allow them to make a decision after that if they'd like to pursue that sport.

Cricket is a sport that, internationally, is massive; in North America, not so much. So we are driving that sport, thanks to Brampton and the international cricket community seeing Ontario as a place to host events that not only impact the community, draw thousands of people, bring in sponsorship, but have a television audience worldwide of over 100 million.

When you can do something like that—and we're just talking about one event that impacts not only that community and the sport, but all of Ontario. It's a little bit like the conversations I've had with film and television: When, internationally, using the US, but other countries realize the opportunity in Ontario to be able to come and film, because of the options and opportunities they have—the tax credit, of course, which is important. We want to be the driver of that in this country. We're very competitive with BC and Quebec, and we want to stay number one

on that list when people are looking at doing their film work—television, movie or otherwise—in Ontario.

When it comes to sport—they're very targeted. Sporting events go where they, number one, can be hosted and the facility is there—it has to be fairly minimal work done, but great support from the community from a dollars perspective and volunteers and, of course, the experts.

Again, the GT20 event was a great example of the rest of the world paying attention to what Ontario has to offer when it comes to hosting events. The facility was great, but I know there are plans to make it even better. When you do that and show the cricket world what you're willing to do to support them and build, potentially, an international league down the road, that, again, brings greater attention to Ontario. It's a win-win-win.

Then, to your point about people coming in—I mentioned being in Kingston this past Friday and speaking at a conference there. One of the philosophies I try to carry is, "Just one more day. Let's get people to stay one more day." If we can do that, that will not only help that community, that festival or event—or larger—but it gives that community a chance to sink the hook in, to get people to come back. That's what tourism is about, and I think that's why we're seeing tourism bounce back as well as it has. Sport tourism really is on that same curve, if you will—again, the opportunity for the small businesses, the hotels, on a hosting perspective.

I also don't want to forget about the smaller—we're talking about large events, whether it's the Canada Games, whether it's the indoor rowing championships, cricket. But minor sports look for places to play their championships.

Kingston, this year, is going to host the Vanier Cup—they've never done it before—and that's because U Sports has found a site and a partner and a community that will step forward and drive that event to another level.

When we're talking in those terms and the impact it makes—you hit it right on the head: the development, and then the opportunity to say, "We've done it once. We can do it again. We can do it in cricket, but we could also do it in this." Those opportunities, when they're done so well—as we do here in Ontario—translate into more and more and more.

That's sport and tourism, and I don't want to forget the culture piece in this. We talked a little bit earlier about what we're trying to do in the culture of sport across the board—and those sorts of things, we continue to build, and we have to. We have a responsibility to work with our partners—the PSOs and anyone in sport—to take care of the kids, whether it's our kids in this room or our grandkids, and make sure that they're going to be safe. The more that happens and the more the water rises, the boats will rise with it. So, the tourism side of it, the economic side, develop perfectly—and then, of course, sport. It really wraps everything up.

Events supported through our government generally average about \$21 million in GDP and economic activity provincially. We can get that higher. There's no question. We are seeing that more often and it's a great thing. It's part of our mandate.

1000

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Yes, MPP Pang.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, to the minister: Thank you for your exciting report on what we are doing to promote tourism, culture and sport in Ontario. I think it is very great news. For my riding, I'm excited about the news that Ryan Reynolds plans on building a world-class studio in Markham and consider that a vote of business confidence in Ontario as a leading destination for the film and television industry in Ontario. However, I also hear concerns of our industry due to the ongoing Hollywood actors' and writers' strikes.

I'd like to know the minister's thoughts about the state of the industry and what we are doing to invest to mitigate the impact of the American strikes.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Chair, through you: Thank you for the question. The question is timely because we just had a meeting with FilmOntario, their managing director, studio representatives and the businesspeople behind driving film and television to Ontario. Ontario is one of the top production locations internationally and, as we know, it offers—and I've mentioned—world-class and highly skilled talent, diverse film locations, cutting-edge support and, of course, we don't want to forget the tax credit.

We did, not that long ago, a fam tour. A fam tour is when FilmOntario brings in representatives from the United States—we had a couple from the UK—to rotate, take them on a tour of locations where they may be wanting to film. This is before we ran into the writers' strike. When we sat in the meeting with them, they were thrilled at the tax credit opportunity, thrilled with what was going on with FilmOntario and the people involved, and promoting what we have to offer. When we talk about our support there and our work with FilmOntario and, more importantly, their work—because the conversation was about solutions, not problems.

I have to tell you, through the last year and a half—and this includes a lot of meetings with people in tourism. They are ready to explode when this writers' strike is over. They are still active and busy, but not nearly as busy. Studios aren't quite as frantic as they normally are, under normal circumstances, when there isn't a writers' strike. The question I asked them was, "Are you ready to go?" And they said, "Look, we're working now," but one of the concerns they had was, when they are flush and things are going, when there isn't a strike going on—which we can't control. I got asked the question the other day: "Well, what are you going to do about the strike?" There's nothing I can do, except work with our partners to make sure they are ready. The domestic productions are still going on, which is great—which is a real plus, as that has moved up the scale a little bit, as far as activity goes. Because of the void that has been left because of the strike, that will continue to grow, then international will come back. Their expectation is to be busier than ever. So, what are they going to do to be able to accommodate and get ready for it? That's what they are doing and planning for now.

The only not-sad piece of the conversation in the meeting was that, through the process of training and skill

development in that industry—that has sort of fallen off a little bit because there isn't as much work as there used to be. They're hoping—and they're staying engaged with their people—that they don't lose a portion of the young people who are coming up into the industry who want to make that their career. I always talk in terms of, "It's not about a job; it's about a career." They want to get into something, and when you had the opportunity to go to one of the—well, we're talking about a studio and Ryan Reynolds. He and the management team they're with are thinking about coming here because of the opportunity, plain and simple. I mean, these are businesspeople and they see what's going on in Ontario. They aren't going anywhere else; they're coming to Ontario. They're not going to Quebec. They're not going to BC. They're coming to Ontario because they've seen the jump and rise in what's going on, and that's because of the talent we have here, our ability to be prepared and do a great job, as well, in post-production—which is another space that we can grow in, because there's a lot more revenue there in post-production.

And then we have to think about international. When we talk about growth in that industry from our ministry, we talk internationally and the opportunities that will come from just making people more aware of what we have and what we can do and just how really good we are at what we do. A lot of people know, but I think we can broaden the perspective outside of North America, certainly to the UK. The UK, as I mentioned, in that fam tour realized, "Oh, we can do this and this and this," and that was coming out of just conversation in the meeting we had. To me, it's just the beginning of what's going to happen in the film and television industry in this province, and it's fantastic.

Again, when you think about the big picture—not just about film and TV—you think about jobs, you think about GDP, you think about careers, the growth in the economy. If more people are going to come to Ontario, we have to have a place for them to go and stay. If they're going to stay longer because we have that capability in the post-production world, then welcome, come on, we have the capability of doing that. So, I think the horizon is great. Even though that strike is going on and everyone is tight for obvious reasons, I think the future is very bright. I'm saying that because, even though it's tough right now, I got that sense in my meeting from that leadership group that, "Hey, we're ready; we're ready to go." At a time of peace, prepare for war. War in this case is a good thing because that means everybody is coming back to Ontario with their productions.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you, Minister.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Six and a half minutes. MPP Barnes.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you, Minister. Good morning. In education, we recognize that, for some students, being able to attend school and participate in a sports team is the hook that we use to get them through the door, and academics fall in place with that after.

I just wanted to talk to you a little bit about, what are some of the measurements or some of the investments that are being made in this sector to encourage students in sports in the education sector? Oftentimes those are small grassroots organizations that might run after-school programming or extracurricular activities. I just want to ask you, how are you growing those opportunities for those grassroots organizations or for organized sports in education?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through you, Chair, that's a great question. It's a challenge that's not just a now thing; it's been a long-time thing. A lot of work is being done. Specific notes in talking about creating opportunity: Our ministry delivers on the priorities. We've allocated just over \$3 million in 2022-23 to support active recreation in Ontario.

When you talk about numbers like this—I've got a couple of other examples to reference—we have to talk about finding ways to help children and youth connect with sport. That's done, typically, locally at the grassroots level, with a focus on just increasing participation, introducing—I referenced the GT20 and what that does for the game of cricket in Ontario: more eyes are on it; “how do I play”; more pop-up opportunities, which we saw, actually, with the Premier in one of the schools that we went to on an announcement. I'd never seen it before, and I know the game of cricket. They had the wickets and the plastic bats set up, and they were in the gym. I thought, this is great; they're developing young cricketers. That takes foresight. That takes a school system that understands who they have as far as students and what they might want to do.

As my dad would have said to me a long time ago, “I want you to play all the sports you possibly can, and then maybe you'll find one you really like.” And that's what happened. I did the same thing for my kids: “Get involved in everything, because if you are going to rise, you will find your spot, and you'll love it and you will be better off as a result of being introduced and having that opportunity to play and compete in a fun way.”

We need to focus on increasing participation of under-representation—young women and girls; racialized communities; Indigenous peoples, which I have an example to show; the LGBTQ2S+ community; and persons with disabilities too. We have programs, and I'm fairly close to these—Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, MLSE Foundation, Canadian Women and Sport, the Foundation for Black Communities and Hockey Diversity Alliance—to leverage their well-established communities and proven track record on developing sport. It also relies on—and I've talked to Minister Lecce about it—how do we get the sport part of the diet back in school? I think we're missing on that, and that starts at grade school, getting kids out and not just having them run around but semi-organized and let them have some fun with it and the situation. I think that's really important.

The Indigenous community—and I want to reference this, because I was invited to their Little NHL event. This was months ago in Mississauga at Iceland Arena. They had 184 teams over a weekend. I apologize for going back

and forth on the touchpoints of it, but all ages, competitive, having fun. Parents were there. It was about them participating. There were girls on the team; it wasn't just boys. It was competitive in a good way. Next year will be the 50th anniversary of the event, and then you step back and you look at the impact on the community.

When we do things and create opportunities for youth, it's going to grow into other wonderful things for everyone. Sport does it, and culture does it, as well. Actually, our ministry does it. When you start with a core of something and allow it to grow, the impact is so positive on everyone in tourism, culture and sport, and the culture of all three things that I speak of in those verticals—the growth of the opportunity. We have to continue to do that. We have to take time.

I've coached sports for 35-plus years and the greatest part of it is watching young people grow, watching parents watch their kids grow into something that they didn't know they might have had because they introduce them to something. And if they don't like that, they will find something else, but get them active because active bodies are healthy minds. You hear kids talk about it. Running around a playground is great, but organize them and create a very soft and nice purpose for them and then watch them grow physically and emotionally. They learn from sport—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Sixty seconds.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** —things you can't learn anywhere else. You just can't. We have to continue to do that and allow young people to have that opportunity, and we're doing that.

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Forty-five seconds left. That's good?

**Ms. Patrice Barnes:** Yes.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Okay. MPP McGregor.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Chair, with the time of 45 seconds, I was just wondering if the minister has anything else he'd like to add in this round of questions that he wasn't able to get to.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You have 30 seconds to respond if you wish.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Yes—30 seconds. Thank you, Chair.

Another great example is the Pickering soccer dome, where we did an OTF announcement. That dome is something like I have never seen in all my years around sport—and that's a lot. I've seen a lot of facilities. What's going to happen in that dome and what the community is going to do is drive kids into that dome—back to your point. It is about developing sport in young people and that's a great location. It's 12 months of the year, 24/7. That's what we want, more development like that.

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

Thank you, everyone, for attending. The time being 10:15, we will now recess until 1 p.m. We will see you all then. Thank you.

*The committee recessed from 1014 to 1300.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Good afternoon, everyone. The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure

and Cultural Policy will now come to order. We are here to resume consideration of the 2023-24 expenditure estimates referred to this committee.

We will now resume consideration of vote 3801 of the estimates of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. There is now a total of 50 minutes remaining for the review of these estimates. We will continue with the opposition for 20 minutes.

I welcome our new Vice-Chair, MPP Andrew. Welcome.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you so much, Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You're most welcome. I believe MPP Stevens is going to start us off this afternoon.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** That's correct. Thank you, Madam Chair. I hope everybody had a wonderful lunch, and may we begin. Thank you very much.

I want to follow up from this morning on some of my questions that I didn't have a chance to continue to follow up on. It's with the amateur hockey and how it relates to these estimates. The province is the principal oversight and further—funder; I'm not only deaf in one ear, I'm blind in both eyes, so sorry about that. I want to follow up with the amateur hockey and how it relates to estimates. The province is the principal oversight and funder, and this morning, I was asking how much was paid to the OHL and the GTHL leagues as it relates to the mechanism for compliance by your ministry. It does have a dollar figure attached to that, and I wonder where I would find that in the estimates.

Considering Quebec brought in provincial hockey leadership for questioning in front of a committee when it came to amateur hockey and hazing—as I mentioned this morning, in 2023 we have dealt with more hazing reports and buying and selling of team profits in amateur sports. The federal government froze funding. Private companies like Nike severed sponsorships. The ministry, as we can see, has not had a similar weight of action.

I'm just wondering, again, what resources has the ministry employed looking into the serious allegations levied against some owners and groups of the OHL and GTHL? It's kind of a twofold question, so if you want to just start off with the first one and then lead into the second, I'd greatly appreciate the answer.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through the Chair, which one would you like me to start with?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** We can start off with the GTHL as it relates to the mechanism for compliance by your ministry. It does have a dollar figure attached to it, and I was wondering where I could find that in the estimates.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Okay. Through the Chair, thanks for the question; I appreciate it. Before I call up my colleague, I think it's important to talk in terms of the funding and Ontario Hockey Federation. They report directly to them and we support through that.

I think that the other side of it—and we talked a bit about it this morning—is we are not in a position to micro-manage the day-to-day work of amateur sport and amateur

hockey. We want to make sure—as we do, and it will be part of your second question with respect to the treatment of athletes and what is going on that I'll wait to answer. One of your reference points was Hockey Canada as far as pulling sponsorship, and I think that's what you were referring to, based on what had happened and what continues—I won't say continues to happen, but continues to be addressed and examined.

I will tell you from the ministry's perspective and mine personally that it's unacceptable what has happened in sport and the maltreatment. We talked at length with the federal minister in our last FPT meeting and again in the last sport meeting about the third-party mechanism to be able to help deal with the issues that have come out of sport. And it's not just hockey; it's other sports as well. I'm not going to identify them because that is not the point. The point is taking a very serious look and making sure that the PSOs, and every organization, do their due diligence with respect to finding and looking for and vetting any personnel, be it coaches or managers, that are going to be responsible for athletes.

It is—and I'm going to use this term again because I take a lot of this quite personally, having been involved with sport in coaching and on other levels for a long time—absolutely unacceptable, and it has to stop. We're going to play our part in making sure that when it comes time for these organizations to choose and review their process and how they pick their coaches and managers and people who will be involved directly with athletes of all ages—to help them get better and improve that process. I'm now going to give it—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Minister, but I'm just wondering—I know what you're saying and I understand, but I just asked the question. I know the province is the principal oversight and funder, and I'm asking, how much has been paid to these leagues—I think that's the question I asked—and where would I find that in the estimates?

**Mr. Tyler Currie:** Thank you, Minister and Deputy. Good afternoon. My name is Tyler Currie, assistant deputy minister of sport, recreation and recognition.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Good afternoon, Tyler.

**Mr. Tyler Currie:** Good afternoon. The answer to your question, and the minister alluded to it: Our relationships are not with the individual leagues and teams that are within sport provincial bodies; our relationships are with the governing bodies of the sport. In this case, as the minister mentioned, the relationship with the GTHL lies with the Ontario Hockey Federation.

To answer your question in terms of how much support goes to them, they're one of the 69 provincial sport and multisport organizations. A total of \$8.3 million is disbursed amongst them, and to the Ontario Hockey Federation specifically, there's \$83,000.

In terms of how we work with them on safe sport, we do have a series of policies that are required for them to have in place. I can confirm that the Ontario Hockey Federation does indeed have these in place. They include



a discipline policy, inclusion policy, screening policy, harassment policy and dispute resolution policy. The minister alluded to the fact that the Ontario Hockey Federation is undertaking the review, adhering to their policy, and we eagerly await the results of that report.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Tyler, for that explanation. I've spoken to the primary whistle-blower for the GTHL about buying and selling teams. It has been said that the independent investigation refuses to interview with them, and then sent their questions to them. This is why it's quite concerning, and I'm sure you will agree with that. It's quite concerning at that level of hockey, if we're having an independent investigation refuse to interview with the GTHL. That's quite concerning. It is why I'm looking for clarity on this issue, which is not just an integrity issue. It is a question about financial impact and the lack of seriousness, in my opinion, from the ministry. At least that is what is perceived out in the public, as well.

