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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

HE-59

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

Estimates

Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday 2 October 2024

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des débats
(Hansard)**

HE-59

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

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Ministère des Affaires civiques
et du Multiculturalisme

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi 2 octobre 2024

Chair: Laurie Scott
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Présidente : Laurie Scott
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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 2 October 2024

Mercredi 2 octobre 2024

The committee met at 1301 in committee room 1.

ESTIMATES

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND
MULTICULTURALISM

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Good afternoon, 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?

We will now commence with consideration of the 2024-25 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.

Today, we will consider the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. I am 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, you may begin.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm honoured to be here today, for the first time on this side of the table, representing the Honourable Michael Ford in my capacity as the alternate Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. I look forward to answering the committee's questions about the important work of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

I want to thank the dedicated teams at the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, including those here today, who have been critical in supporting our mission of strengthening Ontario, its places and its people. Joining me today from the ministry, on my left are our deputy minister, Nosa Ero-Brown; Dr. Parm Bhatthal, the assistant deputy minister for the Anti-Racism Directorate, otherwise known as the ARD; Michelle Gittens, the assist-

ant deputy minister for the citizenship, inclusion and heritage division, also known as the CIHD; and, last but not least, Helen Chimirri-Russell, chief executive officer of the Ontario Heritage Trust.

I want to start my remarks by including some context about the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. The MCM was established in the summer of 2021 with the overarching goal of creating a better future for people and communities of Ontario. Today, the ministry encompasses the Anti-Racism Directorate; the citizenship, inclusion and heritage division; and the Ontario Heritage Trust. Our key responsibilities include leading the government's anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives; promoting economic growth, empowerment and opportunity for diverse communities; recognizing the achievements and contributions of exemplary Ontarians; celebrating the unique communities within our province; and working to conserve and steward Ontario's heritage.

The Anti-Racism Directorate works to combat racism and break down barriers that contribute to inequitable economic outcomes; to advance racial equity for Indigenous, Black and other racialized populations in Ontario; and to promote economic growth, equal opportunities and community inclusion, free of hate, to ensure that all Ontarians can fully participate and prosper. The Anti-Racism Directorate is committed to building a more inclusive and responsive Ontario government to ensure all citizens are served equitably.

The citizenship, inclusion and heritage division, also known as the CIHD, fosters inclusive and vibrant communities by formally recognizing exceptional individuals who make a difference in our communities. By administering the Ontario Heritage Act, the CIHD also supports municipalities, provincial government ministries, 12 public bodies and the heritage sector to identify and conserve Ontario's irreplaceable cultural heritage. This includes regulating the practice of archaeology to conserve and protect archaeological resources.

The Ontario Heritage Trust is the province's heritage trustee, which conserves provincially significant cultural, tangible and intangible heritage; interprets and fosters awareness of Ontario's rich history; and celebrates the diversity of place, experience, language, customs and perspectives of our province.

Overall, the ministry's key areas of focus are:

—leading the implementation of the province’s anti-racism strategy to address racism and promote racial equity;

—providing anti-racism guidance to the Ontario public service to ensure public services are inclusive, equitable and responsive to the needs of all people;

—promoting economic growth and opportunity for all Ontarians, including education and career pathways;

—facilitating community insights through the Premier’s Council on Equality of Opportunity and the advocate for community opportunities;

—planning, delivering and administering the province’s recognition programs encouraging civic participation, community leadership and volunteerism; and

—conserving cultural heritage resources, including archaeological and built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes.

As we look forward, we remain committed to ensuring that all Ontarians feel a sense of belonging and a sense of inclusion. Together, MCM’s strategic initiatives will continue to support our government’s priorities that will build a stronger Ontario.

I want to talk a bit about the anti-racism strategy. One way that we are building a stronger Ontario is through the anti-racism strategic plan. The revised strategy was released in August 2023, under the dedicated leadership of our assistant deputy minister, Dr. Parm Bhatthal, and at the core of our ministry’s mandate we know that driving positive change for racialized and diverse communities requires an all-of-government approach. The revised strategy includes a new vision with 49 initiatives from 14 ministries and will continue to advance racial equality and identify and remove the barriers that contribute to inequitable outcomes.

Our government recognizes that there’s still more work to be done, both to eliminate barriers and to advance racial equity. The 2024 annual progress report demonstrates Ontario’s ongoing efforts to deliver the anti-racism strategic plan, to remove barriers impacting Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities. The 2024 report highlights key milestones achieved across 14 ministries in our work with community and sector partners to address and combat racism, advance equality of opportunity and also foster economic empowerment. The ministry will continue to report annually on our government’s progress on the anti-racism strategic plan to help build a safer, more inclusive and more prosperous Ontario.

Additionally, I would like to highlight recent and ongoing initiatives undertaken by the Anti-Racism Directorate to support our mission. Firstly, we have the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant Program, also known as the ARAH Program—I always say ARHA, and I apologize to the great team for that; I’m trying to get the hang of it. With an investment of \$4.8 million over three fiscal years, this program is designed to support organizations in providing community-based education. Importantly, and I think important for the members of the committee to note, this program supported 82 community-led initiatives to increase public education and awareness of the impacts of

racism and hate across the province of Ontario. I think when we look at the programs that we’re putting forward at the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, I think that’s a key point, where we say “community-led.” We want to make sure that we’re working with community, hearing directly from community and implementing programs that serve their needs, as well.

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To ensure that new anti-racism initiatives meet the needs of Ontario’s diverse population, the ministry partnered with those community organizations who know their communities best to co-design and lead effective programs, in consultation with stakeholders and the public. In the upcoming year, this ministry plans to continue funding and supporting projects that will help enhance local capacity, foster community connections and deepen understanding of the effects of racism.

Ontario, like jurisdictions worldwide, is not immune to the divisions at home that manifest from global conflicts and geopolitical tensions abroad. Despite our effort to promote a culture of respect and understanding, we have seen many concerning events take place globally. Those events have not only brought immense suffering but have also sparked a rise in racism and hate crimes worldwide. The recent conflict in the Middle East, as well as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, are two examples. These events have shaken the global community, and it has become more crucial than ever to use the tools at our disposal, as a provincial government, to address these issues head-on, which we have done in several ways.

As previously mentioned, to combat racism and hate, we launched Ontario’s Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, which involved over 49 initiatives from 14 partner ministries and millions in investment from our government, including \$132.5 million in investment from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

In 2023-24, we invested \$33 million into the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant, which has helped over 1,700 faith-based and cultural organizations enhance safety and security measures at their places of worship and community spaces. I can speak about the results that we’ve seen in my own community in Brampton. We have the Great Lakes Mosque, the Jamiat Ul Ansar, where people robbed money that was donated to the mosque. This was money that community members put forward to build a bigger mosque. If you’ve ever been to the Great Lakes Mosque—and I invite all the members of the committee to come by; it’s at Great Lakes and Sandalwood, just south of Sandalwood. Come by on a Friday and see the Friday prayers. This is a packed parking lot. Attendance is never an issue at the Great Lakes Mosque. They put this money forward as a community to build a better mosque and build better programming and to continue to improve on it, but that money was stolen from them just over a year ago. Part of what we’ve been able to do through the anti-hate security program is build better gates at the parking lot so that it’s harder to get a car through—security cameras, better doors.

We had the Seventh-day Adventist church right on Heart Lake Road—bigger, stiffer doors that they were building, and a big camera with a sign saying, “You are being watched. We’re looking at you.” These are tangible, real investments that are delivering for our communities all across Ontario, not just in my community in Brampton.

I certainly encourage members to continue to share with their places of worship about that anti-hate security grant, because we know, as a provincial government, we have the ability to foster a safer, more tolerant and respectful society here at home. That’s why we remain steadfast in working with communities, partners and all levels of government to combat the rise of hate and hate incidents.

During the pandemic, our government launched the Ontario Grant to Support Anti-Hate Security Measures for Faith-Based and Cultural Organizations. The grant was redesigned based on feedback received from a broad range of community organizations, grant recipients and applicants and was relaunched as the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant. This grant that I’ve spoken about provides funding to eligible faith-based, cultural, LGBT+, First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous organizations and communities to enhance or implement measures to ensure community spaces remain safe and secure from hate-motivated incidents. In December 2023, our government invested an additional \$20.5 million into the revised program, expanding it to be more responsive to the community needs, and particularly the concerns of our Jewish and Muslim communities to worship safely amidst the concerning rise of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Time and time again, we have shown how our ministry adapts to the changes and responds to the needs of our communities. We look forward to our continued efforts serving Ontario’s communities in the coming year.

To support Ontarians and continue to create an inclusive economy, MCM works to empower and equip Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities to reach their full potential. MCM is working to create new opportunities for youth small businesses and organizations across the province, especially for marginalized groups facing systemic barriers. One such program is the Black Youth Action Plan, or BYAP, economic empowerment program. Since 2022, BYAP’s economic empowerment programs have served over 10,000 Black youth and young professionals. The ministry is investing \$16.5 million in the Black Youth Action Plan’s economic empowerment program in 2024. This program will continue to support Black youth and young professionals in developing skills to help launch their careers in high-demand sectors.