Considering that the investigation is not interviewing the primary whistle-blower, when we are talking about the economic impact here, it is clear that the integrity has a financial cost associated. Has the ministry used any resources—and, may I repeat, any resources—to assess the full impact these issues have on amateur hockey sports across the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** I'll take the first part of that. I talked about this, this morning. There is a process in place through the GTHL, a third-party investigation done by two former police officers, one an investigator, to look into the allegations that you are talking about, that I'm assuming come from the whistle-blower. There has to be information to back up said allegations in any situation before moving ahead. My understanding is it hasn't been completed yet, but I have been told from the GTHL leadership that once that is done, we will see the results of that investigation. Until then, it wouldn't be prudent for us to move forward on anything—until we get allegations identified and become more specific, because allegations are exactly what they are. They're subject to investigation and proof.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** All right. I guess that will end my questions for the amateur hockey part of it in the estimates. It is quite concerning to me, though, the lack of measures to ensure compliance of amateur hockey. As I said, it is perceived out in the public, and it's not good enough if the process for accountability is non-existent or is handled by political staffers in the ministry without any real mechanisms for enforcement through the public. I know you have said that it is through an independent investigation, but as it's stated, they're not investigating; they're sending questions to that organization, which is quite concerning. So, unfortunately, this story feels very familiar.

I'll pass it over, Madam Chair, to the Vice-Chair, MPP Andrew.

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

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, everyone, and hello, Minister Lumsden. It's good to see you. Good afternoon.

My first question to you is: Can you, the minister, provide funding specifics towards how many public dollars have been given to ICA, Institute of Canadian Agencies, who are currently locking out unionized ACTRA members, commercial performers, many of whom live right in my riding of Toronto—St. Paul's; who are turning high profits through hiring non-union actors at lower wages, without benefits, and in turn driving down average pay in the sector? As you may know, Minister, the province of Ontario—this government—has some of those union-busting agencies on their provincial vendor list.

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I'm wondering how the province of Ontario, how the government of Ontario, how you, as the culture minister, can help support ACTRA's locked-out performers.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through the Chair: First off, congratulations on your appointment to Vice-Chair. I think that's great.

Interestingly enough, I had a meeting that a representative with ACTRA was at recently, and the conversation that—what you are identifying as an issue did not come up. What came up is the concern that they have based on the environment of the writers' strike and how it is affecting—specifically, when domestic production of television and movies is still relatively strong, given the environment. Some of the members of ACTRA—and we didn't talk about those who were not members; we talked about the members—were obviously trying to pivot and adjust until the writers' strike got over, with respect to not maybe having as much work as they would have had as if everything was the way it was, or it hopefully will be in fairly short order. Their adjustment is, from an individual basis, they may have to take on a part-time job because they're not getting as many acting gigs as they used to. And they talked about the support that they were giving as best as they could to support all across the board those who are not having as much work in the acting field that they would have had if things were normal.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I appreciate your comments, Minister, and I want to thank you for speaking with ACTRA. However, I want to circle back to the specifics of the question I have asked.

I'm wondering what you, as the minister responsible for culture, and our government are willing to do to help locked-out ACTRA performers. More specifically, I'm wondering, are you willing to cut ties with those union-busting provincial vendors that are literally approved on this government's vendor list?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through you, Chair: Do you have any specific information, when you refer to those, that you can share with us—of those busters?

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I can; however, I'm choosing not to in this moment.

What I am saying, similar to yourself, when you spoke earlier to my colleague and you said, "You're not going to say this or say that"—what I'm asking you is: You've got

a provincial vendor list that includes some of those union-busting agencies. Right here, on behalf of the ACTRA locked-out performers, namely, the commercial workers, some of the least-paid, many of whom are women, many of whom are BIPOC folks, many of whom are just getting their start in the industry—it's a simple question. What is the government of Ontario going to do to help support ACTRA's locked-out performers? What are you all going to do, if anything?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Again, through the Chair: Thanks for the question. I think it's a two-part answer here. The first part is probably that we should be having this continued discussion with ACTRA, which I'm happy to do again, to deal with a problem that was given an opportunity to be tabled the other day, and it wasn't, as an issue. Second, it's probably something we need to take back and talk to the Ministry of Labour about with respect to the problem that you're identifying because—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Yes.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** —and I think that's how we will take it from your direction.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I would agree with you, Minister. I actually wrote the Minister of Labour, along with colleagues of mine from the Toronto MPP roster, back in October 2022. Sadly, we got no answer. Obviously, you can't wear his sins. But either way, we got no answer.

I'm wondering if the government might consider passing anti-scab legislation to actually protect gig economy workers, many of whom are commercial workers.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order, Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** And congratulations to our new Vice-Chair as well.

Pursuant to standing order 25(b), I think the member is just directing their speech to matters outside of the question at hand. I think we're talking about estimates for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, not labour legislation, which we talk about in this House at other times. I think this committee—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I would like to reclaim my time.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** That's not the point of this committee, I don't think.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Just to clarify, the clock was paused for your time, MPP Andrew. The member had a point, which I'll reiterate, about how you can ask a wide range of questions, but we prefer that they stay within the estimates, if you could do that for your consideration.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Understood. I appreciate that, Chair.

All right. I will continue with another question. I hope after this time we've had together that you will commit to speaking to ACTRA specifically around those union-busting agencies, some of which are on the provincially approved vendor list here for this government, because when you all collude with those union-busting agencies, it is literally contributing to the affordability crisis that these performers are living through—unhoused, couch-surfing,

not being able to shop at the local groceries in St. Paul's, having to choose a new career etc.

I will go on to another question. I also want to say to you, Minister Lumsden, I really do hope that we can have a meeting. I know that my LA has reached out on many occasions to try to have a meeting about culture and it hasn't been set.

I will jump in: Statistics Canada data shows that pre-pandemic, the arts and culture sector contributed as much as \$27 billion to the provincial economy, 3.4% of Ontario's GDP. In 2021, Ontario arts contributed \$25 billion and 2.8% of the GDP. The Ontario Arts Council is the principal funding body for the multidisciplinary arts community in this province and its funding is entirely the responsibility of this ministry. Can the minister tell the committee how much the OAC will receive in base funding, not including the temporary pandemic \$5-million grants, in 2023-24?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** You bet.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Oh, thank you. How much?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Before that, I'm going to tell you a little bit about, again, a meeting we had with the chair, a member of their committee and their CEO. They were very appreciative to know the funding is at \$60 million, and they are thrilled with the opportunity to have it at \$60 million for a lot of reasons. It was delightful to hear how they are looking and spreading their wings, if you will, to make an even greater impact and, in some ways, slide a little bit over to the tourism side with respect to the metrics that they will supply us with on the impact within the community and the GDP. I think that's really important.

One of the things I noticed in the meeting—and they had plenty of opportunity to talk because it was wide open for them to talk about what they wanted. What they were telling us is what they were going to do and how they were going to improve on what they have, and the \$60 million—not specifically how it was going to be spent, but we know the impact it has and the trickle-down effect. To hear them talk in terms of how they're going to get better as a result of it and provide us with more information down the road that we can then consider—and, of course, at that point, through that consideration, they will probably look for a little bit more funding. At this point, they were happy with the \$60 million from across the table—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** If I may interject, Minister, I don't know when you had your meeting, but I had a conversation about 36 hours ago on the wonderful bustling streets of King Street West with folks from OAC, and I can assure you that there are significant concerns with the OAC budget. That concern is that, essentially, when it's not properly funded, when it's been cut—I'm thinking about the \$6 million that was cut in 2019. It actually amounts to a cut. If it's not maintained, if it's not keeping up with inflation, it's a cut.

I can tell you that there's a lot of concern around serving the priority groups of the Ontario Arts Council. There's a lot of concern about supporting those small and medium community-based arts organizations, producers, cultural workers—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Sixty seconds remaining.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** —with an OAC budget that essentially has been frozen to high heaven and is not keeping up to date with inflation. Thank you, Minister.

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**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Sorry, I just wanted to clarify something. We met with them in between the time you've spoken with them at our office. I just wanted to clarify—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Well, I'll send them a text.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** I'm not trying to beat you to the punch; I just want to create clarity around when we talked to them, as well, and what they are looking for.

I don't know if I think it's fair to suggest that when something doesn't keep up with inflation it's a cut. A cut—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Oh, Minister, that's a whole other conversation, but my time is running out—

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Okay. That's right. I'm just telling you our conversation was very clean—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** —and I will say I'd appreciate if you will actually take a meeting with me—

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** —and very specific and crisp about what OAC wants and what they're looking for. It's very clear.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Just one at a time.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** —as the culture critic. We have asked several times.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Okay, your time is up. One at a time speaking as we go forward would be great. Thank you so much.

Now we move to the independent for 10 minutes. MPP McMahon, please go ahead.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thanks, and congratulations to my colleague on her new role in this—what shall I call this committee? This amazing committee, this hard-working committee, this interesting committee.

Thank you to my colleagues for the questions that they have already covered on GTHL and the Ontario agencies that are continuing to use ad agencies etc. that have locked-out union performers and are refusing to pay actors a living wage, so that's something we need to deal with.

But my questions, for now—let's see. Arts and culture help build strong communities that reflect the diverse cultures in Ontario. Where has the province invested to ensure that diverse voices continue to be heard through the arts? Do you have any specifics on that for us?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Yes, actually. Yes, it's a good question. The culture part, and the culture part of the culture, is obviously very important, which goes to one of the last questions.

In 2022-23, OAC invested in 220 communities to support artists and organizations, and as a result of that, as we found out the other day, the impact has been huge. Those grants were made available to people who are impactful within their community, make a difference and drive the economy as well, so I think from that particular mandate, they're doing a fantastic job in the OAC.

My colleague has a couple more thoughts on this.

**Ms. Katherine Kelly Gatten:** Thank you, Minister.

As the minister mentioned, it is the Ontario Arts Council who are an agency of the ministry and are very committed in ensuring equitable access for all Ontarians, with particular emphasis on the following priority groups: artists of colour, deaf artists and artists with disabilities, francophone artists, Indigenous artists, new-generation artists and artists living in regions outside of Toronto. They do offer funding programs for equity-deserving communities, including for each of these priority groups. They do maintain dedicated offices in Indigenous arts and francophone arts. They have targeted outreach and supports for equity-deserving communities. These equity considerations are embedded into the assessment criteria for all OAC funding programs.

In 2021-22, the Ontario Arts Council received an additional \$5 million from the province, which was invested on a one-time basis to support Indigenous artists, Indigenous arts organizations and new emerging artists in responding to the impacts of COVID-19.

In 2022, following extensive consultation with the arts sector, the OAC launched its new five-year strategic plan, called "Reset. Renew. Revitalize." This plan deepens the OAC's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, and further embeds equity into its granting framework.

Also in that year, in 2022, they created a role within their organization of manager of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility to support the design, development and implementation of an organization-wide equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility strategy.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay. Thank you for that.

To Minister Lumsden: Can you speak to us about the new tourism growth strategy at all?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Certainly. We're well into it. Again, I referenced this morning being in Kingston and speaking to RTO9 and the group and talking about the strategy. We are in place now and moving forward with the strategy. We have talked to the stakeholders; we're past that point. We're in a position now to start to pull that strategy together. There will be more consultation going on when we get closer to the end. We're not trying to protract the process, but it's important that our timing is correct and we're dealing with the facts and the figures that we need to know to be able to pull that strategy together and the capabilities of the RTOs and what they think.

To answer your question, yes, it's well under way. We're excited about the opportunity, as are the RTOs and the members, to where we're going to go and what they need, because it's a matter of—we've talked about this in other things—listening and finding out what the market is doing, and the expansion of tourism and where it has come from based on the pandemic. What I am finding—and this isn't me reading books; this is talking to people in their marketplace about what they've done, the challenges they've faced and how much better they are as a result, and what they've learned.

I think the learning piece on tourism, or anything coming out of the pandemic, has been very important.

They are putting those learnings in place, so when they get to the point—and these are their words I'm paraphrasing, not mine—they will be that much stronger than they were before the pandemic hit, because they've learned, they've expanded, and they're looking at taking that expansion not just to a typical, "Our tourist season is between May and September." They're looking at other opportunities within the industry to attract people, to keep them longer.

I referenced earlier about that one extra day. They're thinking in those terms, and the strategy that we're talking about is to support what they're going to do and how they are thinking. When you've got a group like we have who are innovative and thought-provoking with respect to feedback, we are getting great opportunity to pull together a great strategy that will help everyone—we hope—once executed and dropped.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay, great. Thank you.

Often some of our events are mostly focused on the warmer weather. They're not seasonal. Montreal and Winnipeg do a fantastic job in creating winter cities. That's something that Toronto has spoken about over the years. I think we can do way better. We're nowhere near Montreal, that's for sure.

Is your ministry focused on mostly outdoor arts events, supporting that year-round? I think of a great event that's coming up to its 10th anniversary, which hopefully you will come to, in beautiful Beaches—East York, and that's Winter Stations—which is modelled after the Winnipeg Warming Huts—creating art installations on the lifeguard stations. It brings tens of thousands of people all across Ontario and gets people off their couches, off Netflix and outside, and it's a great economic draw to the area. Are you looking at promoting winter cities and supporting arts year-round, indoors and outdoors?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through you, Chair: It's a great point. I spoke about the way they think, and the first thing that popped in my mind is the Quebec Winter Carnival. It has been going for years, and thousands of people show up every year. They've done such a fantastic job.

There's nothing stopping the creativity of those who are in charge now in their areas of developing those ideas. The one thing that—again, I've used the term "micromanage," and it doesn't apply necessarily here, but it is the point that we can give ideas, but as the saying goes, if you use what you've got, you will not need what you have not. If you expand the way you look at your area and your region, things like winter opportunities present themselves. Maybe they weren't typical before because they didn't have to, but I think those are some of the learnings that everyone absorbed because things were different and they had to find different ways. What you were describing in your community is a fantastic example of maximizing the time of year where people will get outside, get active and support.

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Look, arts and culture is part of that as well, about that experience. Creating experiences in communities is what all of this is about, whether it's sport, whether it's tourism,

whether it's arts and culture, and then the culture of what we do. To see that happen and you using that as an example, and if we want to continue to have a baseline of the Quebec Winter Carnival—okay, maybe that's a bit of a step for a lot of people—but it's out there and available. People are looking at it, and we are taking that into consideration based on the feedback.

It also goes back to the workers, people saying, "Okay, we want to get our staff here, but they leave after six months." Well, you know what, if you develop things like they do in Blue Mountain, as an example—they have done a tremendous job of taking what is usually a winter area and turning it into biking, hiking, outdoor, climbing. They've built these things, and, you know what, they've built them and people are coming. They're coming not just for the day; they're coming to stay. And so that's the way they have to—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you, Minister. I'm sorry I didn't give you a warning, but that's the end of your time.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I'm so sorry, MPP McMahon. You're usually better at timekeeping than I am. I'm sorry.

Anyway, we now go to the government side for 20 minutes. I'm going to start with MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Minister, for all those answers. It was giving us more spotlight on what the ministry is doing. Again, I will go back to the festival piece, because it's very enriching for communities and culture and every aspect of not only the economic side, but the cultural side and the festivity side, and making attractions, bringing people from outside the areas.

For example, in Mississauga—I go back to Mississauga, my city—we have many, many festivals coming along this year. For example, the Filipino community, the Filipino fest; the Latino fest; TD Mosaic Fest; Halal festival; Muslim festival; Italfest; Ukrainian festival; Polish festival; and, of course, the Egyptian festival, which was two or three weeks ago.

Again, if I compare one of the examples—for example, the Egyptian one, because I attended it and you, of course, were invited—the festival grew from last year, about 10,000, to this year, 62,000 attendees. Looking into that 60,000 people who visited Mississauga—and again, to your point about expanding to even one extra night, changing the nature of festivities to two days or three days, which will allow even a portion of those 60,000 to stay in Mississauga, to eat in Mississauga, to spend their night in Mississauga, to get the hotels. They managed to get some discounts on hotels, discounts on restaurants, discounts through the vendors. There were more than 100 vendors, more than 20 sponsors on board in one festival. If we can cookie-cut that on the other festivals and encourage them, grow them, that's about 600,000 people visiting Mississauga. That's a great attraction. That's a great job, Minister. And the ministry is doing great in encouraging that kind of festivity and festivals.

Can you tell me more about what the ministry is going to do or they plan to do to encourage that trend in the industry, to bring tourism into different areas where the festivities could be, like Toronto, for example?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** That's a great question. I'm surprised you're not taking a rest day based on all the activities going on in your region, in your riding. Success breeds more success. When I hear you describe, and I know a little bit about—and some of which, the things we will talk about, are funded through Experience Ontario, which, in turn, ripples out to the rest of the community.

Specifically some of the things you were talking about, the economical impact is huge. Sometimes, I think the average person forgets what that impact is. They see a lot of people and they think, "This is great, and it's great publicity," and that's that. But when you drill down—and what we encourage and what we are seeing more of, as I talked about a few minutes ago, is people changing their landscape and realizing what they can do if they bring the right people together.

The Egyptian festival, I think, is a great example of originally 10,000; now it's up to 62,000. Think of all the residual positive effects that has not only in the core community but outside: all the small stores and shops, the hotels, the things that may be just enough for these businesses to take them from breaking even a little bit more into a profitable situation in their community. When you do that and you get to a point, a lot of these businesses in turn step forward and volunteer and help, because they realize the more they feed it, the better it's going to be for everybody. It's a selfless process of when you say, "If it's good for me and good for other people and it builds our community, then we all win," and that selflessness that I've seen in tourism in communities big and small has been second to none.

There are key learnings in everything we do, and every day I'm going to learn something listening to people, no matter what we're talking about. But that is a great example, along with other things that I can note.

I can go on about some of the things, recent programs and sport events that come into a community and land, and they don't all have to be 60,000 strong; it can be 25,000 for two days around a tournament. The 2023 Canadian U-18 curling championships is going to be in Timmins, Ontario. Is that going to make a difference? You bet it will. The 2023 women's alpine ski Nor-Am Cup in the Blue Mountains: Is that going to make a difference? You bet it will. The 2023 World Indoor Rowing Championships in Mississauga; the 2023 Canadian wrestling trials in Waterloo: They all make a difference at different levels, but the key is the difference. What that does is it adds to the character and the success of those communities, and that's truly what you're talking about, what you are doing and what a lot of other people through the help of Reconnect are able to do in their community, building that community.

To me, that's the other definition of "culture": people coming together for the right reasons to get great results and not just thinking about themselves. It's consistent in

sport, in tourism and in culture, and that's one of the biggest things I've noticed. Again, congratulations for everyone in helping us build and continue to build, so next year you can say there are 100,000 people.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Grewal.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** Thank you, Minister. It's great to see you today. Thank you to your entire team for the great work that you all do at the ministry. I know it's a difficult job when you're looking at a hundred great proposals and you're stuck with the task of choosing which ones to move forward with, and I know you're doing a great job at picking them.

I had the opportunity to visit an event with you a few months ago in our area of Brampton, and we were watching GT20 cricket. Through that experience, with the ministry's support, they were able to bring so many families together, bring so many people out to the stadium, and create something that can develop our future generation and build sports into our community; build that bond between a father and son, a father and daughter, a mother and daughter; and build that family relationship up for something to go out and do, and create an overall positive impact on our community. I know we got to tour the entire place, see the Premier throw the first pitch and also check out their TV studios where they've been broadcasting to hundreds of thousands of homes across the world.

I just wanted to talk to you a little bit. When we look at world-class events like these, does the ministry see this as an investment opportunity or is there an interrelationship between the two? How are these decisions really made, and then how do you go about setting these up?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** It's a great question. There is an investment opportunity for us, because we see the return, certainly.

Using the GT20 as an example, it's a great example of investment and its growth in a very short period of time. One of the things I find very impressive, other than the sport itself and the people coming: When I had the tour—and I think you were a part of it—they were very proud of their TV truck. I don't know if anybody has been in a television truck, but it is not something just like a pickup. It is a massive, expensive piece of equipment. You buy that when you want to do broadcasts at the highest level, just like they do at Hockey Night in Canada and the Canadian Football League. That's what TSN and Sportsnet drive around and drop at stadiums before they get ready to broadcast. Well, they've got their own. When I asked them, "Why did you buy it?" they said, "We're in this for the long run. We understand our impact on Ontario and our sport and bringing more of this to Brampton and 100 million people." Just because people aren't picking up a broadcast in Canada around cricket doesn't mean the rest of the planet isn't, because they are, because cricket is a global sport.

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I'm using that as an example. We can talk about world juniors; we can talk about the women's final championship. All of these things draw attention to us in Ontario

that we're doing things right and that people want to come here to host their event, so the residual effect of that is massive for our community, for the people who live and work, for sport and the cultural piece of how we do things. If we continue to do things well and better than anybody else, that's contagious. That's like being in an environment on a team of whatever we want to talk about. You get the right mix with the right coaches. You don't worry about the cultural piece because that's being taken care of, because people understand the importance of it in sport. It could be sport, it could be business and it's in government as well.

What we are building here, in concert with the GT20—because they've told us they will be back; they want to create a league and part of it is going to be in Canada. How exciting is that for us? Because we supported them and participated as a partner, they want to keep us as a partner, and we want to keep them coming back because the upside is enormous.

We talked just a few minutes ago about winter events. Well, you stage it once, you get X amount of people. The Egyptian festival is probably the best example: 10,000 to 62,000. Think what it could be with our support and investment on a continual basis in bringing people together, the widespread impact it has on the community and Ontario from a media PR perspective, all of that.

We all benefit from what happened through that time period of the GT20. We all do. We might not all see it tangibly, but the community, the province of Ontario sets itself above everybody else by doing things better and doing things like this. We have to continue to do that in this space.

We're excited about those opportunities, because people are paying attention, just like they did in the television and movie space. More are coming to Ontario because of what we have to offer, be it tax credit, be it talent, post-production, all of those things. You do things right, people come, and then you continue to do them right because you're providing the services, the skills, the talent and the support. Everybody wins.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** Thank you, Minister. I'd like to pass the time to my colleagues.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Thanigasalam.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you, Minister, for your great work. I'm proud of Ontario athletes, who punch above their weights in all competitions. I see, in my own riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, how much athletic excellence inspires the next generation to be the best they can be as they take pride in our athletes. I appreciate the tremendous value of the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario, located in my riding at the Pan Am Sports Centre. I'm interested in knowing what investment our government or the ministry is making to encourage and support amateur sport development as well as taking it to the next level of professional athlete development.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Through the Chair: That's a great question. Sometimes, what you are talking about gets lost when we talk about high performance. The CSIO has done a great job. Specifically, our government provides support

to support the recreation sector, including over \$8 million through the Ontario Amateur Sport Fund and \$6.36 million through the quest for gold program. The CSIO receives \$4.2 million from the government, and the coaches association, just over a million dollars.

When we talk in terms of developing sport and youth in sport, it obviously gets a little bit tighter when you get to the top of the pyramid, if you will. What CSIO does—you were there, and you see first-hand. I say this only because of my experiences in my family of an athlete or athletes in high performance and what they go through and what they had to go through to achieve the highest level on the planet when it comes to competition, not just in Canada but worldwide. But to get to that point, you have to develop the athletes.

One of our focuses, as a result of the CSIO and our commitment to them, is taking that next-level athlete, introducing them to the next level of competition, which can be national to international, and then on the world stage at the Olympics—and that takes a lot of work, it takes a lot of expertise, and it takes the right facility. Again, if you haven't been over to the performance centre, which, by the way, as we noticed walking out, is a great facility for recreation, swimming—the general population's access, through membership, to work out and train. They're surrounded by some of the best athletes, not just in Ontario but in Canada, who have come there specifically to raise their level of competition, to represent Ontario and this country, at the end of the day, at international events, the largest being the Olympics.

I will tell you, there is nothing better, I've been told, than to represent your country and have the Canadian flag—but first, carry the Ontario flag, and then have the Canadian flag, on your outfit, on your uniform, into a competition. It inspires people, both parents and supporters alike, to see athletes do it.

You want to talk about culture and developing good things? That happens in sports. When they are in the right direction and good things happen and they work their tails off like they do to represent Ontario first and then Canada in those competitions, it is second-level—it's emotional, it does all the things, and those people around it are pulled in. An updraft takes place that you fall and get connected with, and emotional about what is going on, because those young people have committed their time.

I'll tell you, those who are in university, who go to school, are pursuing an education and training at the same time—it's tough to match their commitment to what they do. They're willing to do it because they know it's special to represent the province and then onward, if they get the opportunity, to represent the country. We need to support them.

We need to applaud what the CSIO does—and all their staff, for what they do at all levels, whether it's repair when an athlete gets hurt, or it takes them to the ultimate level with the work that's put in, because nothing happens, as everyone knows, unless you put the time in and the work in. Those people there—that's what it's all about for them. They're creating a wonderful opportunity for

anybody in Ontario who aspires to be like that—and there are lots of young people who do; I can promise you that.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** There are four minutes remaining. MPP Babikian.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you, Minister, for coming with your team and sharing with us the good news and the excellent work that you are doing at the ministry.

The tragic death of Rowan Stringer, who was captain of the rugby team at John McCrae Secondary School in Scarborough, has indeed brought much-needed attention to the concussion safety issue. I believe we are all more aware and educated today than ever before. As we approach the fifth anniversary of Rowan's Law, many of us would appreciate knowing what work remains to be implemented—all of the applications of the Rowan's Law report. As well, how does the ministry know if any of the measures taken are having an impact?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** It's a great question.

We are very close to the Rowan's Law mandate, if you will. As much as it is sometimes hard to not take things personally in what we do, all of us—I look at this and the loss of Rowan Stringer as a result of what would be considered years ago as, "I'm okay. I can go back in. It wasn't a big deal. Really, I'm okay, Coach. Let me go back in." That was a mindset that young Rowan Stringer had. She was competitive, and she wanted to compete. Sadly, she shouldn't have gone back in. Someone should have noticed that she had been hit in the head—and that's not blaming anyone; that's just the way sport goes. As a result of the working group around Rowan's Law and chipping away at all the elements—and we're almost completely there, but looking to expand it.

The last part of your question was, what kind of impact has it made? I can tell you from, again, coaching experience that Rowan Stringer's impact on how sport is played has changed dramatically. You can talk about it in hockey and certainly in rugby. The awareness that is taking place now, beginning first with—not saying, "Hey, we all have to watch games and pay attention." It's about coaching and training. It's now about teaching young people to keep their head out of contact.

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I can say with a certain amount of experience that in many sports, the head was considered a weapon, not anything but, and now that has changed. It's changed not only in Ontario, but across Canada. Ontario is the leader in concussion protocol safety, thanks to Rowan Stringer's family. They understand that it starts at the grassroots.

Whether you're talking about—and they did take contact out of hockey for checking until a certain age. In rugby and in football, you can't go on the field to practise—in rep or high school football—until the coaches take you on the field without equipment and spend two hours teaching you safe contact rules. That's a result of learning that the head is not a weapon and you need to take care of your brain. Coaches have to go through a protocol to learn about it and understand in each sport before a coach is allowed through a certification process to step on an ice surface, a soccer pitch, a rugby pitch or a football

field, for any sport. The impact, again, has been outstanding and will continue to be, and I can tell you first-hand, it's saving brains.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** That's a great note to wrap up on. Thank you very much, Minister. That does conclude the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of the estimates. I just wonder if the minister and the staff would like a few minutes. You can stay for the votes if you wish, or you can go if you wish.

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** We'll stay.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You're going to stay? Okay. Are the members ready to vote then? Okay. I'll start this list.

Shall vote 3801, ministry administration, carry? All those in favour, please raise their hands. All those opposed, please raise their hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 3803, sport, recreation and community programs, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 3804, tourism and culture capital program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 3805, tourism and culture programs, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 3806, Ontario Trillium Foundation program, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 3808, Ontario cultural media tax credits, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 3811, agency programs, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare the motion carried.

Shall the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Thank you very much, everyone. We will just take a five-minute recess until 2 o'clock.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Oh, 10 minutes. Okay, a 10-minute recess, then we will get the next ministry. Thank you very much again, Minister. Thank you to you and your staff.

*The committee recessed from 1355 to 1406.*

## MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURALISM

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Good afternoon, everyone. We will now resume committee. The second ministry scheduled for consideration today is the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. I'm required to call vote 4601, which sets the review process in motion.

We will begin with a statement of not more than 20 minutes from the minister. Minister, when you're ready, please just begin. Welcome.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Wonderful. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. It is an honour to address the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy on behalf of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism this afternoon. I'm looking forward to speaking about the good work done within this ministry and, of course, answering your questions following that.

I'm very grateful to work with a dedicated team of excellent public servants, some of whom are with me today and will be able to answer your questions as well. Joining me, to my left, is our deputy minister, Keith Palmer; and also Dr. Parm Bhatthal, the assistant deputy minister of the Anti-Racism Directorate, and Michelle Gittens, the assistant deputy minister of the citizenship, inclusion and heritage division; as well as Patricia Perez, the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism's chief administrative officer and assistant deputy minister of the corporate management and services division.

Formed in the summer of 2021—I want to set the context for the committee that we are still a young ministry, and I have been proud to lead it since June 2022. It has been a great honour and pleasure to bring together the portfolios of anti-racism, citizenship, multiculturalism, inclusion and heritage under one ministry. While we at the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism are proud to lead the province's anti-racism and inclusion initiatives, the fact of the matter is that building a stronger and more equitable Ontario requires an all-of-government approach.

During my time as minister, I've had the honour of travelling across the province and have experienced firsthand just how important the vision of our ministry truly is: one where we celebrate our diverse people, history and cultures, while fighting the racism, division and intolerance that have negatively impacted our communities. It is a vision that seeks to better understand our past, while ensuring that people and communities have an opportunity to prosper and build a better future together.

I've also seen how, despite all the things that make us great, we continue to face our challenges. Too many are denied opportunities or face discrimination because of who they are, their background, faith or culture. Throughout the recent pandemic, we saw the rise in acts of hate and intolerance. Islamophobic incidents in London and Markham, vandalism that targeted Jewish synagogues and

Hindu temples: These are just some of the hateful acts experienced by Ontario's diverse communities.

One of the very first things I did after assuming my role as the minister was to visit the London Muslim Mosque, where I personally met with the imam and community leaders to express my deepest sympathies as they continue to rebuild following the tragic act of Islamophobia which claimed the lives of four members of London's Afzaal family. During this meeting, we discussed the impact this has had on our Muslim community in London and on Muslim communities across Ontario and beyond. The conversation helped influence the work of our ministry and influence our ongoing collaboration as we work to drive further change after this tragedy. In fact, I visited the London Muslim Mosque to announce our new anti-hate initiative alongside Mayor Morgan and the Muslim community leaders.

As we look forward, we remain committed to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion for all Ontarians, one where our differences are celebrated as a source of strength, but where we continue to honour, preserve and promote the stories of our past, to be enjoyed for generations to come. I have heard that people want to learn more about how to conserve and celebrate our history in our province. How? By better understanding our past, we can achieve a stronger sense of what brings us together as Ontarians.

### 1410

Today, I would like to provide the committee with an overview of some of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism's key initiatives from 2022 to 2023, some of those priorities being investing towards initiatives that combat racism and hate; reducing hate incidents; fostering inclusive communities; strengthening support for local businesses and community-led programs; and conserving Ontario's heritage for generations, while also supporting key provincial priorities.

When it comes to fighting racism and hate, statistics show that particularly during the pandemic, there was a rise in reported hate crimes, a 27% increase since 2021. Religious-motivated hate increased by 67%, with most victims being Jewish or Muslim. Hate crimes related to sexual orientation went up 64%. It is important to note that the rise is not unique to Ontario, with jurisdictions across Canada and beyond seeing similar rises since the start of the pandemic.

Fighting racism and hate is at the core of our ministry's work, and Ontario's anti-racism strategy sets out how we plan to achieve this goal. The first such strategy was released in 2017, and last year we began the rigorous process to review the progress that has been made and, of course, next steps. We engaged with the public through online surveys and held community-led engagements with Indigenous, Black, Muslim, Jewish and other racialized communities.

During this process, my colleagues in the government and I had the privilege of meeting with the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity, community partners, sector leaders and many others. What became clear during our consultations is that our anti-racism strategy needs to



build on progress made and set the foundation for further action, so that every Ontarian can live, work and prosper.

I was very pleased to release our government's amended strategy this August. I want to take a moment to truly thank the deputy minister and his entire team at the Anti-Racism Directorate for their passion, expertise and hard work in putting this strategy together.

Building a stronger and more inclusive Ontario, Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan takes a whole-of-government approach to create better, brighter and more prosperous futures for Indigenous and racialized communities. It details investments of over \$130 million from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism and more from partner ministries to build a stronger, more vibrant and inclusive province, where every person can participate, contribute and succeed. This strategy has four distinct areas of action: economic empowerment, supporting children and youth, population-specific anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives, as well as policy and accountability.