Last year, our government invested in an additional \$15 million over three years to expand and enhance the Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs program. The RAISE program continues to help more Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs grow their small businesses in Ontario. This grant program previously supported over 400 Indigenous, Black and racialized entrepreneurs, who received business training, culturally relevant coaching, and a one-time \$10,000 grant to facili-

tate growth in the small business sector and foster vibrant and inclusive communities.

Our government is also working to ensure community voices and organizations are reflected in government decision-making for better, more effective programs and services. The advocate for community opportunities, Mohamed Firin, acts as a liaison between government and marginalized communities to better understand the needs of Ontarians and inform government action. In the coming year, the ACO will continue engaging with communities and organizations to ensure their voices inform policy and program recommendations.

Another way our government is ensuring we are engaging with communities to create better programs and services is through the Premier’s Council on Equality of Opportunity. The PCEO is an advisory group that champions community voices and provides advice to the government on how to help young people succeed in Ontario’s changing economy. The PCEO’s 18 appointed members include intergenerational experts from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including youth members. The PCEO has supported our government’s key initiatives, such as the Black Youth Action Plan and consultations on the amended anti-racism strategy. In the coming year, PCEO will continue to make significant strides in advancing social and economic empowerment priorities.

As previously mentioned, a stronger Ontario requires an all-of-government approach to dismantle the barriers that may prevent Ontarians from equally accessing opportunities. Our government’s amended anti-racism strategy, building a stronger and more inclusive Ontario, showcases this all-of-government approach. This cross-government initiative involved the ministry working with 13 partner ministries, including the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. Other examples of cross-government initiatives include the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation, which launched several initiatives to support Indigenous communities, businesses and entrepreneurs.

The Ministry of Education has also taken huge strides to support racialized youth in the education system, with two notable examples being limiting suspensions for students and junior kindergarten to grade 3, as well as ending the practice of streaming students into separate applied and academic paths for grade 9. These are both examples of actions our government has taken to remove barriers that disproportionately affected racialized youth in Ontario. Going forward, our government will continue this multi-ministerial approach that is helping to build a more inclusive and welcoming province for all people.

I turn now to the citizenship, inclusion and heritage division—more specifically, the Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat, which leads the delivery of Ontario’s highest honours and awards on behalf of the government each year under the excellent leadership of Assistant Deputy Minister Michelle Gittens. The Ontario Honours and Award Secretariat administers and delivers 20 honours and awards programs which celebrate Ontarians’

outstanding achievements and honour and recognize those who have contributed to their communities in a variety of sectors. These programs include the province's highest honour, the Order of Ontario, as well as the Volunteer Service Awards; honours to recognize firefighters, police and paramedics; and more.

With the support of the dedicated OHAS team, our government recognized approximately 10,000 Ontarians annually for their service to their communities and their province. In the coming year, OHAS will continue to deliver the programs that strengthen our province; build inclusive, vibrant communities; and encourage civic participation and citizen engagement.

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Sorry, colleagues, I've got to drink more water than I'm used to. Once we're back in the House, I'll be more used to the 20-minute speeches. I apologize.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Minister, I just want to let you know: two minutes until your speech is—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Two minutes?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Yes.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I will try to make them good.

The citizenship, inclusion and heritage division also administers the Ontario Heritage Act, working to conserve and promote cultural heritage resources. Conserving our cultural heritage contributes to Ontarians' sense of place and community, and promotes strong economic growth, social well-being and life-long learning.

MCM also provides operating grants to support local and provincial heritage organizations in promoting the stories of Ontario's communities. Each year, the provincial heritage organization grant provides funding to numerous provincial heritage organizations to deliver public access to Ontario's heritage and encourage participation in heritage conservation activities. The Heritage Organization Development Grant promotes awareness of our heritage and provides community museums, local historical societies and other heritage associations with a portion of their annual operating support.

The ministry will continue to support the government's efforts to increase housing supply and advance provincial priority infrastructure projects, such as housing, transit, health, long-term care and infrastructure, and doing that while conserving and promoting our cultural heritage.

CIHD also plays an important role in protecting archaeological sites and artifacts under the Ontario Heritage Act. Such work includes regulating the profession and practice of archaeology and ensuring that licensed archaeologist comply with the OHA and its regulations. Staff at the ministry review archaeological reports to ensure assessments carried out by licensed archaeologists meet provincial standards.

Ministry staff also maintain information on Ontario's archaeological records, such as the register of archaeological reports, and support the deposit of archaeological collections. Beyond their direct role in regulating the practice of archaeology, regulatory staff also provide

advice and support to Indigenous communities, municipalities and other ministries to continue the important work of conserving sites and artifacts.

The CIHD is also engaged in a phased, multi-year modernization initiative to review and update that regulatory framework related to the administration of heritage conservation—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you, Minister. I have to cut you off there.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I've got more to say, but I'll answer in the questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Yes, you may have that opportunity. Thank you for your presentation, Minister.

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 staff: When you are called to speak, please give your name and your title so that we may accurately record in Hansard who we have speaking.

At this time, I will start with the official opposition. For the NDP, MPP Karpoche. Your time will begin now.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Minister, for your presentation. My first question is regarding the Anti-Racism Directorate. If you look at the estimates for 2023-24, the estimated budget was just over \$27 million, and the estimated budget for ARD this year, 2024-25, is \$26.5 million. I am wondering, given that the estimated expenditure for the ARD is down over \$700,000 from last year: Can you explain what it accounts for in terms of the reduction?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I appreciate the question from the member, and I think this is an important issue the member raised. I will turn it over to our department officials for some technical support as well.

But I will say it's important to point out that while the planned spending may have decreased in 2024-25, overall investments in the Anti-Racism Directorate have grown by \$21.6 million compared to 2019-20. So if you look at that on a four-year increase, that's an increase of about 440%.

We're going to continue to make investments through the ARD and programs like the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant, which I alluded to in my remarks; the anti-hate response pilot with the city of London; as well as additional investments in the Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs Grant Program, RAISE. We just made an announcement about next year's intake, actually, this morning.

The Anti-Racism Directorate's planned spending in 2024-25 decreased mainly due to multiple changes to priority programs and the redesign of time-limited programming. For example, we're reinvesting in some grants to combat hate and increase safety in our communities.

But it is an important question. I want to make sure we address it properly from a technical perspective, so I'll just kick it over to the deputy, and maybe to Dr. Bhatthal to go into technical details as well.

Ms. Nosa Ero-Brown: Thank you, Minister. Nosa Ero-Brown, deputy minister.

In addition to what the minister has just added, we did make some technical changes to programming. We have also made some additional changes to add programs that would support anti-hate and anti-racism strategies.

I am going to call on Dr. Parm Bhatthal to elaborate on the \$700,000. Chair, through you, if I could call Dr. Parm Bhatthal.

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Thanks, Deputy.

Through you, Chair: Dr. Parm Bhatthal, assistant deputy minister of the Anti-Racism Directorate.

Last fiscal year, Ontario released its new anti-racism strategic plan, which required consultation that the Anti-Racism Directorate took on over a period of two years. That additional consultation required additional investments last fiscal year. As the deputy and the minister have said, all ARD programs that we've delivered in the past are continuing, and a lot of those programs have been enhanced.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Taking into consideration all of your responses and noting in particular that, for example, in the last fiscal year the planned spending was larger than the estimated amount, what I'm trying to understand is, given that the planned spending was higher than the estimated account for last fiscal year, why is the estimate for the upcoming 2024-25 year lower than last year? Given the program, the review that has been done, the additional work that the ARD and the ministry is taking on, I would assume that if you wanted to have a more realistic estimate of what the budget will look like, it would be much more than last year's. I just don't understand why the estimate is so off.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'll thank the member for the question. I'll talk a little bit about where our planned spending and where our actuals varied a little bit in the last year. That was really around—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm trying to understand. I understand that there is a variation—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I want to answer your question. I need the ability to do that. I promise I'll get there if you give me time to answer the question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: All right; okay.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Okay, thanks.

Last year, we saw the events of October 7 and the impact that had around the world, and certainly in our own communities here in Ontario. We particularly saw the rise of Islamophobia, the rise of anti-Semitism and the rise of hate incidents against those two impacted communities. Some of those stories are heart-wrenching, and I know the member has heard those stories as well in her own community. I know we've heard it on the government side.

We wanted to make sure that we were there to step up, and what we did was we stepped up with another round of the anti-hate security and prevention program specifically

for—in mind, for everybody, but we specifically wanted to make sure that that money was rolled out for Jewish and for Muslim organizations. That's a program that we've continued to build on as a government and build on success we've seen, but we also had to tweak it when we heard from community.

I'll give an example: One of the things we heard from community was the need to not only just apply the funding for places of worship, but also to apply the funding for child care spaces, and we were able to expand that. Things like short-term security personnel: People feel more worried at major holidays, right? The Jewish holiday season is busy in the fall. That's coming up, so making sure that short-term security personnel are able to be there to step up. We've continued to look at ways that we can modify and retool the program.

But I think it was important—although it was in the middle of the fiscal year that we made the change, in the fall—I believe it was November, but it could have been December; forgive me. But it was important, I know, for the ministry to roll that money out quickly, because of the need that we were hearing—not only in real incidents from communities, but also the impact that that has on mental health and well-being—to make sure that communities are safe, but also feel safe. So that would have been the difference in that year.

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Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I understand that the government was responding to the urgent needs of the community, leading to a higher planned actual spending, but that is not my question. I appreciate that response and I think that that was the right step taken in order to meet the needs of the communities; however, what I'm not understanding is, are you anticipating that that need is no longer going to be there moving forward, and that is why the estimates budget has dropped not only dramatically down from the planned spending, but is actually estimated lower than the previous year?

Hon. Graham McGregor: No, not at all. This is a program that—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: So then why do the numbers not reflect that?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I just want to make sure that you have time to finish your question, and then I'll give my answer when I have time.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Because these numbers are not reflecting what you're saying, so I'm trying to understand why the estimated budget is a cut from the previous year's estimated budget.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; where is the cut that the member is referring to? I don't understand.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The estimated budget for 2023-24 was \$27.3 million, and the estimated budget for 2024-25 is \$26.5 million, which is a reduction of about \$700,000, right? So where are you accounting for that estimated reduction?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Got it. I think you asked this in your first question, but I'll give the answer. It's an important one.

Let's have a note that the overall investments in the Anti-Racism Directorate have grown by \$21.6 million compared to 2019-20. That's an increase of 440% since—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: So why are you estimating lower this year?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I promise I'm going to get to the answer. You've got to give me a chance to answer the question—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm not hearing a response. It's a very simple question. It's very straightforward. You're saying the budget has grown. You're saying that the previous spending is higher.

Hon. Graham McGregor: By 440% from 2019-20, that's right.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I understand all of that. So despite all of these trends, why is the estimated budget for 2024-25 much lower, including being \$700,000 lower than what was estimated last year?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Again, I'm trying to answer the member's question—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I don't hear an answer.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Just because you don't like the answer doesn't mean I'm not answering it.

I know the member voted against these investments, but it is a fact that the ARD budget has grown 440% since 2019-20. That's a \$21.6-million investment over and above what we had.

Regarding some of the planned spending changes between next year and this year: There were changes in priority programs and the redesign of time-limited programming. For example, we are reinvesting in grants to combat hate and increase safety in communities. We redesigned the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant to be more effective by having a wider scope, expanded eligibility and stronger accountability measures.

The Anti-Racism Directorate is also redesigning the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant program by integrating lessons learned from the previous three years of the program. That would address community needs and demonstrate a commitment to protect communities disproportionately impacted by and/or at risk of hate-related activity.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Okay. Thank you. Just because we have limited time, I'd like to move on. But I just want to clarify for the record, based on—

Hon. Graham McGregor: I think it's important that I give the answers—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Can I have my time, please, Chair?

Hon. Graham McGregor: These are important for the public, right? So I'll give the answers that I can.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Yes—reclaiming your time.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I reclaim my time. Thank you very much.

Before I move on to the next question, I do want to note that the minister said that we voted against the initiatives that the ministry has brought forward. I do not think that

that information is correct. If you want to put it on the record that it was not voted against—just for clarification.

Hon. Graham McGregor: It was in the budget. You vote against it every year.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Moving on to the next set of questions: The ministry characterizes the ARD as leading “all ... government anti-hate and anti-racism efforts” and that “the ARD works to eliminate systemic racism in government policies, decisions, programs and services and advance racial equity in Ontario for Indigenous, Black and racialized populations and communities impacted by anti-Semitism and Islamophobia ... with a plan that is grounded in evidence and research.” This is directly quoted from the ministry's documents.

Can the minister detail some of the metrics used to determine the success or efficacy of this work to eliminate systemic racism in government policies with ARD?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Beautiful. I appreciate the question. I will be calling up Dr. Parm Bhatthal to supplement the answer.

But I know when we were redesigning the program we engaged in an extensive community consultation as a ministry, but also through the work of organizations like the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity. When you look at that council, it's a great group of members from a wide variety of lived experiences. Not only did we want to make sure that we were dealing with the statistics, but also dealing with the lived experiences of Ontario's diverse communities.

But for some of that technical research component, I would be selling it short if I tried to paraphrase Dr. Parm Bhatthal, so I'll ask the doctor to come to speak to some of those measures, as well.

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Thank you, Minister.

Though you, Chair: As the minister alluded to previously, Ontario released a new anti-racism strategy in August of 2023. The strategy includes over 50 initiatives from 14 different ministries. More recently, at the end of August of this year, we released a progress report that shows the progress over the last year of that anti-racism strategy. In that progress report, which is available on ontario.ca, it lists the progress that those 14 ministries have made with respect to the strategy.

I will also say that a part of the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate is also race-based data collection which is collected by the child welfare sector and the education sector, as well as the justice sector. The ministries—education, MCCSS, SolGen—also use that data to inform policy and program decisions. As the minister alluded to previously, the Ministry of Education has done a lot of work to advance racial equity and eliminate systemic barriers around suspensions and expulsion, for example.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you. So just going back to your initial—as you said, there's a progress report that is released based on the revised strategy from 2023. So again, what are the metrics that you are using? How are you measuring progress? Can you share that?

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Through you, Chair: The Anti-Racism Act requires Ontario to maintain an anti-racism

strategy and requires targets and indicators to measure its progress, as well as a progress report to report on its progress.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Can you share some of that, please?

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: The targets and indicators that Ontario uses are linked to race-based data that's collected by sector, so race-based data that is collected by school boards, police services and child welfare organizations. Ontario has that information available around race-based data collection on the progress report that has been recently released, and the ministries that collect that data—as well as the public sector organizations that collect that data, like municipal police services and school boards—use that data to advance racial equity and eliminate systemic barriers, as well as to inform policy decisions. For example, the Ministry of Education is doing work around advancing student achievement, looking at initiatives to reduce suspensions and expulsions, which show disparity, disproportionality, from the data that's been collected.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Okay. Can you give me examples of how the analysis that is done—I'm assuming that the ARD is doing analysis based on the race-based data that is being collected. What are some of the examples, for example, in children's aid societies, in policing that you are seeing? And how is that information going back to these bodies and services in order to make improvements?

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Through you, Chair: I'll talk maybe about the initiatives that the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism leads. We lead the administration of the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant. We've led that grant initiative for a number of years. It's a core initiative within Ontario's anti-racism strategy, under the anti-hate pillar. Organizations report back to us every year as a part of the grant dollars they get, and those organizations have overwhelmingly said that the grant dollars they received have helped them create a sense of safety for their communities, for their congregations.

Separately, economic empowerment is also an area of focus of Ontario's anti-racism strategy. The Anti-Racism Directorate and the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism administer the RAISE grant, and so over the last couple of years we've provided \$10,000 to entrepreneurs to grow and scale their businesses. We follow up with those entrepreneurs regularly to make sure that the funding they're provided, the culturally appropriate coaching they're getting, the training they're getting is helping to grow and scale their businesses. The report-backs that we get from these organizations demonstrate the outcomes, and we report that through the progress report.

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Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Okay. What I'm assuming and what I understand in terms of what the ARD's mandate is, is to be the lead working with ministries, doing the analysis of the race-based data that is being collected by the various ministries. So what I would like to know is, what are the trends that you're seeing? How are you

measuring that the work that you are leading, working along with all the ministries for which you're responsible in collecting data—how are you ensuring that the evidence that you have seen, based on your research—how is that actually eliminating bias, actually working to remove the systemic racism that is within all of the services and programs?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thanks. I'll give the member an example of a program that we're seeing be successful and work. It goes through the Black Youth Action Plan economic empowerment stream. It's a partnership we engaged in through the ministry with—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two minutes remaining.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'll try to make them good. It's a partnership that we put together with the Dream Legacy Foundation, which is a program that provides Black youth with transition and union job placement support; a pre-apprenticeship program for Black young adults on the fundamentals of heavy equipment operation, excavation, and drywall, acoustic and lathing application; health and safety; and other hard skills in the construction industry.

One of the things that we hear time and time again is that the opportunities just aren't there and aren't front and centre for many of our racialized youth and community members. By getting more youth into jobs in the construction sector—again, that's a \$290,000 investment that the Ministry of Multiculturalism is making. By putting big paycheques into people's hands, giving them economic empowerment, economic freedom so that they can spend money and live well—I think it's awesome. I think it's great work that the ministry—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you very much. Since we only have very little time for dissertation—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Of course. Sorry.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Can I get a confirmation: Is the ministry collecting race-based data, working with the Ministry of Health? Is race-based data being collected for health is my question.

Hon. Graham McGregor: On technical aspects, I'll defer over to—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's a simple yes or no.

Hon. Graham McGregor: On the technical aspect, I'll defer over to our assistant deputy minister. I do know, through the Anti-Racism Directorate, we just published our new plan from last year—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I understand that. I'm just asking—as we heard, it's being collected through the Solicitor General, in education. Can you confirm that race-based data is collected for health?

Hon. Graham McGregor: As I mentioned, the Anti-Racism Directorate—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's a simple yes or no. Is it yes? Is it collected, or is it not?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'll call our ADM.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you. A quick yes or no.

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Through you, Chair, the race-based data that the Anti-Racism Directorate and the

Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism support the collection of is identified in the Anti-Racism Act. There are nine regulated areas in the act that are required to collect race-based data. I can't answer the question about whether MOH is collecting data outside, but they're not one of the nine regulated areas.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: So they're not part of the nine—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you. Time has expired.