In addition to this work, I would also like to highlight the recent and ongoing initiatives undertaken by the Anti-Racism Directorate to support its mission. First is the anti-racism anti-hate grant. This \$4.8-million investment over three years supports 82 community-led initiatives that will increase public education and awareness of the impacts of racism and hate. This includes the project called Our London Family Commemorations, led by the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the London Muslim Mosque and Islamic Relief Canada.

Another project aims to address racism and hate directed towards East Asian communities in our province, led by the Community Family Services of Ontario. There are also many projects that build cultural and anti-racism awareness in rural areas across Ontario. In 2023, the ministry will continue to fund and support local projects to help build local capacity, connect communities and deepen understanding of the effects of racism and hate.

In an effort to create safer communities and protect the rights of everyone to live free of fear and intimidation, the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism launched the Ontario Grant to Support Anti-Hate Security Measures for Faith-Based and Cultural Organizations back in 2021. The grant provided eligible faith-based and cultural organizations with funding for safety and security measures to protect their facilities and communities against hate incidents. A total of 1,244 unique organizations were funded through both rounds of that program.

Following ministry consultations with recipients and based on their feedback, the program was redesigned and renamed the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant. Starting in 2023, the ministry is investing \$25.5 million in the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant to address the rise in hate incidents against faith-based, cultural and Indigenous communities. This grant will continue to help faith-based and cultural organizations protect their communities by funding essential safety and security measures. Eligible organizations can receive up to \$10,000 to better protect and secure their facilities against hate-motivated incidents, graffiti, vandalism and other damages.

The ministry is working to create new opportunities for youth, small businesses and organizations across the province, especially for marginalized groups facing systemic barriers. A terrific example of this is the Black youth action plan. The Black youth action plan's economic empowerment program provides supports for Black youth, entrepreneurs and communities, while building a future-oriented and talent-driven workforce here in Ontario. Ontario is investing \$17 million in funding in 2023-24 in the economic empowerment program to help Black youth access employment opportunities and career-building resources, as well as to support Black business leaders. This program is helping community organizations create local projects that will help youth gain in-demand skills to find jobs in high-growth sectors and equip Black-led organizations with tools they need to prosper in Ontario's thriving economy.

Another example of our work here is Racialized and Indigenous Support for Entrepreneurs Grant Program, also known as the RAISE program. In the last year, the RAISE program has provided businesses with training and coaching as well as \$10,000 grants to approximately 400 Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs in Ontario to facilitate innovation and growth within the small business sector. We are expanding and enhancing RAISE over the next three years with an investment of \$15 million to help more Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs grow their small businesses in Ontario, creating an inclusive economy.

As we look towards the future, it is critical to ensure that all Ontarians have the necessary tools and opportunities to achieve their economic goals and contribute to a prosperous society. The Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity was established to empower Ontarians and enable them to thrive in an ever-evolving economy. We look to the PCEO as a champion for community voices. I have seen the council make significant strides in advancing social and economic priorities such as post-secondary education, skills training and employment, with a focus on youth facing systemic barriers, such as Black, Indigenous, racialized and rural youth, and youth from marginalized communities.

As I mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism leads the province's anti-racism and inclusion initiatives. We know that to drive real change and build a more inclusive and equitable Ontario requires an all-of-government approach. Right across our government, work is being done each and every day to continue moving that needle in the right direction. Fourteen ministries worked with me on the anti-racism strategy, including the Solicitor General and Attorney General, who are working with the law enforcement and justice sectors to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system, prosecute hate crimes and provide closure to those affected by these horrible acts; and the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, who have launched a number of initiatives to support Indigenous business and entrepreneurs. This is only a small sample of the actions our government is taking to dismantle barriers. However, I

believe it provides the committee with a better sense of how our multi-ministerial approach is advancing Ontario's equity and inclusivity efforts and helping build a more inclusive and welcoming province for all people.

**1420**

The ministry is also working to strengthen the bonds that build inclusive and vibrant communities, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and pride amongst Ontarians. Each year, through the great work of ADM Gittens and the team at the honours and awards secretariat, we recognize as many as 10,000 Ontarians for their service to their communities to our great province.

The ministry administers and delivers the province's six honours and 13 awards that celebrate the accomplishments of outstanding Ontarians. These honours and awards cover everything from the most prestigious, the Order of Ontario, to others including the volunteer service awards, the June Callwood awards for volunteerism, the James Bartleman Indigenous Youth Creative Writing Award, four Lieutenant Governors' legacy awards and honours for brave firefighters, policemen and paramedics, who put their lives on the line each and every day for the people of Ontario. As part of this effort, we are working to embed inclusion, diversity and equity into how these awards and honour programs are promoted and delivered, encouraging more Ontarians from all backgrounds and all across the province to nominate outstanding individuals for recognition.

An Ontario where we conserve value and share the places, landscapes, histories, traditions and stories that embody Ontario's heritage, now and for future generations, is also the focus of our ministry. Our work on heritage demonstrates excellence in the conservation and stewardship of places and landscapes, traditions and stories. We spark new conversations and give voice to the diversity of Ontario's people and places. Last year, our heritage team was focused on how we can help facilitate the conservation of Ontario's cultural heritage resources, while also supporting key provincial priorities.

I'd also like to take note of the critical role our ministry plays in terms of archeology. The Ontario Heritage Act enables the province to protect and conserve archeological sites and artifacts. Our ministry does this through a role in regulating and overseeing the profession and practice of archeology. Our team at the ministry reviews archeological reports from various stages to ensure they're being conducted properly, while also listening to the archeologists themselves. We recognize the important role these professionals play in conserving important sites and artifacts, and are actively hiring additional staff to address the growing demand for these assessments.

Celebrating Ontario's history and heritage is an important part of the work of our ministry, as I've said, and, of course, of the Ontario Heritage Trust, which plays a key role in that effort. Ontario also supports heritage protection and conservation through the OHT. The OHT carries out important work commemorating the peoples, places and events that have shaped the province through programs such as Doors Open Ontario, the Provincial

Plaque Program and the Heritage Matters speaker series. They are leaders in conservation of built heritage and own and conserve numerous properties throughout the province, like the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre—if you haven't been there, I highly suggest you go. They are also doing vital work with Indigenous communities to reflect Indigenous history at OHT's properties and through the OHT programming.

In closing, Ontario succeeds when people from all walks of life are supported, empowered and have every opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential. We are paving the way for every individual to rise to their fullest potential. As we work to reduce hate incidents, we are also cultivating an environment of safety, respect and understanding, where diversity is valued and celebrated. By empowering Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, we are energizing our economic foundations and ensuring that we all play an equal part in Ontario's success story. By promoting and celebrating our heritage, we are preserving the Ontario story. We are honouring the legacy of those who helped shape the province into everything it is and we enjoy today.

We will continue to promote Ontario's past for future generations to learn from, while ensuring the next chapter of our story continues to build on the progress we have made and is not one single action, but the cumulation of all our collective efforts here at the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism and right across our government that will continue to shape the future of our province for generations to come.

Madam Chair, committee members, thank you very much for the opportunity to address you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much, Minister. We're going to go over to the questions and answers with the official opposition for 20 minutes to begin. MPP Stevens, I think you—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Andrew. Change of play.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you, Minister, for your comments. First, I wanted to ask if you happened to receive a letter that was addressed to yourself and some of your colleagues. It would have been sent on April 14, 2023. It was the day before World Art Day. I will read an excerpt of that letter:

"I am writing to you as the official opposition culture and heritage critic on behalf of our Ontario NDP caucus. Echoing the calls of countless arts, culture and heritage stakeholders across Ontario, we urge you to make the following immediate investments to arts, culture and heritage"—which is your piece. One of the points that I highlighted for yourself was to "engage in meaningful consultation with community, including vested stakeholders, such as Ontario Place for All and Architectural Conservancy Ontario, to ensure the public lands of Ontario Place are kept public, accessible, and it puts Ontarians first in its planning"—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP McGregor has a point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Yes. Pursuant to standing order 25(b), I think the member might be directing their speech to matters outside of the topic today. I believe it's estimates, specifically money being spent by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, so just—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I would like to reclaim my time.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Absolutely. If I'm wrong, I'm happy to be wrong. I just want to make sure we're using committee for the right purpose here today.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP McGregor has made a point just to keep it for the estimates in the specific ministry that's before us. MPP Andrew, if you could direct your comments accordingly, please.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you very much. I was providing context. Ontario Place certainly, I would argue, is part of the heritage, identity and mainstay of our province. It is currently, as we know, at danger of being ripped away by this government. I'll reframe.

Can the minister confirm the total cost to Ontario taxpayers of this government's plan to demolish the historical landmark of Ontario Place to make way for a private, luxury mega-spa and parking lot, again, on public property—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** —charging \$650 million to taxpayers—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP McGregor has a point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Yes. Madam Chair, pursuant to standing order 25(b), I believe the member is directing their matter to subjects that are outside of the proceedings today. The plans on the redevelopment of Ontario Place, I believe, sit in the Ministries of Infrastructure and Tourism, Culture and Sport, not in the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Again, it's an estimates committee, just to respect the taxpayer and direct the speech to what the committee is supposed be for.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** That is a valid point of order, and I will do the reminder again, MPP Andrew—  
*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I have the floor. Thank you.

MPP Andrew, I will remind you of the specific ministry we have and the contents within that ministry and the estimates that are before us. If you could please, again, direct your comments to the topic that's before us with the appropriate minister.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you very much. I am reclaiming my time, of course. Again, I'd like to know what the government of Ontario has invested in ensuring that heritage sites in our province are protected. As we know, Bill 23 has actually put heritage designation in jeopardy, and I want to know what the province is doing to protect heritage designations with the changes that have been made under Bill 23.

1430

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I want to thank the member of the opposition for the question. First and foremost, I always welcome letters from all members of the Legislative Assembly on any topic, so thank you for that.

I think one of the key things is consultation and, as mentioned in the question, my ministry has been very focused on consulting with Ontarians on a whole host of stuff, whether it is what you have referenced in the changes to the heritage act which really go to conserve, preserve and celebrate heritage, but also while streamlining the act for future growth for Ontarians here in the province.

Beyond that, I'd like to highlight the work of the Ontario Heritage Trust. They are a vital agency in a lot of the work we do in preserving, protecting and celebrating Ontario's heritage, and I'm really proud to have a great working relationship with them. I know the work that they're doing is great.

Specific to funding, two grants I would like to highlight for the committee are the Heritage Organization Development Grant, which helps 160 organizations involved in heritage—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** If I may just interrupt the minister—and I hate doing that, but this is a timed activity. Can the minister explain why, given the sweeping changes made to the Ontario Heritage Act through Bill 23, not a single heritage organization was selected for consultation in committee hearings on the bill?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Chair, through you to the member, consultation was key to the changes to the heritage act amendments that we did. My ministry has, from day one, consulted communities right across Ontario, whether—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** But again, Minister, you are the heritage guy. You are the minister responsible for heritage, so I'm just wondering why, for changes made to the Ontario Heritage Act through Bill 23, not a single heritage organization was selected for consultation in committee hearings on the bill—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order, Chair.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I mean, I assume the heritage organizations are the experts.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP McGregor has a point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Again, Madam Chair, pursuant to standing order 25(b), the point of the committee here is to go through the estimates of the ministry. The ministry does not control the committee. The committee decides what witnesses come to testify before the committee when a bill comes up. The bill in question was a municipal affairs bill.

I know the member has a lot of good questions about the estimates for citizenship and multiculturalism specifically. I would just invite the member to direct their speech towards the matter that's at hand.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you, MPP McGregor. MPP Andrew, the clock is stopped on the point of order, so don't worry, you have your time.

I will again direct for specific questions for this ministry. That's what we're here for. If you would please take that under consideration to keep to the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Your time is going to start again now.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you so much, Chair. I, as a member of this committee, am here for the constituents of St. Paul's and the stakeholders who have very specific questions that they often ask me to ask, and whenever I have a chance to speak to a minister, gosh darn it, I'm going to bring the house of St. Paul's into Queen's Park, with all due respect.

The question I'd like to pose to the minister: From the briefing book, the citizenship, inclusion and heritage division now administers the Ontario Heritage Act with a mandate to "work with partner ministries to ensure that cultural heritage is considered in other land use planning processes, housing and infrastructure planning and the management of provincially owned property." This work was what saw changes—as I was saying, through Bill 23—made to the Ontario Heritage Act that risk erasing 32,000 heritage designations across the province and, frankly, the work of communities that realized them.

This includes the designation of Little Jamaica, something I've seen my community locally fight for. I don't have to tell anyone in the room about the hundreds of small businesses, Black-owned businesses, that had been decimated during the pandemic, many of which because they couldn't access funding from this government to stay afloat—and I could go on for that, but that's a different committee. Anyway, it is a change that experts agree is an inefficient use of resources and would be especially damaging for racialized communities.

Can you specify the total that will be spent on ensuring the heritage of Black, Indigenous and racialized communities is protected in places like Little Jamaica? What dollars and cents are going into supporting heritage communities that are predominantly home to Black, Indigenous and racialized communities?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Absolutely. Through you, Chair, to answer the member's question: First, I do want to say that one of the greatest strengths of Ontario is in its diversity, and it is truly a part of our heritage. I echo the member's statements on that.

I have met with folks from Little Jamaica who have expressed interest in creating a heritage district and doing that. I, of course, encourage them to do that. The Ontario Heritage Act outlines ways in which they can do that, and I, as the heritage minister, will always have an open door to those communities and to work with them.

But maybe with this, I'm just going to turn it over to the deputy minister and his team to maybe talk about the specifics of the Ontario Heritage Act and how communities can work within it to designate districts or municipal properties.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair: I'm Keith Palmer, deputy minister, citizenship and multiculturalism.

Heritage is a very, very important part of this province and the work that this ministry does, and preserving and conserving that heritage is of the utmost importance. As we start thinking about the future state of this province in regard to opportunities to continue to develop and build this province into a community that will flourish and allow everyone to succeed in their endeavours, it's important for us to continue to engage. It's important for us to continue to meet with stakeholders specific to some of their requirements around their needs specific to heritage.

We have reduced some of the red tape pertaining to heritage and designation of properties, working with municipalities in their efforts to be able to designate different sites specific to the needs of those individuals. As such, our heritage teams are reviewing different archaeological reviews. We're working with different heritage organizations and trusts and making sure that our responsibilities to the conservation, while at the same time thinking about the future state of this province, is something that remains important to this ministry.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Understood. Thank you very much for that response. I guess I was looking for some dollars and cents with regard to investments made in Black and racialized communities, heritage communities, like Little Jamaica.

You mentioned, Minister, that you consulted with many stakeholders in Little Jamaica. I'm wondering if you could share a few of those names, if I'm not breaking any privacy laws or anything like that, of some of the folks you've consulted with.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Chair, with respect to the member, I don't have a specific name right off the top of my head, but I do recall meeting with an organization within Little Jamaica. With respect to the member and to the committee, I meet with thousands of folks and consult with tons, so if I had it, I would share it, but I know we've done that.

To the member's question, I would like to highlight some of the grants that we have invested in within heritage specifically, and that is the Heritage Organization Development Grant that has gone out to 160 organizations across the province to continue to, as you said, promote, conserve and celebrate heritage. As well, the Provincial Heritage Organizations Operating Grant has helped 12 larger heritage organizations do that work. These are investments my ministry is very proud of and I am proud of, as the minister, to be making and to continue to tell that Ontario—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** If I may interrupt you, Minister: You have an Artscape building in your riding, right? The Weston Common, I believe?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Right, yes.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I'm not in your riding, but we are practically neighbours somewhat.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** We're close.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** We're close enough, right?

I'm just wondering, specifically around Little Jamaica, one of the areas in our province that were disproportionately hit by the pandemic—we're wondering, as

this is part of heritage, what is this government putting forth in terms of actual dollars and cents to support Black, Indigenous, racialized communities and maintain that heritage, such as in places like Little Jamaica?

I'll give you a minute on that one, and then I'll move to another question.

1440

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I'll do my best. I'll jump right into it. Chair, there are a few different things I'd like to highlight, of course, echoing the investments that we have made in the grants organizations within the heritage landscape. But when it comes to supporting and investing in our diversity as a province, this ministry has truly been a leader on that front, and we've done it in a number of different ways.