We'll move on to the next round of questions for the independent member. MPP McMahon, please. Your time will start now.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good afternoon, everyone. Great to see you again. I'm sad that Minister Ford is not here. I know him well from my days at city hall, and I wish him Godspeed in his journey.

With that, I have you, Acting Minister, who used to be on this committee. Those were good times, good times.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'm a pale imitation of Michael Ford. I apologize.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm going to switch topics to heritage. Sometimes it's a bit of a balance with the need for new housing and our desire to preserve our heritage and our designated buildings, so I'm just wondering how your ministry balances that.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'm glad that the member addressed this in the member's question. We need to hit a balance. We're in a jurisdiction now in Ontario where Ontario has the fewest homes per capita of any province in Canada, and Canada frankly has the fewest homes per capita of any country in the G7. We have a housing crisis, which is driven by a lack of supply, which is pricing out millennials, seniors, newcomers to Canada. It's something that I hear not only in Brampton, in my community, but it's something that's impacting folks across Ontario. If you do not have an opportunity to get into the housing market, it's really hard, frankly, to live a decent life and to be able to do the things that you want to do. We used to have an agreement in Canada that if you worked hard and you got a good-paying job, that would be enough money to afford a home, get into the housing market, have some money left over—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So what's your ministry doing? Sorry—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry. So, I just want to explain the need. We—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I know the need. I'm well aware of the need.

Hon. Graham McGregor: As I was saying, it used to be an agreement in this country that if you worked hard, you got a good job, you would be able to afford a home, maybe take a few vacations a year, drive a car that was half-decent, and that hasn't been the case for certainly the millennial generation and for—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes, I have kids. I'm well aware. I'm just wondering what the ministry is doing.

Hon. Graham McGregor: What we've been engaging in is making sure that our heritage act and the way that we

administer heritage properties reflects that and balances that. We have not only a housing issue; we have a large infrastructure issue, frankly—subways that need to be built. We've got transit that needs to be built. We've got major industrial projects. Particularly you're seeing the EV sector, but the manufacturing sector here in Ontario—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm all for the environment, but we're going way off. What is the ministry doing to balance that?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Here in Ontario, we're happy to report, last year, in 2023, more manufacturing jobs created in Ontario than in all 50 United States combined.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm talking about heritage buildings: whether they're designated or listed, and how we balance that with density.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'm sorry. Could you repeat the question? Maybe I don't understand the question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: No. You're rambling off on manufacturing, which is great, and EVs, which is great. I'm asking you about heritage, designation versus building—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Oh. So what we want to make sure is we balance—we've got to balance, obviously, preserving Ontario's heritage and doing that where it makes sense, but also balance it with these other priorities that I was speaking about: priorities like growing our economy. In Ontario, we have a trillion-dollar economy now and over 16 million people who are calling Ontario home. So while we want to make sure we preserve our heritage and make sure that it makes sense how we're preserving that, we also need to balance the need to develop and actually build things to—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Yes. Do you have any concrete examples of that? There's a backlog with listed buildings and designated buildings, so how is your ministry addressing that backlog? And is your ministry—because we all want housing. We want it where people want it, actually: in livable, walkable, sustainable communities. Is your ministry looking at alternate areas like creative ideas, parking lots, provincially owned lands? And what are you doing to address the heritage designation backlog at the same time?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'm sorry; what could we do on the heritage side for parking lots?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: No, no, no—

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'm sorry; I'm just clarifying your question.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. I'll do them separately so you understand, actually.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thanks. Sorry about that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Maybe your water-drinking was distracting you; I don't know.

So we have a backlog, I know, in Toronto. I'm sure other places in Ontario have a backlog in heritage designations for buildings—listed and designated. What is your ministry doing to address the backlog?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I appreciate that. In order to address the housing crisis, to grow our economy, we

made some modernization changes as part of Bill 23 around Ontario's heritage properties. Recently, the proposal originally set a time frame that we heard from our municipal partners was kind of hard to reach and hard to hit that target. So it's that balancing act that we talk about, where we want to balance the need to protect heritage, and we're continuing to work through to make sure that we're not having heritage be a burden or red tape that prevents housing, but more of a consideration that we have to make sure that we work through while we're still prioritizing getting shovels in the ground to build 1.5 million homes by 2031.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I didn't hear anything in there of concrete actions to deal with the backlog.

MPP Zee Hamid: Point of order, Madam Chair: Just for my own education, how is this related to the estimates? 1350

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): As I'm listening, the minister is responding to questions. If the minister proposes that, that's how I would rule, but they seem to be engaging and the conversation is carrying on. I will take the member's point of order into consideration. If the minister wants to continue and engage, that's up to him, but otherwise, carry on.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Yes, so—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Maybe you can learn.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Oh, sorry. Yes, I appreciate that.

And thank you, Chair. Through you: We are continually working to make sure that we balance those priorities. We've made some changes to speed that up and to streamline that.

I'll turn to the deputy minister and maybe some of the officials to talk about some of those technical changes that were made—and again, with the priority of, when we look at these policies, we always want to balance protecting heritage properly, but also making sure shovels get in the ground and we hit our goal of building 1.5 million homes in Ontario.

Ms. Nosa Ero-Brown: Thank you, Minister.

Chair, through you: We are taking the issue of the backlog very seriously. We recently augmented the staffing in our branch and division, and expedited reviews can be requested by consultant archaeologists in the course of work on behalf of proponents for consideration for priority projects facing critical impending deadlines. We continue to monitor the backlog and the priorities to address ongoing pressures, including what I mentioned around maintaining staffing levels.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two minutes remaining.

Ms. Nosa Ero-Brown: In addition to that, we are also looking at options to review our standards and guidelines, and continue to work with our partners in doing so.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That was a great answer. Thank you.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'll add on to the deputy and talk about what's motivating our work. We know that

it's important to protect Ontario's culture and heritage. This ministry is focused on that, but we don't want it to be a barrier to building Ontario's future.

When you have situations where you have 30-year-olds living in their parents' basement, who are working good jobs, who are priced out of the housing market and unable to kind of take that step and get forward, clearly something we are doing is wrong. You've seen across the government a whole host of other ministries have been taking steps to see where we can reduce red tape, not only on our own side but also holding municipalities accountable for the red tape reductions that we need to see out of them, and rewarding them when they do it well. The need for that is really around the unprecedented growth that you've seen in Ontario.

Take a city like Brampton, where I'm from.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. I have one final question that I'd like to get answered—

Hon. Graham McGregor: In the last 20 years, we've doubled in size—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —because I have a short period of time.

Hon. Graham McGregor: —and we haven't had the infrastructure to support that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. So my final question—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Likewise, in Ontario—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sorry, Acting Minister—

Hon. Graham McGregor: —as we go to 16 million people—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you consider—

Hon. Graham McGregor: —we need to make sure we have homes for people to live in, and—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Absolutely—

Hon. Graham McGregor: —this government will be tireless in our effort to make sure that that happens.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. We're not ragging the puck anymore.

Do you consider the Ontario Science Centre a heritage building?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I believe questions about the Ontario Science Centre are better suited to the estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Just your opinion and your experience with the destination that it is.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I apologize to the member. I'm here as the Acting Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. This is really important work, big work, that the government is undertaking on the estimates.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: And you're talking about valuing heritage.

Hon. Graham McGregor: So what I would like to make sure that I do—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you. Time has expired on this round of questioning.

We'll now pass it to the government for 20 minutes of questions. I'm going to direct it to MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Minister, for the informative deputation.

As I am the PA for the ministry, I have been working with the ministry and the minister on many initiatives. We know the multiculturalism, as we see it and as we promote it in different communities, actually also has impact on the involvement of those communities and linked to the internationally ongoing activities. It can impact communities here because of that.

I would like to ask the minister about—I know the work we are doing in the ministry from all the programs we have been working on, advocating for community support: the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant, the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant program, the Anti-Black Racism Strategy, anti-racism impact assessment modernization, anti-racism strategic plan modernization which started in August 2023, the Black Employment Support Program. There are many, many programs we are working on, already put in place because we hear the communities, we outreach to those communities. We understand their challenges and their issues, and we are trying, as a ministry, to help in those.

Over the course of the past two years, the anti-hate security and prevention program invested a total of \$45.5 million to help faith-based and cultural organizations enhance security and safety in their communities. With the expectation of the new grant launching in 2024-25, what has the ministry done to revise the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant program to be more flexible in helping those communities to feel more safe, more protected?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member for that question. I think it's important to state on the record, not only as an MPP but also as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, that MPP Sheref Sabawy has been an absolute champion for Ontario's diverse communities since the day he was elected until now.

Regarding the question around the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant, which I'll note that the member voted in favour of and had the courage to stand up there and say, "This stuff matters. We're going to vote for it"—this member voted in support of it. And it's a program that we've been helping to get more communities the resources and tools and security that they need to be able to worship freely. It doesn't matter where you come from, who you love or how you choose to worship God; everybody belongs in Ontario. They deserve to be safe. They deserve to feel safe.

I'll talk about an example of success that we've seen through the anti-hate security grant that the member will know well, which is the Archangel Michael and St. Tekla church in Brampton North that the member originally introduced me to. Coptic Orthodox Christians are a smaller community in terms of population here in Ontario, but they're a Christian community that I think is particularly sensitive to religious freedom and being able to worship in a place and not be persecuted for those beliefs. Archangel Michael and St. Tekla is a growing church right

on Mayfield and 410—great priests there: Abuna Morcos, Abuna Michael, who I know well.

They've been able to use that grant for things like additional security cameras, not only for the church but also for the child care space, because they want to be able to have community members have child care in a kind of culturally relevant, culturally sensitive way to make sure that they're defending that Coptic Orthodox tradition by making sure that that place of worship can have cameras, so that when everybody goes home at night, you don't have vandals coming to vandalize the church. I can't stress enough how important that is, when we hear from community members when it comes to feeling safe, worshipping in their own way and praying in their own way.

This is a program that didn't exist before Doug Ford became Premier in Ontario, before this PC caucus voted for those investments, designed that program, put that program forward. And it's something that, as we continue to roll it out, I'd advise all members of the committee, all community members who are watching, that anti-hate security and prevention program—it's a very low-barrier program to apply for. Once you're in the system, it's easy to keep it going. It's exactly the type of low-administrative-cost, effective public service program—exactly what we're trying to do here in the government: get money out of government's hands, put it into communities' hands, let them spend money on their priorities. It has been, I'd say, a home run that this government has put forward, and it wouldn't have happened without the leadership of that member, so thank you very much, MPP Sabawy, for the question and for your leadership to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Minister, for the answer.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I would like to first of all thank the ministry for the program. In my riding, many communities have made use of this grant to add security to their facilities, be it a mosque, be it a church, be it a culture-based facility, which is impacted by all that's going on worldwide through faith or through other international conflicts, which, again, at the end of the day, make the people fear to go worship or fear that their facility can be attacked. This grant is helping many, many of the communities.

1400

In my community, we have, of course, a big Coptic community, but we have Merciful Redeemer, which actually got vandalized three times in three months. Three times in three months, we got vandalized at Merciful Redeemer, the biggest Catholic church in my riding. They kept adding more security to their facilities.

Still, we still have lots of work to do. I understand that we can do better. We'll do better. We'll try different things until we make sure that those who are promoting hate or racism from any aspect can be prosecuted, but having a grant like that will help those communities.

Can you give me some good examples—boast of examples—about the feedback you are getting from those communities about how they are happy about that grant?

How can we improve that grant, in your opinion, for the future?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Yes, I appreciate that. And exactly what the member talked about—I mean, this is why we put the grant in place. For a church or any place of worship to be vandalized once, never mind being vandalized three times in three months, I think it boggles the mind. It makes us all shake our heads as parliamentarians and as good, decent Ontario citizens, frankly. I think it's important that government stands up and elected leaders stand up and say hate has no place in Ontario.

By voting for that investment, by voting to put money into places of worship's hands so they're able to invest in their own security—and they know their needs better than any politician at Queen's Park does. By giving them the ability to invest in their own security—I think that member stood up and stated very clearly that hate has no place in Ontario, and it's one thing to say it; it's another thing to act that way and to legislate that way and to make sure.

One of the success marks that we saw in 2023—when we rolled out the new program, we'd heard from community organizations that the funding wasn't flexible enough, right? We were able to invest in security cameras, and better doors and locks and that kind of thing, which is important, but what about schools? What about child care? What about things that are maybe not structures, but kind of time-limited investments?

Certainly under this government's leadership—and under Minister Ford's leadership, whom I am representing here today—we reacted. We were nimble. We redesigned the program with that in mind, to make sure that child care spaces in religious schools were able to apply for it. Imagine how worried you are—somebody could be at a place of worship, but imagine the fear that a parent has that their kid could be in harm's way. So we made that change. We made that responsive to community needs.

Another thing that we put forward was a change around short-term security personnel, so it's not just physical structures that are eligible for the grant; you're able to bring in short-term security personnel for days that are high-volume. Many faiths have holidays where more congregants go on the holidays than not. I can be as guilty of that as anybody.

Go visit the Guru Nanak Mission Centre in Brampton on Gurdwarab. There are lineups outside the door. Visit the Great Lakes Mosque on Eid. I mean, just a regular Friday, never mind, but Eid is like a whole other—they've got to do multiple services just to get people in, and this is a building that holds—I don't want to say what the fire code holds, but it holds a lot of people. I won't get the mosque in trouble, but it holds a ton of people and they're doing multiple prayers just to make sure that everybody is able to get in.

Communities know where the need is better than politicians do, and I think this is something that the leadership of the Premier really put forward in how we design programs. Rather than setting up a big anti-hate security agency and having government employees and politicians—and all respect to politicians and government

employees; we all work for the government here. We all work for the people. But rather than having people from the top down, sitting in downtown Toronto, telling communities what they need, why don't we listen to communities and hear what they need and respond to what they're seeing as the stressors?

Again, that anti-hate security grant—a low barrier to entry. Something that we've heard from particularly racialized communities is they're unable to take advantage of some of these massive grants, because they just don't have the infrastructure to do the grant-writing for a half-a-million-dollar grant etc., and a lot of these legacy organizations get them. But with the anti-hate security grant, it was the right amount of money, widely applied—tangible, real impact happening to communities across Ontario, something that I'm proud to have voted for myself as a member and proud to be representing here as the acting minister, certainly. I'm just very appreciative of the members who voted for that fund, because that is making a huge impact across Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I recognize MPP Hamid.

MPP Zee Hamid: Thank you, Minister, for addressing the committee and answering questions, and for all the good work the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism is doing to build a stronger and more inclusive Ontario.

As you're aware, Minister, I'm from the riding of Milton, which is one of the most diverse ridings in Ontario. A strong majority of our residents are racialized: more than 50%, for sure, according to the last census data that came out in 2021; I assume it's a lot higher now. I had the pleasure of touring the riding with Associate Minister Nina Tangri last week, the minister of small business, and a lot of these small businesses in Milton are managed and run by racialized folks, racialized individuals and families. They're really family small businesses. They really have a great deal of contribution towards the community, not just creating jobs, but also participating in events and supporting different local causes and charities.

As you're aware, Minister, a lot of Indigenous, Black and racialized small business owners face some unique challenges that might be unique to them. Can you please tell the committee what the ministry is doing to support racialized small business owners, both individuals and families, as well as entrepreneurs looking to start and grow their business?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Really great question by the member. A lot of the stats that the member talked about are the same in my community in Brampton: a highly racialized population, lots of small business owners and lots of newcomers, as well, which is something that I think needs to be addressed particularly as well. You're seeing that growth happen in our communities in Brampton, Milton and, frankly, across Ontario.

We put forward a program, and we just announced this year's iteration of it this morning: the RAISE program, the Racialized and Indigenous Support for Entrepreneurs Grant program, which is a grant program that provides

access to business development training, culturally responsive and tailored business coaching, and networking opportunities to support Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs, as well as a grant of up to \$10,000. I can tell you, in my community, many racialized entrepreneurs have taken advantage of it—not just the \$10,000 grant, which is important, giving people start-up money so that they're able to really get going and be entrepreneurial, but also just the access the coaching.

I won't name her, but we had a hairstylist in my community go through the RAISE grant and learn things like how to use Google AdWords and make your online presence bigger. I know in other cases they also do business licensing and how to navigate getting your paperwork up and how to find a good space and all these things that are, when you're starting out as an entrepreneur—I mean, look, I've never done it, but I've heard starting up a company is hard. Starting up a business is hard. I think giving that tool to people to really be able to do that effectively is helping. I think it's helping certainly in the GTA, the kinds of communities like mine and yours, but helping across Ontario.

It really leans into—one of our priorities as a ministry is around economic empowerment. We want to make sure that people are able to afford good lives, frankly, and make good money and be able to afford groceries and a place to live and raise a family and all these things that so many people in Ontario are allowed to do. So the RAISE program, I think, is another one—again, \$10,000, right? And it's widely dispersed. So many people are able to take advantage of it. I think it's absolutely brilliant. I think it's the kind of programming that we need to see more of in Ontario, frankly, and I'm very proud to be supporting the ministry as they do the good work.

1410

I'll note I'm the acting minister today. You know who has been administering this program is a good friend, the Honourable Michael Ford. We certainly hope he gets back into fighting shape soon. And like I say, the minister, but also the ministry team—some of them are here today and have been speaking to the committee and will continue to speak—have just been absolutely killing it. The RAISE program is an excellent program and one that we need to keep investing in in Ontario.

MPP Zee Hamid: That's really helpful. Thank you, Minister.

I have a constituent I met a couple of months ago. She actually has a group she organized to help Black Franco-Canadians, very specific, because she felt that they face challenges that she had to go through and she was able to help out. So, I'll share the details with her. Thank you for that.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Please do.

MPP Zee Hamid: Madam Chair, I'll give my time to my colleague MPP Bresee—

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'd also say to the member too—sorry, Ric—that we've got so many francophone support organizations. That member's constituent, I assume, is in Milton, but in Peel region, we've got things

like the Retraite active and Cercle de l'amitié—lots of really good francophone organizations, acknowledging that, frankly, in the GTA west, they're a smaller community than they are in other parts of Ontario. Imagine how hard it is to come as a newcomer, never mind if 95% of other people are speaking a language that you're not speaking. That's why it's important that we protect French language rights across Ontario, frankly.