I would highlight the anti-racism strategy, which is an all-of-government approach investing hundreds of millions of dollars into the cultural fabric of Ontario while combatting racism and hate. Particularly what's before you is a \$132-million investment from this ministry alone. It's something I'm really proud of. Whether it's heritage, anti-racism, making Ontario one of the greatest places in the world to live, work and play, it's on a foundation of our diversity and our culture.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I appreciate that response, and I want to say on the record that any penny, let alone a dollar, that any government can provide to support communities in need to make investments toward our communities—I think we can all agree that that is a positive thing. That said, I think if we take an intersectionality approach to looking at how this government works, one could argue that a bill, like Bill 124, for instance, that suppresses the wages of predominantly Black and racialized nurses is pretty problematic legislation.

Regardless, I'll go back to my point here and start a new question—I like to jump around sometimes. Racially motivated hate and hate crimes are rising, and quickly, as you indicated, across our province of Ontario. Yet overall spending towards the Anti-Racism Directorate has actually decreased this year from last.

Can the minister explain how this government expects to counter this dangerous trend across our province without an increase in funding that directly matches the increase in racism? And I have to say, when I first became an MPP and I learned that the Conservative government had a \$1,000 budget to address the Anti-Racism Directorate, that was shocking. I mean, some people's suits in this room are probably more than \$1,000.

So just redirecting to the minister: Can the minister explain how this government expects to counter this dangerous trend of hate, of racism, across our province without an increase in funding that directly matches the increase in racism? Again, I say that with the hearts and minds and lived experience of Black folks in St. Paul's, of Jewish folks in St. Paul's, of racialized folks in St. Paul's who have experienced anti-Black racism, who have experienced anti-Semitism—who have experienced both—and other forms of hate.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the committee: Look, that's one of the biggest focuses we have in the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, that open-door policy, and we will continue to work with all ethnicities, all cultures, people from all walks of life as we make these critical investments.

Particularly to your question, the Anti-Racism Directorate, under the leadership of this Premier and this government, has actually risen 450% from the last government. Just this year alone, we have announced many anti-hate initiatives to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, whether it's been the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant to help places of worship, cultural communities, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Can you just tell me what the Anti-Racism Directorate funding is, specifically?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Yes. It's to the tune of \$31 million, and that is a 450% increase in the Anti-Racism Directorate. That is one part—one important part, but one part, of the ministry's work on equity, inclusion and diversity.

The anti-racism strategy we just tabled with an investment, just in this ministry alone, of \$132.5 million is also an all-of-government approach, across 14 ministries, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

I am proud of this work. I am proud of the work of our government and the other ministries in these strong investments.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This is taking you on your word, Minister. The numbers sound excellent, and they're certainly in the estimates book and whatnot. I'm sorry to beat a dead horse here, but Little Jamaica—I live about 15 minutes away—is literally the heart and soul—and maybe I'm a little biased, right? But during the pandemic, no one could speak about the loss of small business, the loss of heritage, the loss of affordability without mentioning Little Jamaica. I'm just curious, with all these big macro-numbers and ideas, if we can make a commitment to talking more about Little Jamaica in our Legislature—through you, Minister—about heritage, about the funding that you're going to put towards Little Jamaica and the Black folks who live there, and the Black businesses and the artists who contribute to the heritage of Little Jamaica.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Chair, through you to the member, absolutely. All of our communities across Ontario really add to what makes Ontario the great place it is.

Specific to those numbers—they are large numbers because we have a very large commitment to this. They are, of course, in the briefing book: Ontario's anti-racism strategy; it's all laid out here.

What I'll do is I'll just hand it off to our deputy minister for further comment—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Actually, I'm going to follow up with the deputy minister and hopefully I can get a meeting. I know that the time is running, so I'm just going to jump in to the other part of that question.

As I expressed, I was rather shocked when I became an MPP and saw that the Anti-Racism Directorate had a

budget of \$1,000. Now it has more, and I thank the government for the little more. But more out of touch with inflation, more out of touch with the number of folks coming to Ontario, more out of touch with the rise of racism and anti-Semitism and all the “-isms” and phobias—we can argue whether it’s enough. I think we can always do better, right?

Of this overall decrease in spending, on the Anti-Racism Directorate, the largest decrease was seen in the directorate’s transfer payments: a decrease of 8% over the last year, which is even higher when accounting for a year of record inflation across this province. This means that less money is actually making it to the organizations doing work on the ground, the organizations that Minister Ford spoke so eloquently about. This means that less money is making it to those folks.

Can the minister please explain why most of the funding shortfall the overall directorate is seeing is in these transfer payments?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** There’s 50 seconds remaining.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I do want to start off and stress the fact that the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate has seen a 450% increase under this government. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars as a government in tackling racism and hate, and we are going to continue to do that. We are going to continue to listen to communities. They are going to be at the core of this ministry’s work and this government’s work.

When we talk about dollar funding—whether it’s the \$25-million investment in the anti-hate prevention grant, the anti-racism anti-hate grant, the city of London pilot, the Black youth action plan, the RAISE grant—we are putting our money where our mouth is and we are making these investments.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Chair?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** We’ve got five seconds left.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Well, all the millions of dollars that you’re investing—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** —I think the people of Ontario want to know over how many years—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you. That’s time.

We are now going to go to the independent. MPP McMahon, you have 10 minutes, and then the government will have 20 minutes, and that rotation will repeat itself once more.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you for coming in. Happy summer.

I’m just going to follow up on a few of those same themes, going back to heritage. I’m so glad that you spoke at length about heritage and the value of preserving Ontario’s heritage. I’m just wondering, in light of Bill 23 etc., is the ministry doing anything to help with the backlog of buildings to be designated or listed as heritage, like partnering with municipalities to help alleviate that?

1450

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thank you very much, through you, Chair, for the question. Look, the changes made to the Ontario Heritage Act were to streamline heritage, focusing on conserving, preserving and celebrating Ontario’s most valuable heritage while striking a balance of building for the future.

I have had the opportunity, just recently at AMO, to meet with municipalities from across Ontario—not just whether it’s heritage or whether it’s tackling racism and hate and so on and so forth. We at the ministry, from day one, have had an open door to our municipal partners and community organizations, and I’ll continue to have those conversations.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay. That’s really good to hear.

Then, you mentioned the Ontario Heritage Trust, and I’m just intrigued because we had a fantastic property in my riding before the boundaries were switched. Can you speak to Ontario Heritage Trust properties: the volume, how many we have in Ontario, what is their state of good repair, if they are occupied?

You know from being at city hall with me when we went through all those vacant residential properties, but are these being activated and utilized to their full potential? Sometimes you see buildings at great sites, and maybe they’re not all fully being used, so is there a way—I’m thinking, in light of Minister Lumsden, about how people in the arts community are looking for spaces for performance and just more spaces in urban centres, for sure.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** First off, thank you very much for the question. Through you, Madam Chair, to the member and the committee: The Ontario Heritage Trust does great work each and every year in conserving and preserving built heritage right across the province. I have had the privilege as minister to join the CEO of our trust and senior leadership and board members in touring different heritage properties and, truly, to see how valuable heritage is here in Ontario. We see it from rural Ontario, small-town Ontario, right here in urban centres and downtown Toronto, to the very committee room we are sitting in today. Heritage is incredibly important, and I’m proud of the work that the Ontario Heritage Trust is doing.

I will pass the floor over to the deputy minister maybe to expand on some of the work the Ontario Heritage Trust does and our officials.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair: Thank you for the question, member.

I myself, in fact, am making my way down next week to the Josiah Henson site just outside of Chatham, where I will see for myself exactly what that building looks like and the state of that building, but more importantly to introduce myself to the history, the culture and the environment of that building.

Having recently joined this ministry and having the opportunity to make my way down to the trust on Adelaide Street, I’ve been introduced to numerous files we have on properties that we have. What I’ve realized is they are in a

fairly decent state of repair in regard to prioritizing and triaging the needs for those buildings to be addressed.

In regard to your question about arts, we do have two theatres in downtown Toronto, to which there are fantastic opportunities for those who are in the arts to visit that centre and where there are possibilities of creating partnerships. I know the heritage trust is always open to opportunities to enhance and continue to establish the meaningful services that that trust provides in Ontario.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Following up on that, I'm just wondering, with your going out on site visits, which I think is fantastic: In the inventory, which ones are fully activated, which ones have space for more fulsome use and what are their states? Do they need work or are they in a good state of repair?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Chair, through you to the members of the committee and the member: Yes, I have had conversations with the trust on making investments in a state of good repair, and the trust is doing that. It is a very wide portfolio. Of course, with heritage properties, investments have to happen to upkeep them. I am confident, and I know, that the trust has been doing that work and making those critical investments.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay, great. I will just say, Sarah Ashbridge Estate is a great one to visit as well. They did a great partnership with a local farmer's market and they're growing food on the property, which is fantastic for food security.

Now I would just like to speak about—can the minister please outline if the ministry is working together with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to address the refugee homelessness crisis? We're seeing it across the province, across the city—and especially stressed this past summer in Toronto with asylum seekers having to sleep on the streets. We're welcoming people to Canada, but we're allowing them to sleep on the streets instead of housing them. I'm just wondering what you're doing to address that.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the committee: I thank you very much for that question. The responsibility for immigration does not sit within the purview of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

The investments that the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism are making are geared towards cultivating and investing in Ontario's diverse communities and tackling some of the challenges that we have seen around the heightened instances of hate and intolerance to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. That is very important work. That is work that is an all-of-government approach.

Particular, specific questions on that, I would refer them more appropriately to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** But you would probably be working—would you agree that all governments should work together on this issue?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the committee: Most definitely. The more we can take an all-of-government approach to addressing the challenges of

Ontarians, the better off we do. That's why I'm so proud of doing that in the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism on a lot of the initiatives we are responsible for, and I will continue to take that approach in the strong investments we are making to uplift support to our diverse communities right across the province.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Sixty seconds remaining.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay, I'll be quick. This one is about whether you know about the Single Journey Travel Document, and refugees and their ability to obtain OHIP cards. Could you explain why refugees are unable to use these single-journey documents with their photo ID and their signature to get—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order, Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Yes. The clock will be stopped. MPP McGregor, please, on a point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Pursuant to standing order 25(b), I believe the member is directing her speech to matters outside of what's in question, I think. The minister has been clear, and I think it's clear, that immigration is under our Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. It's just not the purview of the ministry at hand.

It's a good question, a good topic; it's something we should debate. It's just at this committee where we're talking about the estimates, it's not within the purview of the discussion.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I will just remind all committee members to stay on the estimates that are before us with the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Please continue MPP McMahon.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Sure, I just—you know, because we're promoting citizenship, that I feel it's part and parcel, as well as the Ministry of Health is under our purview. I'm just wondering and hoping that we can all work together on this because it's really unfortunate what I'm hearing from refugees across Ontario.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** There's five seconds. There's another round coming, okay?

We will now go to the government side for 20 minutes. MPP Thanigasalam to start us off, please.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Minister, I would like to thank you for addressing this committee this afternoon and also for highlighting the good work that the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism is doing to build a stronger and more inclusive Ontario.

**1500**

Minister, would you be able to provide this committee with some additional information about why the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity, PCEO, was established? Could you also highlight for us some of the recent achievements that this committee has made so that we all could be on the same page?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Absolutely. Through you, Acting Chair: Thank you very much for the question. The PCEO has done some incredible work. I have met with them a number of times. It is a dedicated, passionate group

that comes together to really give the community a voice as that bridge between government, myself as the minister, the Premier and the government's work on making Ontario the best place it can possibly be for people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds and from all corners of society.

The PCEO, to date, has engaged and convened 17 meetings. They have come up with 13 policies and strategies as well as, I would say, undertaken significant consultation across the province.

One of the things they have focused on was the creation of and the changes to Ontario's anti-racism strategy, which is truly a guiding document for the government and an all-of-government approach to tackling racism right across the province. They have done some great work there.

With that being said, maybe I'll turn it over to the deputy minister and our officials to expand on the work the PCEO does.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Chair: Thank you for the question, member. The PCEO's most recent accomplishments have focused on engaging communities and providing advice on government initiatives to strengthen and support better outcomes for marginalized youth and communities. For example, the PCEO has facilitated a series of community engagements to support and review the anti-racism strategic plan. The PCEO members continue to provide their expert feedback and advice to partner ministries, not just our ministry, on strengthening proposed and existing policies.

Some key initiatives, as the minister talked about, are providing some support and advice on the Black youth action plan, which we've discussed heavily today, but also on the COVID-19 vaccine distribution task force. I think with the infinite wisdom of that group, ministries have been able to create policies that are very reflective and respectful of the individuals of this community.

The learning recovery action plan is something that the PCEO also worked on, as well as a post-secondary employment engagement initiative, to which we have seen outcomes that are supporting our communities in ways that they have never done before.

I'll be very forthright in saying that the PCEO has been extremely helpful as an advisory table for us to create the right policies that are going to support the people of this province.

**Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam:** Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor):** MPP Pang.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Mr. Chair, through you: Thank you, Minister, for your great work in the ministry. Ontario is home to one of the most diverse populations anywhere in the world. As the minister may already be aware, in Markham-Unionville, which I have the honour to serve and represent, more than 80% of the residents are visible minorities. Unfortunately, with that background, we are not immune to the rise in the incidents of hate and intolerance being witnessed across the country and across the world.

Would the minister please elaborate on the important work your ministry is doing to combat hate, protect diverse and marginalized Ontarians, and build safer communities for all people?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, I want to thank the member for the question. Without question—and I say this passionately, and I think all members of the committee know this—Ontario is one of the most diverse places in the world. With that, I believe that is our greatest strength: the people who make up our province and the cultural fabric of our province. You are correct that we have seen that heightened rise in hate incidents, not just in Ontario but across the country and around the world.

With that, from day one, since stepping into this chair and having the honour to serve the people as the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, I have been out visiting communities, consulting with communities on how we can do better to support them and continue to foster that strong and inclusive society where people from all walks of life can feel safe, feel at home. I said this in my opening remarks to the committee.

I truly believe it is important to highlight or to honour the memory of the Afzaal family in London. That's why I decided to drive out to London. One of my first days as minister, I instructed my staff: "Let's go out to London. I would like to meet with the community." That day was such a dark day for our province, but it shows the important work that has to be done by all of the government, but particularly, of course, by our ministry as the lead.

That is why I, not long ago, joined Mayor Morgan, the mayor of London, to announce the London anti-hate pilots. As well as the numerous announcements we have made as a government and the investments we have made in combatting hate—and that is, from 2021, before myself as minister, a \$40-million investment in the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant then; and then the revised new investment of \$25.5 million to help religious, cultural institutions and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community use that to make those investments. Those investments came directly from my consultations with those communities, particularly Pride Toronto. We amended the grant to address some of those concerns directly. We made the grant retroactive. So, we were listening. That is what was driven out of the consultation. We're going to continue to make these investments.

The all-of-government approach is critical to doing this work. I know I've said it a million times. Respectfully, to the committee, I'll say it a million more times because it's truly important, but to highlight some stuff in other ministries, whether it's working with the Solicitor General on the hate crime and extremism investigation team, making a \$1.2-million investment there and into 17 local law enforcement agencies as well as the Ontario Provincial Police; or what's going on in education, investments in the new curriculum-linked resources of \$2 million to digital literacy for students. These investments really go towards the broader goal that our ministry set out to achieve, continuing the work on making Ontario one of the



greatest places, one of the safest places for people from all walks of life in the world to call home.

That is just to highlight some of the stuff we are doing in combatting hate and racism in our ministry.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Thank you, Minister, for your appearance here at the committee today and for all the work that you've done. It's been impressive to see you over the last year, what you've been able to do to foster that spirit of inclusivity across Ontario and across the government. We know that no matter where you come from, who you love, how you choose to worship God, everybody belongs in Ontario. Everybody deserves to be safe in Ontario. Everybody deserves to feel safe in Ontario.

I was proud that in your last visit to Brampton North, which is certainly my favourite riding for obvious reasons, we were able to stand with the Ahmadiyya Muslim community and yourself. We had the Solicitor General there as well. We announced the new intake of the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant. Not only were we there, we were joined by representatives from the National Council of Canadian Muslims. We had representatives from CIGA there as well, all standing united to say that hate has no place in Ontario.

I want to highlight a few of the local organizations from my own community that are actually applying for the grant that we—myself and my office—have been helping to get those applications in. The first that comes to mind is Jamiat Ul Ansar, which we know more as the Great Lakes mosque, the way we say it in Brampton. As I understand, this is actually the biggest mosque in Brampton; it's massive, and you should see how they run out of parking regularly, especially during holidays. Literally thousands of people worship there.

1510

We were heartbroken this last Ramadan that the mosque was actually broken into and people had their possessions taken from them, so the idea of a \$10,000 grant to have better locks on the doors, to have stronger windows, to have security cameras—we're grateful for the change around short-term security personnel and those kinds of things that you've changed in the program as well. I can't express how big of an impact that's going to have in our community, in my community in Brampton North, and I just appreciate the leadership.