But on that constituent, maybe follow up with me after committee. I've got some other good people for that constituent to talk to.

MPP Zee Hamid: Will do. Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Cheers. Thanks.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I recognize MPP Bresee, and just two minutes left on the time.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you, Minister. First off, let me say thank you to you, to Minister Ford and the entire team at the ministry for their work and all of your work to fight hate, to fight fear in support of racialized people across the province. It's so very important.

Minister, my question is actually on a different one of the programs under the ministry, the heritage grant program. As a former municipal leader, I greatly appreciated the minister's efforts to protect, preserve and to educate all Ontarians with regard to the significant cultural heritage in this province and all across the province. My own riding has definitely benefited from that.

Just a point of note: the Hawley House in the village of Bath, built in 1785, is the longest continuously resided home in the entire province.

Hon. Graham McGregor: What?

Mr. Ric Bresee: And it's just a small little house—

Hon. Graham McGregor: How many years is that?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm not doing the math.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I'm not supposed to ask questions.

Mr. Ric Bresee: So my question to you, Minister—and I know we've got limited time. But can you please elaborate for the committee on the types of programs under the heritage program that not only support my riding, but support all the ridings across the province?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I appreciate that. Thank you, MPP Bresee. I appreciate the question, and I appreciate your leadership on the file as well.

I know the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism provides over \$1 million in funding through the provincial heritage organization and the Heritage Organization Development Grant. The PHO program supports 12 not-for-profit organizations with province-wide mandates in the heritage sector, which are organizations that aid the public in learning about and conserving their local heritage.

The HODG program is designed to support historical societies and associations to inform and educate the general public about community heritage and promote public awareness through outreach activities such as exhibits, promotional materials, walking tours, and other locally inspired and delivered activities.

What I want to lean into, the important part of that statement, is the locally inspired activities. I think that's exactly what you're alluding to with your—I still want to know how many years that home has been resided in—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you, Minister. The time has ended on that round.

I now move to MPP Karpoche for the next round of questioning.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Before I ask my questions, I just want to ask the minister—I'm going to ask very straightforward questions. Given that this is the last rotation and we have limited time, I'd just appreciate if you could keep your answers short and to the point.

Part of the work and mandate of the ARD, the Anti-Racism Directorate, is to lead an Indigenous-Focused Anti-Racism Strategy. Can you share with us what the status is of the Indigenous anti-racism strategy? And if you could also share what the review that was done of the overall strategy showed and what are some of the changes that were made.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I appreciate that. I appreciate the question. I will bring Dr. Parm Bhatthal up to speak directly to some of the components.

I'll just say that when it comes to the Ontario government and treating all communities fairly, and particularly our Indigenous partners, this is something that we continue to strive to get right, and we know that we have to get it right. It's a continual work in progress. I think that's why it's important that we continue to—and we have that enshrined in legislation, to update the ARD as we go.

But on specific elements, I'll just phone a friend here and ask Dr. Parm Bhatthal to chime in.

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Through you, Chair: The anti-racism strategic plan that was released in 2023, like I said, includes initiatives from 14 different ministries. There are many initiatives that support First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. There are initiatives from the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation that are in that strategy.

More recently, in August, the ministries released updates through the annual progress report. The Anti-Racism Directorate has provided in this fiscal year over \$500,000 in investments to provincial and territorial organizations, including many Indigenous organizations: for example, the Chiefs of Ontario, the Ontario Native Women's Association, Grand Council Treaty 3 and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. Those initiatives that are led by First Nation communities are responsive to their local needs. Some of them are capacity-building initiatives; some of them are initiatives to increase awareness around anti-Indigenous racism considerations; some of those initiatives also focus on providing advice to the ministry when we are redesigning programs like the race program or programs like the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Okay. And what government agencies or other ministries has this work informed?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I don't understand the question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The Anti-Racism Directorate is leading an Indigenous-focused strategy, correct?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Yes.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: And as part of your mandate, you are also responsible in ensuring that government agencies and other ministries are working to remove anti-Indigenous racism. So can you share how the ARD is working with government agencies and ministries to ensure that the work that you are doing is informing—in practice, on the ground—the services and programs the various ministries provide?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Great. I'm going to call Dr. Bhatthal up here, as well.

What I'll say is, the Anti-Racism Directorate and the plan—something that's really important, that I think we need to continue to get right is that obviously the Anti-Racism Directorate is about all forms of racism, but we specifically call out a few different kinds. We call out anti-Semitism, we call out Islamophobia, we call out anti-Black racism, we call out anti-Indigenous racism, and we really want to make sure that we draw specific intention. I think with this work, as always, the key is to be intentional.

I know Minister Rickford is working around the clock on a number of initiatives that I know—I'm not sure if that ministry is coming for estimates, but there are tons of things that we're working on around the board, and certainly work particularly on Indigenous files. We want to make sure that we're working with that ministry quite closely and—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Minister. Thank you very much for that. But as I said, we have very limited time, and I do want to get to the point.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I'll try to keep my answers short.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I simply want to make sure that the ARD, through your Indigenous-Focused Anti-Racism Strategy, is actually working with agencies that the government is responsible for and making sure that systemic discrimination and bias that exist within the systems of the government are removed.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Certainly. One of the things that the—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's not so much about how much funding you're providing to other organizations. That's absolutely important, and that work is being done in the community, but much of anti-Indigenous racism, like many other things, is systemic. It's within the systems that governments operate. So what are we doing in-house, internally, to make sure that the government agencies and the ministries are being responsive and proactively removing anti-Indigenous racism?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Oh, sorry. I just wanted to make sure that I got the full question.

It's important, and to that point, one of the things that our ARD and the ministry mandates is through the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity. I know, through that work, with Indigenous representation as part of that Premier's council as well, they've looked at things like mental health—they've had the mental health minister

come and speak—to make sure that our programs have that Indigenous sensitivity component to it and that we're reflecting that in the work that governments are doing.

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Recently, it was Working for Workers—I can't remember if it was 5 or 4; I apologize. But Working for Workers was legislation that the Ministry of Labour brought forward that we made sure we got the PCEO to have their eyes on, to make sure that we're having that sensitivity lens and that cultural relevance in our programming.

For some of the more specific, tangible, on-the-ground results, I'll kick it over to our friend the good Dr. Bhatthal.

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: Thanks, Minister.

Through you, Chair: I previously mentioned that the ministry provides funding to provincial and territorial organizations, and we've provided just over \$500,000 this year. As I shared previously, a big part of the work at the Anti-Racism Directorate is grounded in the Anti-Racism Act and race-based data collection and the nine regulated areas of race-based data. The race-based data is collected on race categories, ethnicity—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I understand all of that. Thank you.

Dr. Parm Bhatthal: —Indigenous identity and religion. And so, we provide advice to ministries and broader-public-sector entities on the Anti-Racism Act, the regulations, as well as the Ontario anti-racism data standards. The data standards are what organizations are required to do to publicly report on the data, as well as the progress and the policy intent on removing systemic barriers and advancing racial equity. My team continuously provides advice to those organizations to take anti-Indigenous racism considerations in when they're reviewing the data.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Okay, thank you. And how much of the funding in terms of the overall strategy for the ARD is dedicated specifically to Indigenous-focused anti-racism?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I guess we fund the program as a whole. We want to make sure that the—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Yes, so what percentage of the budget that the ARD has is dedicated to anti-Indigenous racism?

Hon. Graham McGregor: In that ARD plan, we specifically—obviously, it's about racism as a whole, but we also specifically address anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, because we want to make sure that no matter where you come from, who you love, how you choose to worship God, that Ontario is yours, you belong here in Ontario and you have every opportunity to succeed.

I wanted to talk a bit about the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity and list some stats I think the member will be interested in. Since 2020—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm interested in responses to my questions, Minister.

Hon. Graham McGregor: The PCEO, since 2020—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Chair, can I reclaim my time, please?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry; I'm answering the question. The member might not like my answer, but I'm answering the question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I don't hear an answer. That's why—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): If I could just interject and ask that we try to tie in our questions to estimates. And Minister, when the member does reclaim her time, please allow that to happen.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is actually very specifically on estimates, because I'm trying to understand how much in terms of funding—a percentage, a figure, a dollar figure—is dedicated to anti-Indigenous racism.

Hon. Graham McGregor: With the Anti-Racism Directorate, we look at anti-racism initiatives as a whole, and then specifically on anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Indigenous racism. If you want evidence of the government's commitment to working with our Indigenous partners, there's an entire ministry that is dedicated to that and work that is being done, as we speak, on making sure that we're building that partnership and empowering communities economically etc.—a lot of initiatives that I know the member's party has voted against, particularly, but initiatives that we do as a whole.

I want to talk a little bit about the PCEO, if I may, because I think this is important work that I think the member will be very interested in. Since 2020, the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity—again, it's a representative council that is there to advise the government and the Premier on government policy and make sure that we are being culturally sensitive and relevant in our policy delivery. Since 2020, they've convened 25 meetings and advised on 34-plus policies and strategies. They've held 23 engagement sessions with stakeholders, engaged with 300-plus external stakeholders, collaborated with 11 partner ministries and chaired four council working groups.