Another application that we've put through that we're looking at is the Guru Nanak Mission Centre, or the Peter Robertson gurdwara, literally on a street in Brampton in my riding that used to be called Peter Robertson, which we've now named the Guru Nanak street.

We have the Archangel Michael and St. Tekla, which my friend Mr. Sabawy brought me to for the very first time. Our Coptic Orthodox community just celebrated Nayrouz, and we wish them a happy Nayrouz.

We have the Shri Radha Madhav heritage and culture centre, which is a growing mandir on the north end of my riding off Dixie, with Acharya Rishiji. These are groups that hadn't seen the government have their back in the way

that this government really is having their back through this grant.

I wanted to thank you for your leadership on changing the protocol, but I also wanted to ask you what motivated you on some of the changes around short-term security personnel, around allowing faith-based schools to apply for the grant, around expanding eligibility across and continuing that program into the future. Could you talk a little bit about the motivation of the government on why that's a good investment for Ontario taxpayers?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Absolutely. Chair, through you to the committee and to the member: Thank you very much. I always have a great time in Brampton North when I get to join you, so I always look forward to going out to Brampton North. That was a very good day that we did announce the grant, and it really showed a cross-section of faiths and folks from all walks of life supporting the government's work, but also that cohesion and the multi-cultural fabric of Ontario.

Particularly with the grant, as I mentioned earlier, coming into the ministry back in June of 2022, my main focus was getting out to speak with communities, have those conversations, have the meaningful dialogue: "What are we doing good as a government? What can we improve on?"

One of the things I heard was that the grant could have been expanded a bit to help with a number of different things like short-term security. I know every member of this committee gets out into their communities, whether it's in their ridings or in other parts of the province, and when there are cultural celebrations happening right across the province, particularly in the summer, there always are those concerns of safety.

What we did was we amended the grant to help give those organizations the ability to put the funding where they believe it best suits them to address their needs. The needs of a community group up in Thunder Bay or Kenora may be a little bit different than a community group down in southwestern Ontario, Windsor or right here in downtown Toronto, so we wanted to give them that flexibility. We listened to communities.

Of course, some of the consultations I had were with our 2SLGBTQIA+ community and Pride organizations, and that really drove our ministry to open up different possibilities for the grant. I always want to thank the leadership, the competency and the dedication of the Ontario Public Service, the deputy minister, who sits with me here at the table, as well as his senior team who do this work. I want to thank them for that.

Yes, that is how I would say we brought changes to the grant. To end my answer to your question, we will continue on a daily basis what I've done for a year, what I will do today and what I will continue to do as long as I have the honour and privilege of sitting in this seat: Consult communities, have an open door, and do that work.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Sabawy, please.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** How much time do we have?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** We have four minutes.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Okay, good. Thank you very much, Ms. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for all the informative actions your ministry has taken. Being a human rights activist as well as a community activist and outreaching to different minority communities and racial communities for the last maybe 20 years, I always say that we should not tolerate intolerance.

That's exactly what we are doing with this government and with your ministry: supporting racial groups who are marginalized. We understand that education is essential for combatting racism and intolerance. An equally important step is building up the talent and expertise of Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities.

Minister, you mentioned the Black youth action plan as a key example of an initiative that is building up talents and supporting communities. Could you elaborate on the impact these initiatives are having on communities and individuals across the province? Tell us also a little bit more about some of the organizations being supported as part of the Black youth action plan and of any other initiatives similar to that.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Absolutely. Thank you very much, through you, Chair, to the member of the committee and to the committee.

I'll give you some overall highlights on the Black youth action plan. Maybe I'll hand it over to our deputy minister and officials to go into the program's specifics.

The Black youth action plan is an investment of \$138 million of total investments that have been made since the start of BYAC, the Black youth action plan. This year specifically it will be an investment of \$31 million, which has been an over 500% increase from 2018. Within the Black youth action plan, we are investing in approximately 62 different initiatives, 32 of which being core programming, 25 of economic empowerment and, of course, an expansion of the Economic Empowerment Stream of an additional five.

Those are the overall numbers of the Black youth action plan, but what I will do is I'll hand it over to our deputy minister and his team to maybe walk through some of the specifics.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair: Member, thank you for the question.

Of course, you can imagine the Black youth action plan is something that is extremely important to me, having a young Black son.

I would go on to say that, getting a bit more granular into your question, the Black youth action plan supports eight main pillars and programs. I'll list those off fairly quickly for you—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Sixty seconds.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Sixty seconds? I'll do it in 60 seconds: the student and family advocates program; our industry-led career initiative program; our innovative supports for Black parents; the Black innovation fellowship program, also known as a DMZ; our Youth Now On Track career launch programs, career advancements programs and sector innovative networks programs linking

individuals to new and innovative manufacturing and technical jobs within the province of Ontario.

I can go on further with greater levels of detail, but I think in regard to the overarching categories and thematically the type of work we're involved in, these are some of the key areas we're delivering on.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate all of this information. How much time?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** About 10 seconds.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Ten seconds? Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much. I will now continue on with 20 minutes for the official opposition. I'll call on MPP Andrew to start us.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Alrighty. Thank you very much. Let me orient myself.

**1520**

First and foremost, I understand that the minister is not responsible for immigration. However, I do know that the federal, or was it the city and the province, had a one-time top-up around housing benefits to help folks, like many of the African refugees who were left in a lurch by all levels of government, especially the federal and provincial level, initially.

I just wanted to say a thank you, actually, on the record to Black church leaders like Pastor Judith James in Toronto at Revivaltime Tabernacle, Pastor Eddie Jjumba of the Dominion Church International, and there was one other church as well, the Pilgrim Feast Tabernacles, who literally housed many of these refugees. I just wanted to say thank you to them for stepping up and, sadly, having to do the work of government. I think a lot of times when issues happen, especially issues that impact Black, Indigenous and racialized communities the most, there is a lot of finger-pointing: "No, it's the federal's fault." "No, it's the province's fault." "No, it's the city's fault." At the end of the day, when you're an elected official, we should always be trying to help. You've said a lot here today that diversity is at our heart, etc. etc., and I think making sure that refugees aren't sleeping outside in the cold and in the rain or are unfed or unshowered for long periods of time is incumbent on any minister—anyone that has the title of "minister"—to care.

Anyway, I'm going to jump into a question I had with regard to this interesting separation of immigration from your portfolio. Since your election and appointment as minister, the ministry has separated from immigration, which is now listed under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Nonetheless, this ministry and immigration should remain linked, especially as our province welcomes a record number of immigrants and anti-immigrant sentiments are quickly rising. No doubt, of course, it's been propped up by the propaganda around the greenbelt being about housing immigrants, as though immigrants could come to Ontario and afford greenbelt homes—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order, Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Andrew, MPP McGregor has a point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Yes, thank you, Chair. Pursuant to standing order 25(b), I believe the member is directing their speech to matters outside of the discussion at hand. The committee is about the estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, not about broader government structures of how you change ministries and move departments between ministries. There's a lot of stuff this ministry does, and I just would hope that the members had some questions about the actual content of the work of the ministry that we're here studying the estimates of.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you. I'd just remind all committee member to please stay focused on the ministry that's before us for estimates for 2023-24. Thank you.

MPP Andrew.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Absolutely. I'm doing that. As I said at the top of my hour, I'm proposing questions put forth by community members, by stakeholders, by my own understanding of ministry work. And the minister is here, so I'm going to take an opportunity to ask the minister a question that I think is worthwhile asking.

Going back to my question: To combat these harmful, unjust sentiments, experts in this area point to the importance of widening the lens through which we view immigration, shifting away from a solely economic lens where immigrants only exist to fill gaps in our labour market, towards ones where newcomers, like all Canadians, are viewed as full social beings with social realities. They go on to state that this, as an overarching anti-racist philosophy, must be ingrained into settlement services, which of course are now falling under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

I'm wondering if this minister can provide further information as to how the two ministries are working together to ensure this so that there isn't that sense of "Oh, not my responsibility, ask him, ask her," so that we're seeing an inter-ministerial, whole-person approach to taking care of every Ontarian. Again, can the minister provide further information as to how the two ministries are working together to ensure this? What expenditures are being put forth from the Anti-Racism Directorate to combat rising hate towards newcomers, particularly those who are visible minorities and those who are trans, queer and non-binary?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I want to thank the member for the in-depth question. First and foremost—I know the member mentioned this in the question—compassion will always lead our ministry's work here in the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism and we have demonstrated that to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars in investments in continuing to invest in the multicultural, diverse communities of the province of Ontario.

Particularly, for the member and for the committee's purposes, I do want to continue to highlight the recent, amended anti-racism strategy, which is a guiding document, an all-of-government approach across 14 ministries, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, \$132 million of which comes from our ministry into four key areas—

economic empowerment being one of them. I know you mentioned labour; that is important for us. Connecting marginalized communities to jobs today and of the future, as well as supporting children and youth, and, of course, our most vulnerable, as well as population-specific anti-racism and the anti-hate initiatives that I have laid out for the committee—and I have more to lay out that we have done, as well as policy and accountability.

Within that all-of-government approach, that document is a comprehensive document that leads the government's work. I will always work with my ministerial colleagues from across government and within cabinet—and not just ministerial colleagues, but members of the governing party, members of the opposition—on the work that we do on behalf of the residents of Ontario.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you, Minister, for that response.

Coming back to my actual question: I was just wondering how you, as the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism—if you could elaborate on an example where you and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development have worked together to support refugees, to support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, especially that community, considering—and I'm probably going to get called by my friend over there, MPP McGregor. But especially in a province where we see the Premier allowing for the calling out and endangerment of trans kids—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Point of order.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP McGregor, please, on a point of order.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Yes, pursuant to standing order 25(b), I believe the member is directing their speech to matters outside of the topic of discussion here today. The topic of the committee today is the tabling of estimates for the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

I can appreciate the desire to talk about collaboration across ministries etc. We're about to have our session in the fall; there's lots of times to talk about that. There are bills that the opposition will have a chance to bring forward—I'm sure they will—where they could submit their ideas on how we could broadly collaborate. But again, the topic at hand is the tabling of estimates for the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

You know, we're talking about a \$132-million investment in anti-racism initiatives. There's plenty of material here to talk about that is pertaining to the study of the committee and I would just request the member to scope their questions towards the work of this ministry. Thanks.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you. You can resume your time, MPP Andrew. There are 13 minutes left.

Again, I'll just say to all committee members, please try to keep to the estimates that are before us for the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** I have a question for our heritage minister here: How much funding is the ministry providing the sites of significance to the history of the Under-

ground Railroad? There's also a church in Hamilton and other sites of great significance in southern Ontario. We're just wondering about that. Thank you.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thank you very much.

Through you, Chair, to answer the member's question: Of course, the Ontario Heritage Trust is a great agency whose key mandate from our ministry is to continue to conserve, preserve and protect Ontario's most valuable heritage. Of course, the stories of our ethnic and diverse communities—they do that work. We have also invested in grants within many organizations. I've named a number of them earlier that do that work as well.

With that, specifically, maybe I'll just ask—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Minister, if you don't mind me interrupting—I do want to share my time with my colleague. Hopefully, we could meet at some point and maybe you could send me your mandate letter for your ministry so that I know exactly what you're offering, or what you've been directed by the Premier to do as minister, so I can share that with my folks in St. Paul's. Thank you.

1530

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Chair, I'm more than happy to meet with the member. My mandate is very clear to the people of Ontario—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Oh, no. I understand. I'm talking about getting the mandate letter.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** We are going to continue to—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** We're turning it over to my colleague over here.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If I can reclaim some of that time of the back-and-forth there—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Stevens has the floor. I'm sorry, the back-and-forth—for the time—maybe she will let the minister finish the answer.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'm just going to follow up on MPP Andrew's request about highlighting some of the significant sites. While everyone is highlighting their own communities this afternoon, I'm going to touch on a historical site right in my riding of St. Catharines: The historical BME church, again, is located in St. Catharines. It is truly a true part of all of Ontario's, all of Canada's and Niagara's history. The BME church was once the congregation of Harriet Tubman—who is now on the \$20 bill, so I'm hoping the minister will give us lots of \$20 bills—and an important site of the Underground Railway.

Minister, how much has the ministry contributed to the preservation of these very important heritage sites?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, and with respect to the time: The Ontario Heritage Trust is a key agency under the ministry, and a key mandate given to them from, of course, myself, as minister, is to conserve, preserve, protect and celebrate Ontario's heritage, so much of which is embedded in the diversity and culture of Ontario. They've done a number of things.

At this moment, I will pass off to the deputy minister and my team of officials to elaborate.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair—the question in regard to the investment to that particular property is something we'd have to take away specifically.

The Ontario Heritage Trust—and I think the member had talked about the Underground Railroad and my mention of the Josiah Henson site as well, which sometimes is confused as—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Hamilton's Stewart Memorial—

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** —two places. But our contributions through the Ontario Heritage Trust is about \$3.8 million, to which they, through their board, work to distribute those funds. Of course, they have to consider the administration costs, costs of addressing different property needs—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you for that, but I've just got one other thing, to follow up on what you're actually revealing to me.

Can the ministry also confirm that no sites—may I repeat—no sites of any Underground Railway historical sites will be impacted by the changes made to the Ontario Heritage Act that could see heritage destinations removed? I'm hoping that the BME church, as well as Hamilton's Stewart Memorial Church and all of these historical sites will not be removed, and they will not see the heritage destination sites removed under the Ontario Heritage Act. Can I have confirmation?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Chair, if I may—thank you very much for the question. Of course, the Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the power and town councils—I was a previous councillor—to make efforts and to move forward in protecting key heritage sites within towns, municipalities and cities. Those mechanisms are at the municipalities' disposal but, further, the Ontario Heritage Trust, as a provincial agency, will always embark on looking at valuable heritage right across the province and making investments as such, through the leadership of the trust.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** The Ontario Heritage Act stops at your ministry, I might remind you, but anyway, moving on.

The ministry emphasizes the importance of diversity, inclusion and anti-racism in its programs. Can the ministry provide a breakdown of its internal operations in terms of diversity in leadership roles, hiring practices and staff training initiatives to ensure that the ministry itself reflects on the values it promotes?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Absolutely. Of course, all the specifics of our ministry are outlined in the estimates briefing book that is before the committee. As I've said once—I'll say it again—the diversity of Ontario is truly our greatest strength and I am so fortunate to work with a team of dedicated, passionate individuals within my office and, of course, under the deputy minister's leadership, who care about this work, and they do truly magnificent work.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Great. The documents mention various community consultations. You

mentioned the briefing notes and the document also mentions various community consultations, such as the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity and the advocate for community opportunities.

Through you, Madam Chair: Can the ministry provide detailed records of these consultations, including who was consulted, what were the main concerns raised and where? How—

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** So, I—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Sorry, I'm not finished.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** No, no, my—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you. How have these concerns been addressed in your strategic plan?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to answer the member's question: The anti-racism strategy, which I have right here with me—also available on ontario.ca—really outlines the comprehensive approach we are taking to tackling racism and making Ontario a more equitable, safe and welcoming province from people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Excuse me, Madam Chair? Sorry, Minister.

Are you saying to me—I want to clarify my question, actually; I was just asking who was consulted and what were the main concerns raised. I know that you're saying what your document says, but my question was: What were the main concerns raised and where, and how have these concerns been addressed in your strategic plan?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the member's question: Within the strategic plan, it outlines a lot of what was consulted on and how we have come to invest dollars in many different initiatives right across government. I undertook, personally, many of the consultations our ministry did and the whole host of engaging with different groups, whether it's discussing anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia with our Muslim community, consulting with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, engaging with education stakeholders from right across the province, colleges, universities—the Attorney General sat in with me, with the Solicitor General, while engaging with crown attorneys, with the Ontario Provincial Police, the hate crime investigation team, so within that, it's a—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Excuse me—

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** You asked for who we consulted.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I just want to lay that out for the committee on record.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** You haven't said their concerns that they raised, but that's okay—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** You've got to let him—

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I'm in the middle of—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** He's listing but he's not saying their concerns—but, sorry, Minister.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Stevens, would you like the minister to carry on?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes, please. Their concerns.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** We did a whole host of consultations right across the province, with people from all walks of life, from all corners. Of course, a lot of those concerns were around incidents that were happening to places of worship, hence why we changed the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant and added, under this Premier and government's leadership, \$25.5 million of an investment to help places of worship. That came out of the consultations. Investments in education around the new curriculum-linked resources for education, digital literacy for students—it is a comprehensive document.

With all due respect to the member, I could sit here all day and list them out, but I would definitely, if you can, take a read of the anti-racism strategy. It is a great document.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes. I have, actually. We've read it a couple of times.

Through you, Madam Chair—how much time do I have left?

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Oh, perfect. Good. Thank you very much then.

What specific metrics or key performance indicators, KPIs, has the ministry established to measure the success and the impacts of initiatives like the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant and the Black youth action plan? Can your ministry provide data, right here today, to this committee on the outcomes of similar programs from previous years to justify the current allocations that are right here in front of us?

1540

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** That is a very good question; I thank the member for asking that. KPIs are a big part of the conversation I have had while making these investments. We want to make sure that we're investing the public's money wisely, that we are doing it effectively and that the outcomes we want to achieve are going to be achieved.

What I will do is I will pass this over to the deputy minister to maybe expand on that.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair, if I can, we have Dr. Parm Bhatthal here with us today, who is the assistant deputy minister for the Anti-Racism Directorate, who can speak to some of the outcomes through this initiative of anti-racism.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** You have a minute and 15 seconds, just to let you know.

**Dr. Parm Bhatthal:** Thanks so much for the question. Parm Bhatthal, assistant deputy minister of the Anti-Racism Directorate.

Through you, Chair: Our anti-racism strategy requires us to ensure that we are constantly assessing progress and looking at outcomes. There are targets and indicators that are attached to the strategy that are a part of the Anti-Racism Act. Our targets and indicators are attached to the race-based data collection that the province collects in

three different sectors: the justice sector and the education sector, as well as the child welfare sector.

As well, the Anti-Racism Act requires the province to have a progress report that is released every year. That progress report contains the outcomes and evaluation of the initiatives that are contained within the anti-racism strategy. The last report that we released was in September 2022, and that contains the progress that the province has achieved on the last strategy.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Fifteen seconds.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Minister, I am always humbled and honoured to represent the city of St. Catharines. As MPP McGregor has stated that he always loves to see you in his riding, it sounds to me like you celebrated a few cultural events there. I'm just letting you know that St. Catharines is the home of the longest-running multicultural event, the Niagara Folk Arts Festival, in all of Canada's heritage.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'm hoping that we see you there, with a really nice—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Okay. Because it was an invitation, I let it go on a little longer, but there was the invitation, so there you go.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** You will see me there, as long as I get a nice, big welcome.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** There you go. As the love-in continues, I will ask MPP McMahon—

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I'm coming, and I'm bringing MPP McGregor with me.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I'll play if you want me to.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Okay, lots of invitations.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Okay, we need to carry on here, please. MPP McMahon for 10 minutes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you so much, and you know the door is always open in beautiful Beaches—East York.

I was just eavesdropping on my colleague over there and was rather alarmed to hear about the possible changes in the Ontario Heritage Act, with the potential of removing sites from heritage designation. My question is—I just would wonder why that would ever happen. What would be the criteria to remove a property?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, with respect to the member: In no way, shape or form has any property been removed from the province, so I don't know exactly where that question is coming from. Of course, there are amendments to the act to strengthen and give municipalities the ability to focus on designating heritage as meaningful and important to them, but just to be very clear on the record, nothing has been removed. If municipalities wanted to, that would be within their purview, not the province's.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** But I'm pretty sure you would fight with us to keep it, because you and I were

on council together when the city bought the house that had the 250-year-old heritage tree.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Yes.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** So I know you're very strong on heritage; I thank you for that.

You were mentioning about the Black youth action plan, and I didn't get all the numbers, but it's something like 60-something organizations that received—

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** It's 62.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:**—62 that received funding and support—

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Initiatives.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay, initiatives. Do we have the details on those? I'm just thinking from a geographical perspective. Is it right across Ontario?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the member's question: Of course, all of the grants that we do put out and these investments are for organizations right across Ontario—again, from the north to southwestern Ontario, out to eastern Ontario. Particularly with the Black youth action plan, we have seen an investment of \$31 million this year and, as you said, within 62 initiatives. That's an increase of over 500% since 2018.

Having said that, maybe I'll pass it off to our deputy minister and team to maybe expand on some of those initiatives that you've asked.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the member: I had listed eight different thematic areas or pillars of the Black youth action plan. And the answer to your question is, yes, this is across the province of Ontario for both Black and Indigenous youth.

I can go on to say that for student and family advocacy work, we've attributed \$2.2 million, specifically. For work where we're looking at employment and income disparities addressing some of the Black professionals, we've allotted \$1.4 million to different organizations across the province. As we look at innovative supports for Black parents, we've allocated \$2.1 million to those organizations and entities that require that level of support, and, of course, through some of the other initiatives: for example, education that we're taking responsibility over specific to Black youth action, \$3.3 million.

Again, just being cognizant of the clock and your time, I can go on and continue to share the investments that we've made across the province, specifically the Black youth action plan.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Are you monitoring how well the funding works, how the benefits and the successes—and then looking at that through the lens of expanding the funding, increasing the funding for future? Are there some sort of checks and balances so that you can have the information and double your funding or whatever to increase it?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the member: Again, it's a great question, and very similar to the member from St. Catharines's question. Of course, the investments that we make have intended outcomes. Of course, when we make these investments, we look at key performance indicators and metrics to achieve that.

But maybe I'll hand it over to our deputy minister.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Through you, Madam Chair: In fact, the performance measures and the indicators are a vital part of the success of these programs. I think we all know that the data tells a different story. It's whatever the story is that we want that data to tell is what we need to collect. I can share with you that we collect a number of participants who started and completed the relevant courses pertaining to some of these initiatives. We look at the participants who report feeling as though they belong more and they have opportunities to access different programs and pathways to employment. We also measured the participants who secured high-quality employment. We also look at the employee participation who secured advanced opportunities and, of course, the number of participants who reported feeling supported and success through their entrepreneurship.

So, the answer to your question is, yes, that data is collected. Of course, that is the story that drives us going back to Treasury Board when it's time to request additional funding to address these ongoing needs of our community.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay. In addition to the numbers, you also hear the stories and you get the anecdotal information right from people who been involved.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Correct. It's both qualitative and quantitative that we're looking for.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Okay, sure. Then with DEI training, do we have any information on which ministries have, with staff here—you know, we need to model the behaviour ourselves before we expect other people. We just want to be good role models.

Can you tell us about DEI training in the ministries themselves with staff?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thank you very much for the question. Through the Chair, over to the deputy minister.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** To the member: Yes. In fact, between January and March of 2022, the Anti-Racism Directorate offered 16 virtual training sessions on anti-Black racism for the OPS management teams. The two-hour professional development opportunities were facilitated by a local organization, and they guided leaders towards an understanding of anti-Black racism, developed leaders' capacity in applied practical and action-oriented frameworks, and, of course, provided leaders with tools to assist them in transforming their thoughts around organizational culture.

1550

We attributed \$132,000 to that undertaking, to which we received satisfaction and feedback that was extremely positive. Those 16 anti-Black racism training sessions have been very impactful towards leaders within the OPS.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** And you'll continue them and expand them?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair: We will look at any initiatives that go towards fostering equity, inclusion and diversity within the OPS—and, of course, the initiatives that we have invested in, to the tune of hun-

dreds of millions of dollars invested in the province of Ontario.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Great. Thanks

My last question—we didn't really touch on it today—is about volunteerism. That's a big component, I think, of your ministry: encouraging people, empowering people and acknowledging people who have done such a tremendous amount of volunteering for the greater good. I wonder if you can talk about that.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the member: I think that's an excellent question, and it is truly a great part of our ministry. Like all ministries, we have important and serious work, and of course the work of equity and inclusion and fighting hate, intolerance and racism is key to this ministry, but the Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat does some incredible work.

It's very, very important for us, whether it's as legislators or as a province and as government, to recognize tremendous individuals for their commitment to the province. Within the honours and awards secretariat, there are a number of awards. There are six honours, one example being the Order of Ontario—I think many know that—Ontario's highest honour.

But, of course, there are honours for a whole host of stuff, including volunteerism—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Twenty seconds.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** —as well as 13 awards, which are separate from honours, particularly the volunteer service awards. We are happy within the ministry to honour approximately 10,000 individuals each and every year who go above and beyond for the province of Ontario.

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

We now will go to the government side for the remaining 20 minutes, and I will ask MPP Babikian to please begin.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Chair, through you: Thank you, Minister, for coming. Before I ask my question, I just want to relay to you the faith groups' enthusiasm. They appreciate the approach that you had to include them in the next round, so that the faith groups also can benefit from the anti-hate grant, because many of these people, especially in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt—I have such a huge, diverse faith base, from Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, you name it. All of them are very grateful to you for extending that goodwill gesture to them, to benefit from that grant.

Also, I appreciate your ministry-wide decision to extend the next round of anti-hate applications to October, because, as all of us know, during the summer many of the organizations are on a skeleton operation schedule. This will give them an opportunity to catch up with the next round. I just wanted to relay to you those two sentiments, those comments, from what I am hearing in my riding.

Minister, I would like to thank you for your enthusiasm and leadership on an important file. You mentioned earlier a multi-ministerial approach to advancing Ontario's equity and inclusivity goals. Would you be able to highlight some of the cross-government efforts included in the updated

anti-racism strategy and provide some additional insight on the importance of working across government to dismantle barriers and build a more inclusive Ontario?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Absolutely. Thank you very much—through you, Chair—to the member and the committee. As I have said to the committee—I'm really passionate about it—we tabled the amended anti-racism strategy just a few weeks ago. It is on a foundation of community input and consultation. That is truly how the document came to be and as we've released it—I had a number of partner ministries sitting alongside me working on this, from Minister Lecce in education to, of course, the Solicitor General, Michael Kerzner; our Attorney General; the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services; and so on and so forth. It truly was an all-of-government approach and a partnership that tabled that document under the leadership of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

That document is broken up into four distinct areas. Maybe I'll pass it off to the deputy minister and the team to maybe go into a little more depth, but the four key pillars are economic empowerment, supporting children and youth, population-specific anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives and, of course, policy and accountability. That was really driven out of the community consultation.

With that, I will hand it over to our deputy minister to expand.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair, to the member: There are 47 initiatives that are taking place across the different ministries. I won't go into all 47 of them, I promise you, but it would be worth doing that, because it's really good work that's being undertaken by this government. We work within our own ministry, MCM, and we've created initiatives that focus on community partnerships, especially partnering with our Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity—the High Priority Communities Strategy, as well as the Indigenous cultural competency strategy.

We also work with MCCSS on investing in women's futures. We also work with our MTO partners on Indigenous transportation initiatives. We work with Indigenous Affairs Ontario on the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.'s people and talent programming. We also work with our MCCSS on youth justice services redesign for Black and Indigenous youth.

I can go on, but as the minister had said, that information is in our anti-racism strategy that has been recently released. There's really good information in there. It speaks to a lot of the cross-cutting, cross-ministry initiatives. Again, I'm sure the members have read that, but the information is sitting there, nestled really nicely.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** My next question is related to recognizing and acknowledging the accomplishments of individual Ontarians. Going beyond the ministry's anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives, would the minister please elaborate on what the ministry, and the province more broadly, are doing to recognize and acknowledge the accomplishments and achievements of exceptional Ontarians who have gone above and who have helped build a stronger and more vibrant province?

Minister, if I can make a couple of comments regarding this issue: The Chinese community is another community which was subjected to hatred and racism in the last two and a half to three years, especially when COVID was a pandemic. The Chinese community has a long history in Ontario, and I have been involved with many of them for a long time because I have a large Chinese constituency in my riding; almost 44% of my riding is Chinese, and I am in daily touch with them.

They are also concerned with this hatred and racism issue, but they were glad when our government tabled the bill declaring Anti-Asian Racism Education Month every May. That's one step forward by our government to eliminate racism in our country, regardless of which community it is. In this particular case, it is the Asian and the Chinese community.

Within this program here, I don't know if it is suitable or fitting that this year is the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act. This is not a negative issue, but we should turn it to a positive issue, because we can take this anniversary and acknowledge the contribution of the Chinese community to Ontario. So that's one way to do it.

**1600**

The other issue, for example, and maybe I'm going into too much detail, but the Heritage Minutes, which the federal government instituted a while ago—I think it was one-minute info packages which were very, very powerful and impactful. I personally learned so much through those Heritage Minutes, so that's something that could be considered.

Lastly, we should involve the multicultural communities in this policy and what means we should implement to highlight those contributions, those communities or the individuals in the communities brought to Ontario. One mechanism is the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, because they have so many different ethnic language media. They can also be involved in promoting not their own, but other communities' contributions with their own language to their own people. That way, we build bridges between all these different groups.

Sorry if it was too long, but feel free to answer it any way you want.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, I'd like to thank the member for the question and some of the comments that came along with it, because I completely agree.

Something that is very special to me is that I get to travel the province, celebrate the diversity of Ontario and go to many different events and cultural celebrations—as we have been together; I've joined many members of the Legislative Assembly. It's truly a great thing, and the more we can do to showcase, whether it's Asian heritage, Chinese heritage or the host of cultures that make up Ontario—we will continue to do it.

Also, to answer your question around how we celebrate Ontarians—I think you were getting at maybe the honours and awards secretariat. I know I answered some of that stuff earlier, but maybe I'll dive into that a bit, around how we honour individuals here in Ontario. The honours and awards secretariat, as I said earlier, honours about 10,000



individuals who go above and beyond to really invest their time, their money sometimes and their efforts to creating a better province for all of us to live, work and play in. Within the honours and awards, we of course have the Order of Ontario, the highest honour; the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship; the Ontario Medals for Firefighter Bravery and Police Bravery; the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. There's a whole host of ways that we recognize individuals who go above and beyond.

Of course, the Lieutenant Governor's Awards that I always have the honour of attending: We have some of them coming up this Friday, at the Royal Ontario Museum. I look forward to joining Her Honour for them as well. So, there's a whole host of awards and things we do to recognize individuals—and of course, always the leadership that the government has taken and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has taken in recognizing different months, different heritage months, when we all come together and celebrate the diversity of Ontario.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you. I will pass it to my colleagues.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** MPP Grewal.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** It's great to see you here today, Minister, and it's great to see your team joining us as well. I first want to commend you and your team's work with the anti-racism, anti-hate initiatives. I know places of worship in my riding, my city of Brampton and the region of Peel really appreciate the work that you guys do to make sure our communities stay safe, and they really appreciate the grants that you've offered to ensure the safety and security of all places of worship in Ontario. I think that was an amazing step that the ministry took, and your continuous efforts are truly appreciated by the residents in our area and the residents of Ontario.

Previously, when we were just talking, you mentioned you had the opportunity to travel across Ontario, meet with different communities and understand their needs and challenges. I see through that that you're able to communicate effectively with the communities, and a lot of consultation probably comes out as a result of those visits and meetings that you have with those particular community members. I just wanted to see if you can discuss some of the important role that those community consultations have played in the development of Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategy, and share some of your experiences and perspective on interacting directly with communities during the development of these new strategies, programs and initiatives?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Through you, Chair, to the member and to the committee: Thank you very much for the question. Look, some of the best and most innovative ideas, I would say 99% of the time, happen outside the walls of the Legislature, in communities, in places of worship, cultural centres, community centres. As I have had the privilege of visiting many different communities across the province, a lot of those ideas and suggestions have been exchanged, and I have joined many members of the Legislature and had those round-table discussions, those discussions in coffee shops, those discussions right across the province.

It really builds into how we take this work back to our ministry and how we implement this, our strategies, our initiatives, our programs. You highlight the anti-racism strategy, which is a comprehensive all-of-government approach to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars across 14 different ministries, so really, with a strong foundation of community input. Of course, when I visit a place of worship or a cultural centre, we will always get suggestions on how we can enhance these programs, but we also do it in the ministry through very formal processes, formal consultations, working with the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity, having those formal consultations.

Maybe I'll pass it over to the deputy and his team to maybe expand on some of the consultations we have done within the anti-racism strategy.

**Mr. Keith Palmer:** Thank you, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair: You did a wonderful job explaining some of the consultation opportunities that we've embarked on, but it's important to mention that we also use the Internet. Sometimes it's much easier for communities and stakeholders to engage and converse with the ministry through the use of different survey tools on the Internet, from which we will take that information, review it and create the themes that are necessary that we had used to create the strategy.

As the minister talked about, we also went out and engaged with particular individuals and worked with different organizations on what some of their needs are. The minister and I had an opportunity to engage the Muslim community during the AMO conference specific to what some of their challenges were and were able to hear some of those pieces and bring those pieces back to the team to consider as we think through the upcoming strategy and what we might need to do to pivot from time to time.