Key accomplishments I want to talk about: In winter 2024, the PCEO provided advice to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to inform Working for Workers 5, which I'll note that the member did support. We appreciate—oh, I don't know if they supported that one; forgive me. But I know generally the members in the NDP certainly support the work in Working for Workers.

I think when we talk about what the ministry can do effectively, it's by making sure we have that cultural lens, that cultural sensitivity across how government designs programs—and I'll point to our continuous work on Working for Workers as an example of work that is being done well, and I think the members opposite appreciate that as well—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you, Minister. I only have a few minutes left, so I'd like to move on. But I did not get a response, so I would like for the minister's office or the ministry to provide a written response to the committee to know what percentage of the overall strategy is going towards addressing anti-Indigenous racism. And very specifically, I want to point out that, yes, while the

work does happen through other ministries as well, the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, through your ARD mandate, is the lead on this work, so the responsibility does lie within the ministry here.

Moving on, the next question: In the estimates briefing materials, there is about 13.6% listed as “other direct operating expenses.” I’m just curious to know if the minister could please detail what these expenses are.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I will kick it over to our deputy minister.

Ms. Nosa Ero-Brown: For sure. Chair, through you, I’d like to call on Radoš to explain the ODOE expenses.

Mr. Radoš Zlatanović: Good afternoon. My name is Radoš Zlatanović. I’m the director of the strategic corporate management branch, which is essentially our corporate finance branch.

“Other direct operating expenses” in the ministry pays for a wide variety of products and services. We use the funds in those accounts to pay for things like office expenses; to pay for our chairs, our tables; to pay for ministry cellphones; and any other services or products that the ministry may be purchasing which are not directly related to payroll of ministry staff or that are not related to transfers to ministry partners.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Got it. Thank you very much for that.

My next question is around another aspect that the ministry is responsible for, which is all of the acts that the ministry administers. I think this is a good thing, that we celebrate, as the minister said in his opening statement, the many unique communities that make up Ontario. I know that very well personally, as well. One of my bills, Tibetan Heritage Month, was recognized and supported unanimously in the House, and we have been celebrating Tibetan Heritage Month for a few years now.

However, I have to say, we do recognize the various communities, but there doesn’t seem to be any funding available for communities to celebrate the various days, weeks and months that we recognize officially. I know, for example—again, personal experience here—for Tibetan Heritage Month, there’s no pocket of funding that the Tibetan community can apply for, and I know that this would be the same for all the other communities.

So how can the ministry support the actual celebration of our communities, of our heritage, if there isn’t money that’s going towards—and it doesn’t have to be much, but there’s just a complete absence of that in the budgeting. Is this something that the minister is interested in and can look into?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thanks to the member for the question. I know for making sure that we celebrate Ontarians of all backgrounds and making sure that everybody’s achievements in Ontario are appreciated and celebrated, we’re working hard to embed inclusion, diversity and equity into program delivery, while promoting programs to encourage more Ontarians from all backgrounds all across the province to be nominated for and have the potential to receive provincial recognition.

The ministry is also working to strengthen the bonds that build inclusive, vibrant communities, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and pride amongst Ontarians. For instance, we have honour and award programs that celebrate the volunteers and the exceptional contributions—

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I understand that, Minister. Sorry to interrupt, but again, we have very little time left.

I’m not talking about the individual awards; I’m talking about the acts the ministry administers. Let’s start from the top: Albanian Heritage Month, Armenian Heritage Month, Bangladeshi Heritage Month—there’s a lot. But in terms of actual funding, as far as I know, it’s zero dollars for communities to celebrate these acts—

Hon. Graham McGregor: I’d say there are programs outside of the ministries.

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I attended the Armenian genocide memorial event at the Armenian Community Centre in North York, in northern Toronto. For example, one of the programs that the government is funding for the Armenian community is the Armenian Youth Centre, and that was something that was funded through the ICIP program. So that was a joint program that we had—municipal, provincial, federal—

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Yes, I know the ICIP program.

Hon. Graham McGregor: That’s an example, I think, of culturally relevant services that are going to be delivered with provincial dollars. When you say that there are zero dollars for people of diverse cultures, it’s just not true. We’ve put money in for—

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Chair, I’d like to reclaim my time, because this is going in a direction—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Well, just because you don’t like my answer, right?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): If we could answer the question—

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I’m reclaiming my time, Minister.

My question very specifically was about the various acts that are administered by the ministry. It was a very simple question—

Hon. Graham McGregor: But then you listed off cultures. Again, I have examples of—

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: No, I’m talking about very specific celebrations—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): If we could have the answer and then the question, that would be good. If you could just try to respect each other’s—

Hon. Graham McGregor: If I can get an answer out, I’m happy to give it. I’m not being allowed to give an answer.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: Again, there are acts that the ministry administers, and it’s a good thing. We’re celebrating the unique communities of our province. What I would like for the ministry and the minister to do and look into is ensuring that these are not just words on paper, but we’re actually celebrating communities—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two minutes remaining.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: —and we're able to provide some funding in order for the actual celebrations and the promotion of culture to happen on the ground.

Again, I gave the example of Tibetan Heritage Month because it's very important in my riding, locally. I was the one who brought forward the Tibetan Heritage Month bill, and thankfully it was supported unanimously. But since then, there has not been any actual funding available to mark these months that we recognize on paper and officially to help promote the culture in our communities. So it's a very simple thing. I know it doesn't exist, and I'm simply asking: Can we look into this? Is this something that we can put into practice, going beyond words?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Again, I'd say to the member, we fund cultural organizations through a variety of government programs.

I'll point to one that we had in Niagara Falls: iMela, which was celebrating Punjabi culture. Through the Experience Ontario grant, we were able to do that.

So I'd invite the member to look at opportunities. The government of Ontario has a ton of grant opportunities for cultural organizations—maybe not necessarily through this ministry, but the money exists. So I just categorically deny that—to say that there's no money for cultural organizations—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: No. Again—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Maybe the member—again, you can look—

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: —very specifically earmarked for the celebration of heritage months, days, things like that, that we recognize officially in Ontario.

Hon. Graham McGregor: We have a ton of programs that the government funds for cultural organizations. I certainly invite the member to have a look at some of those.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): There are 12 seconds remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Please use it.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Yes, please do.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thanks.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): All right. We're going to move on to the next round of questioning for the independent. MPP McMahon, your time starts now.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. Let's try for no fireworks.

How is your government fostering relations with Indigenous communities across Ontario, and are you encouraging the local MPPs of those who are in those areas to get out there and visit their communities and build trust?

Hon. Graham McGregor: As we work towards proper, true reconciliation, we certainly encourage all MPPs here at Queen's Park—and all leaders, frankly, in Ontario—to be engaging with our Indigenous partners and working together with Indigenous communities to make sure that programs that we deliver are culturally sensitive and culturally relevant.

I'll talk a bit about the RAISE program. We just announced again this year's intake, and I certainly hope that members will share that press release out in their own areas. We put the news release out this morning about the RAISE program. That is specifically a program—the Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs Grant Program—because we know that Indigenous communities and other racialized communities have incredible expertise and potential, but unfortunately aspiring entrepreneurs from these communities are more likely to encounter barriers to starting and growing a business, such as a lack of financing and market opportunities in smaller networks.

The RAISE is a grant program that provides access to business development training, culturally responsive and tailored business coaching, networking opportunities and a one-time grant of \$10,000 to support Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs. We hope with this holistic approach that we'll be able to ensure the next generation of entrepreneurs have the tools, resources and capital they need to grow successful and competitive businesses.

Ontario is investing \$15 million over three years in the Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs Grant Program. This program will help prepare more than 1,400 Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs, including nearly 500 entrepreneurs in 2023 to 2024 to grow successful businesses which, in turn, will help create great jobs for Ontarians, provide goods and services people need and help foster vibrant and inclusive communities.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. That's great. I'll do my best to get that out there.

So the most someone can receive from that is \$10,000?

Hon. Graham McGregor: The RAISE Grant Program is a \$10,000-program; that's correct.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: What about for capital? Is there any money there, then, for, say, a water system in a greenhouse, specifically for seed restoration?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I think those would be programs for another ministry, maybe better directed for Minister Rickford's ministry or the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. Great.

Can you speak to the work that has been done to address the situation at Grassy Narrows?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Again, I would refer that question to Minister Rickford's ministry.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: So with your ministry, nothing on that? Do you guys work collaboratively? There's a lot that kind of overlaps with other ministries; I'm thinking heritage with Minister Cho and Minister Rickford and your ministry. So how much collaboration goes on?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Again, I would direct that question to Minister Rickford's ministry.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Right. But this is just as an aside: Are you collaborating on Indigenous relations with the other ministry, or do you guys operate in silos?

MPP Zee Hamid: Chair, point of order: This has nothing to do with estimates at all.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): If I could ask members to please direct their questions and tie them into the estimate questions, that would be helpful.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, I think it does when we're—we don't want our ministries operating in silos.