But, as the minister said, the best strategy sometimes comes from those who are living in those communities. As people who live in those communities, it's important for us to hear some of those comments and sentiments and see what we can do as public servants to weave those responses into some of our strategies moving forward. If there's anything else that I can add, Minister, but I think you did a really good job explaining some of the approaches that we take.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal:** Thank you, Deputy. I'd just like to share my remaining time with MPP Sabawy.

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

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Ms. Chair, and thank you to the minister for all the information.

Ontario is home for the most multicultural population in Canada and is one of the most multicultural places anywhere in the world. This diversity of backgrounds, faiths, cultures and traditions is part of what makes Ontario unique and, as you have said, makes our province a stronger and more vibrant place to live in. My riding of Mississauga–Erin Mills is no exception: 55% of my constituents were not born in Canada, so 55% immigrants from everywhere in the world. We are about to be home to so many talented, skilled and hard-working individuals

from a wide array of backgrounds who make critical contributions to building a better and a stronger Ontario.

**1610**

As we are close to the end of our time here today, could the minister please remind the committee of the steps our government is taking to support Ontario's diverse and marginalized communities, especially?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thank you very much, through you, Chair, to the member. I really thank you for the question, and I thank the committee for their time and discussion this afternoon.

Again, at the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, we are proud to lead the government's work on continuing to pave the path to keeping Ontario one of the greatest places in the world for people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, from all corners of society to call home. They feel welcome, they feel safe, and they feel a part of Ontario.

The ministry will continue to make these strong investments, whether it is the \$132.5 million in the anti-racism strategy as an all-of-government approach, and whether it's our anti-hate initiatives to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, whether it's the work with our Black youth action plan, our RAISE grant, the anti-racism and anti-hate grant, all of which go towards that goal.

With that in mind, I just want to thank—and I said this a few times—the work of our deputy minister, with his incredibly passionate and dedicated team and their teams within the ministry for all the work that they do—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Sixty seconds.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** —in continuing to make Ontario one of the greatest places for people from all walks of life to call home. I know that is an all-of-government approach. I can't speak for all my ministerial colleagues or there might be a point of order, so I will not do that, but I know it's a collective effort, so thank you very much.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** If I might ask, in the last 40 or 50 seconds, if you can point to some of the directions for small businesses, which we know are the backbone, especially for the Black initiatives for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** One of the key pillars within the anti-racism strategy is our economic empowerment section. Really, that speaks to a lot of the supports for racialized businesses, as well as the RAISE grant, but I'm always happy to continue the conversation.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you so much, Minister. That concludes the committee's consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Standing order 69 requires that the Chair put, without further amendment or debate, every question necessary to dispose of estimates. Are the members ready to vote?

Shall vote 4601, ministry administration, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I declare the motion accordingly carried.

Shall vote 4602, anti-racism directorate, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those

opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 4603, citizenship, inclusion and heritage, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2023-24 estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed, please raise your hands. I consider the motion carried.

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Before we adjourn, I would like to inform the committee that I am in receipt of two letters which have been distributed to the committee: a letter from the member for Beaches–East York dated August 31, 2023, and a letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and member for Markham–Stouffville dated September 13, 2023.

I believe MPP McMahon would like to bring forward a motion.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Thank you for staying a little longer for this important motion that I'm hopeful that you will support.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 113(a), the committee meet to conduct a study on the Ontario government's decision to remove parcels of land from Ontario's greenbelt; and

That the committee meet for public hearings on the following dates:

—Wednesday, September 27, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.;

—Thursday, September 28, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.;

—Monday, October 2, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.;

—Tuesday, October 3, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; and

That the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member for Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes; associate minister(s) and deputy minister of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; and the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator be invited to appear before the committee; and

That the subcommittee on committee business may identify and invite additional staff of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's office and ministry staff, Premier's office staff and Cabinet Office staff, and any other relevant public service and caucus staff to appear before the committee; and

That the witnesses shall have two minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 75 minutes for questions and answers, divided into two rounds of 15 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 15 minutes for the

official opposition and two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

That the committee meet for report writing on Thursday, October 5, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Any discussion or debate? MPP McMahon.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Sure, gladly. Thank you.

As you all know, over the past month, Ontarians have learned that a small group of people with connections to the government have been able to influence the government's decision-making process surrounding the greenbelt land swaps in order to further their own private interests—people the Premier has called his friends—furthering their interests to the tune of \$8.3 billion.

This information has been presented through two scathing reports: one done by the Auditor General and one done by the Integrity Commissioner. While both present damning details, they raise more questions than answers. Both reports detail missing documents, emails and phone records. The Integrity Commissioner described the process as being marked by deception. This should be a great concern for all of us, and while we have had ministers and staff of this government resign, what we have not seen is transparency—something members of this government claim they believe in.

Ontarians have not heard directly from people involved in these decisions. Members of this House have not been able to review documents, emails or text messages involved in this debacle, many of which the government claims have gone missing. We have not been able to question the very people who were responsible for these deals.

Each day, through the tireless work of the media, Ontarians learn more and more about what went on behind the scenes to broker this \$8.3-billion backroom deal. More evidence outside of what is presented in these two reports has surfaced, and it raises many questions.

For example, Ontarians learned that in 2019, the sister of a developer friend of the Premier's was appointed vice-chair of the Greenbelt Foundation, the very foundation that is meant to protect our greenbelt. They've learned that the former chief of staff to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was hand-picked by the Premier's office. They've learned that the former executive assistant to the Premier was working with a developer and an unregistered lobbyist to crack open the greenbelt. But they have not heard testimony told directly from those involved.

Ontarians deserve complete and utter transparency. They have lost trust in their government, a government that has always claimed to be for the people. Transparency is for the people. I am even hearing from Conservatives who are upset. Despite the 2018 mandate letters from the Premier outlining how he would run a government defined by accountability and ethics, this cash-for-your-land approach has proven the opposite and really broken the trust of Ontarians. It is unacceptable.

If members of this government care about transparency, ethics and being there for the people, like they have claimed on numerous occasions, they will support this

motion. If there is nothing to hide, they will have their colleagues testify in front of this committee and in front of the people of Ontario to provide Ontarians with the transparency they deserve and get to the bottom of this \$8.3-billion backroom deal.

That is why I am requesting that the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy meet to question all those involved in these greenbelt deals. Thank you in advance for your support.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Any further debate or discussion? MPP Stevens?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Madam Chair, can I call for a recess so I can read this over, collect my thoughts and make sure that I understand exactly the motion on the floor? Can I call for a 10-minute recess?

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Yes.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** A 10-minute recess.

*The committee recessed from 1623 to 1633.*

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Thank you very much, everybody. We will come back from our recess. Any further discussion or debate on the motion put forward by MPP McMahon? MPP Stevens.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you for giving me the chance to have a recess so I could read through this motion that was put on the floor before us this afternoon in the committee.

The official opposition definitely supports anything that we have to do to get to the bottom of, I guess—I don't want to say the words—anything that we can do to make sure that the greenbelt, any pieces of the greenbelt that have been taken away or carved up, is turned back over into the hands of the residents of Ontario.

We understand the greenbelt and what it is. It's actually the kidneys of our ecosystem, of our fine fruits and of our forestry. The greenbelt is so important and it is so important that we support this motion.

Anything that we can do to make the government be transparent is key to the residents of Ontario. Transparency has been flawed through the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It was flawed right from the beginning. It's been one—may I say, and I don't want to say it—pants-on-fire to the residents in Ontario. They have been led down many garden paths and told, "We won't touch the greenbelt. We promise we won't touch the greenbelt."

And now we see that we're going to be getting houses, and not affordable houses, may I say, or sustainable houses. May I say it's million-dollar houses that my child, who is 32 years old, cannot afford and will never be able to afford. Maybe the child who is living in the basement of a millionaire or a billionaire will be able to afford those houses that are going to be carving up and tearing up our wonderful greenbelt that is so, so important to our environment.

This kind of reminds me of what the official opposition of the time had to do to remind the Liberals about the gas plants—and how they had to hold them accountable, and what they had done and how they weren't transparent. I think that if we can bring this forward and we can make sure that we have these large conversations that the official

opposition actually wants to do—we want the House to be called back, not to do it in committee.

We want to do it so that we can make sure that Ontario is listening, and they hear what we have to say. We can tell them the scandals that they're going to be going through and how their greenbelt, the most important part of our environment, is being carved up for billion-dollar homes, \$8.2 billion—I'm saying "billion," not "million"—put in the pockets of developers and of this government. It's just horrendous to have the people not be informed and have smokescreens all over the place, with different parts of this government coming forward with smokescreens, may I say, and playing games with transparency and not letting the general public of Ontario have their say and their voice.

We know in Ancaster this afternoon—I believe it's at 6 o'clock this evening—they were going to have a meeting about little parcels of the greenbelt that were being taken away in Ancaster. They had it in a committee room that held 55 to 75 people, possibly 100. Now, they have to have it in the fairgrounds. This is hundreds and hundreds of people coming from Ancaster to say that they do not support what this government is doing.

So, I commend my colleague for bringing this forward. I commend her to the point where I will be supporting this so that we can make sure that the government is held accountable at a committee level, even though we would rather have it done in the Legislature, so that we can make sure that the government is held accountable for transparency, to let the residents of Ontario know what a scandal this has been, how terrible it is that the Premier hasn't come forward and been utmost honest and transparent to the people of Ontario when he said and held his word—he should be held accountable—that he will not be touching the greenbelt. He and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing at the time both stated to the official opposition, Madam Chair, on several counts when we had asked those questions that they would not touch the greenbelt, and here we are, seeing little pieces and big pieces being carved up to wealthy developers.

They're saying that we need housing, which we do—we're in a housing crisis, absolutely—but not million- and billion-dollar homes. When we maybe, falsely, say that we're going to be building homes and we're going to make sure that we are listening to the average Ontarian—I think, is false. It's false information because these homes are nowhere near affordable.

We had been told time and time again that there are plenty of other properties throughout Ontario, that we do not need to use our greenbelt. We do not need to build on our greenbelt. As I said at the beginning, it's the kidneys, may I say, of the whole ecosystem. It makes sure that we have our fine, fresh fruits, like the peaches that Ancaster grows in their greenbelt portions.

You can say that these little portions that we're carving out of the precious greenbelt are not important parts—oh, it's a big field over there and nothing grows on it but grass and weeds. Well, guess what? That's green space. Do you know how important that is to our ecosystem? Do you know how important that is to our animals and to the humans when we're in a food crisis? We won't be able to grow on

our greenbelt anymore, because you're going to have multi-billion-dollar homes for your wealthy developers to profit on.

Well, I'm telling you right now, I think that the government today—I commend you again, may I say, for bringing this to a committee level, but I think the government should call the Legislature back and listen to the people of Ontario. We were duly elected in every riding to be the voice of the people who duly elected us in. It's always an honour for me to be able to speak on behalf of the residents of St. Catharines, and let me tell you, I have petition after petition and signature after signature—because we live right there in Niagara, where our fine fruits feed the people, feed the homeless. We need sustainable housing, absolutely, and we need affordable housing, but we don't need the multi-million-dollar mansions that this government is proposing to build on our greenbelt.

**1640**

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair. I thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak on behalf of most of the residents that I have fielded phone call after phone call from in my office. I've been asked, "How was your summer, Jennie?" Well, I'm going to tell you, it's been busy. Uneventful? Not a chance.

Every person in St. Catharines, I can say—they wouldn't fill a fairground, let me tell you; they'd fill outside of these Queen's Park grounds, and they'd be yelling at the rooftops that this government should be held accountable. You should be more transparent. Never mind saying that you weren't going to touch the greenbelt; now you're going to touch the greenbelt. It's been a flip-flop situation since 2018 when the government took seat.

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

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Thank you to my colleague from Beaches–East York for putting forth this motion, which I will support. I support the motion because, as we know, the Ford government has lied to the people of Ontario. This is the fact.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Point of order, Chair.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** The Ford government has lied to the people of Ontario about the greenbelt.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I have to ask you to—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Oh, is it the same rules?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes, you can't say—

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** It's the same rules, so for parliamentary language, please—

**MPP Jill Andrew:** Understood. I will recall the "lie" and say instead that the Ford government has been less than transparent with the people of Ontario. In fact, there is proof put forth by the greenbelt land grab that there were efforts made by the government to not be transparent, to not be accountable with regard to stealing land from our precious greenbelt under the guise of needing more housing.

I want to make it clear—and I know my colleague from St. Catharines and I have spoken about this many times—the government's own housing task force or group of experts told the government, told the Premier, "Premier Ford, you do not have to build on the greenbelt to build the 1.5 million homes that you say you're going to build."

Now, as we know, some of these “developers” who have benefited to the tune of billions of dollars by the Ford government, namely Mr. X—we’re even wondering if some of these folks are developers or if they’re speculators. For us here in this city and for me in Toronto—St. Paul’s, I know a thing or two about speculation, because we have an affordable housing crisis, one that stealing land from the greenbelt is not going to fix.

Long before our colleague from Beaches—East York put forth this motion, the Ontario NDP official opposition has been asking the public accounts committee to prioritize the AG’s report and their recommendation. The leader of the Ontario NDP, Marit Stiles, has been speaking to anyone and everyone in the province of Ontario. Everyone is disillusioned as to how this Ford government, this Conservative government, can abuse its power, frankly, by giving out gifts to their developer friends. And shame on the government for, frankly, using their own staff as fall guys.

I say that a motion like this, an inquiry into the greenbelt scandal, is crucial, of course. The NDP has called, on multiple occasions, for the return of every inch of land to the greenbelt. We will do as has been done before, when the NDP held the Liberal government of the time accountable for their gas plant scandal.

Ontarians deserve answers. Ontarians deserve to be able to live and thrive in our province. Tonight in St. Paul’s, we’re having a meeting about demovictions, affordable rent, ending vacancy decontrol—you know, having rent control, for goodness’ sake. I’ve got a couple of tenants in my riding who saw their rent go up from \$2,500 a month to a proposed \$3,500. When the tenants fought back and simply asked a question, “What the heck is going on here?”, the landlord turned around and put it up to \$9,500 a month for a two-bedroom condo in midtown. I tell you, government, this is the reality of the housing affordability crisis that you all have created, one that is hurting Ontarians.

I want to take this opportunity, while I have a microphone, to say that this notion of blaming the migration of immigrants to our fine province—using immigrants as a scapegoat, as the reason why the Ford government has to build on the greenbelt—is disgusting. It’s disgusting because, sadly, many of our immigrant moms, dads and family members sitting right at this table couldn’t afford to build a McMansion, right?

I want to make it clear—I think my colleague mentioned this a bit, about food insecurity, which is something we certainly see even in an urban riding like St. Paul’s. When you attack the greenbelt, you attack farmers. You attack our food sources. You attack our natural environment. You attack wildlife. You attack drinking water. We can have a bigger conversation on if they actually care about clean drinking water; I mean, look at all the water advisories that Indigenous communities have to live through, right? I don’t know what doesn’t say “truth and

reconciliation” like running a province where Indigenous communities don’t have access to clean drinking water.

All that to say, I will support the motion, because I will support any motion that is demanding accountability, that is calling for an inquiry into the gross abuse of power that we have witnessed by this Conservative Ford government—

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** And past governments.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** And past governments, but most certainly the province is on their watch now.

People are watching what you are doing now. We sincerely hope that you will put every piece of land back into the greenbelt, that you will hold yourselves accountable and have these conversations. Bring forth these ministers or former ministers to defend their choices, because it costs the taxpayer. It’s costing our environment. It is helping to shoot up the prices of food, the prices of the things that people need, the basic needs that folks need to be able to live and thrive in Ontario.

I don’t know. I mean, another review? How much is a review going to cost the folks of Ontario, right?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** A colossal waste of Ontario’s money.

**MPP Jill Andrew:** A waste of time and money, but in any case, I support the government being held accountable.

I see you all are listening intently—well, some are; some aren’t. But the point of the matter is, you said you’d keep your hands off the greenbelt. Your Premier said he would keep his hands off the greenbelt multiple times. That was one of your so-called electoral promises: to keep your hands off the greenbelt. Premier Ford and this Conservative government did not tell the truth. He went behind the backs of Ontarians, and you stole land from the greenbelt.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Any further debate, discussion? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Recorded, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** Recorded vote.

#### Ayes

Andrew, McMahon, Stevens.

#### Nays

Babikian, Grewal, McGregor, Pang, Sabawy, Thanigasalam.

**The Chair (Ms. Laurie Scott):** I declare the motion lost.

Seeing no more committee business, I now adjourn the committee for today. Thank you.

*The committee adjourned at 1651.*





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

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Mr. Billy Pang (Markham–Unionville PC)

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