All right. We will move along, then, to anti-racism. There were many questions already asked about that, so I won't repeat those. You're mentioning that you're expanding the scope for anti-racism grant programs, and I'm just wondering where and how you're advertising those grants.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Sorry?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Some of your anti-racism-and-hate grant programs—

Hon. Graham McGregor: Oh, yes.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: —where and how are you advertising those?

Hon. Graham McGregor: It's a great question. When we design programs like these, like the anti-hate grant, like the RAISE grant, we want to make sure that people are able to access them, and particularly we want to make sure that the barrier to entry is accessible. We've heard time and time again from community organizations, particularly racialized-led organizations, where sometimes the process to write for the grant is a barrier to even apply. We want to make sure that we design programs that are able to cast a wide net and able to hit everywhere that needs to be hit.

I know our ministry puts out a comprehensive communications plan on the anti-hate security grant. In my previous role as a parliamentary assistant, I got to join Minister Ford and Minister Kerzner at the Mubarak mosque in Brampton to announce a program and drive what media coverage we can. We certainly encourage MPPs to share that program and would encourage members of the committee as well, and certainly share it with your own caucuses and everything else. The anti-hate security program is a great program, it's an accessible program and it's really making an impact to serve communities well and to make sure that places of worship are certainly kept safe.

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. And then, can you speak to your ministry's relationship with the Ministry of Education and how you're implementing anti-racism practices in schools across Ontario?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Yes, I appreciate that. That was part of our work around the Anti-Racism Directorate. We wanted to make sure that we partnered with ministries across government. I know ending streaming is an example of good collaborative work that happened to make sure that our education ministry and our education partners are serving the public in the most effective way.

I'll ask the deputy minister for more concrete and specific examples.

Ms. Nosa Ero-Brown: Thank you, Minister.

Chair, through you: We do partner with the Ministry of Education and their partners in the development of the anti-racism strategy. We talked earlier on about targets and indicators, and that's one of the areas where we look at outcomes like graduation rates and ensuring that the curriculum is reviewed from an equity lens.

In addition to the Ministry of Education, we also work with a number of our partners, including the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity, which provides us with advice on how we can work better in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two minutes remaining.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Okay. So you may or may not be aware, but my colleague MPP Fraser introduced a private member's bill in June before we rose, private member's Bill 208. It's at the first reading: An Act respecting the safe access to religious institutions. I'm wondering if you'll be supporting that when we return, given your role, especially.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I don't think that's a role for the estimates. I don't know if that's a question that's answered in the estimates of—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: But you've been mentioning that all afternoon, so I just was wanting to know if you're actually putting it towards actions.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Again, I'm here in my role as the Acting Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. I think questions are supposed to be focused on the estimates, not on what bills I may or may not be voting for in Parliament. There are plenty of opportunities to ask those questions, but today is specifically focused on the estimates that the ministry is spending, put forward and certainly seeking the approval of the House—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Sure. Just given that you were talking about it all afternoon, I'd wondered, in your leadership role—

Hon. Graham McGregor: —and certainly seeking the approval of the Legislature to make sure that we're able to table them. And we're hoping that they're accepted, as well.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: All right. Last question, then—I guess that's a yes.

But anyway, my last question: Do you think more can be done to promote and encourage multiculturalism at Queen's Park?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Yes, I think certainly we've been engaged in making sure that we're promoting diversity. You certainly see it, I think, in the PC caucus. We've got a vibrant, diverse team in the PC Party of Ontario that is here to deliver for Ontario residents. Ontario is a diverse place: 16 million people, a trillion-dollar economy. We're growing and accepting more people from around the world who are coming to Ontario to make their life here, and I think it's incumbent on us as parliamentarians and as government to—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: To keep them safe. Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Thank you.

Moving on to the government side for questioning, and I recognize MPP Bresee.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, thank you, Minister. Earlier in our conversation, there was an estimate that was missed, and that one was that Hawley House has been around for 239 years.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Oh, my God.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Right? It didn't always have indoor plumbing and electricity and all of that stuff, but it has been continuously inhabited right up to and including today.

Hon. Graham McGregor: That's all right. Queen's Park doesn't have indoor plumbing and electricity sometimes.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Right?

While I've got the floor, I would like your comments, and actually to express my appreciation for the encouragement from your ministry—and the previous member was speaking about this a little bit—to provide that diversity of viewpoint, that diversity of education within our signage and within all the various tools around our heritage properties to go beyond, I'll say, the settler-focused documents of the past. Would you comment on the efforts that your ministry is moving towards that?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thanks. It's important that we're clear-eyed when we're looking at our own history and that we don't shy away from it. I know the ministry has put a lot of effort into that regard.

I'll invite the deputy minister to expand on my answer.

Ms. Nosa Ero-Brown: For sure. Thank you so much, Minister. I'd like to call on Helen, please, to come provide a response.

Ms. Helen Chimirri-Russell: Thank you very much, Deputy. Through the Chair: I'm Helen Chimirri-Russell. I'm the chief executive officer of the Ontario Heritage Trust, and it's a pleasure to be here today.

The Ontario Heritage Trust has a variety of programs that we're working on. The term that we've been using is "expand the narrative," working to look at not only our plaque program, our designation program, but looking at the portfolio that we currently hold to see how representative it is of our diversifying population. Ongoing work is happening with communities, as well as from staff examination of those programs themselves.

I'm just trying to think of some interesting plaques that we've done recently. We've done one up at Shingwauk Hall, which looked at the residential school experience, working very closely with that community. It took looking at a plaque that had been there originally, working with the community to look at that story that had been told and having that reinterpreted through a different voice as well—in that case, not only just in English and French, as we normally would do, but also in Cree.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister.

I'll pass my time over to MPP Byers.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you, Minister, for being here and for your comments this afternoon. I wanted to ask about the Black Youth Action Plan. As you know, while education and schools are essential to combatting racism and intolerance, they're also important to build up the talent and expertise of the Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities.

Certainly, I see that first-hand in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. We have a large Indigenous presence throughout the riding. Also, we're seeing communities really, really changing in recent years, particularly in Dundalk, down in the south part of the riding, where we have a huge diverse community now. It's great to see lots of housing development in there, and part of that as well is development of schools. In fact, the previous Minister of Education, Minister Lecce, was there to announce a new school for Dundalk to be built over the next few years.

Minister, you mentioned the Black Youth Action Plan and its economic empowerment stream in your remarks as a key example of an initiative that is building up talent and supporting communities. Can you elaborate on the impact these programs are having on individuals and communities across the province and provide examples of some of the organizations that are being supported as part of the Black Youth Action Plan?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you to the member for that question. I think the Black Youth Action Plan is something that I know the ministry and Minister Ford have really taken and driven to make sure that we're building it to be the best that it possibly can.

I'll point to the \$16.5-million investment in the economic empowerment stream, and I've got some of the organizations here that I want to talk about. One program that the Black Youth Action Plan was able to fund through the economic empowerment stream was in partnership with the Kingdom House Christian Centre, which is providing a 12-week cyber security training course to Black youth and young adults ages 16 to 34. This course will provide participants with technical skills in the field of cyber security, along with new innovations in artificial intelligence education.

We've heard from experts, not just at this committee but across anybody in your own riding. You hear about how big of an industry cyber security is going to be and what an economic opportunity that is for people to be taking advantage of. When we hear from some marginalized communities and people who maybe don't have access to the same resources, it's hard to pick up those skills. How do you get trained on cyber security when Internet access is a problem or getting on a computer is tough etc.?

But this is a program that the government, the ministry put in real money on: \$435,000 invested in this program, which will not only help youth get the training and get those skills and get that opportunity, but also facilitate getting them into job opportunities and internships and

really help put Black youth and young professionals—again, 16 to 34. I'm 31; please don't call me a youth. These are young adults, as well, and it gets them into high-demand, high-paying fields where you're able to have some money in your pocket and live a good life and afford good housing and good food and raise a family and all those things.

1450

The more we can do as a government to remove barriers for people, get money into their pocket and get them out there and succeeding, I think that's exactly the kind of work that government should be focused on. I'm certainly proud to be representing it. Again, all credit to Michael Ford and to the PC caucus for voting in favour of putting this funding forward. It's a great program that's having a big impact across Ontario.

Mr. Rick Byers: Thank you for that. Thank you for your work and the ministry's work in this regard.

I'll pass it over.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): I recognize MPP Rae for the next line of questioning.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Can I get a time check?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Time check is 12:51.

Mr. Matthew Rae: All right. Thank you.

Lots of time, Minister—get ready for some grilling.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Take it easy on me.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I think you're a youth even if you're 31, Minister.

Thank you for being here today, and thank you for stepping up, as well, to be the acting minister while Minister Ford—as my Liberal colleague mentioned, we wish him well on his journey and hope to see him back here very shortly.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Hear, hear.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Obviously I want to talk about the honours and awards program that your ministry oversees. There's a lot of awards that you oversee: the Order of Ontario, as you mentioned, I believe, in your remarks, but also obviously the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers, the Ontario Volunteer Service Award, the June Callwood outstanding achievement award for voluntarism, the LG's Community Volunteer Award for Students.

In particular, the bravery medals that we have—the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery, Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery and the Ontario Medal for Paramedic Bravery as well—I think that's also key for our paramedics; they do such great work in our communities, and I know our government continues to invest and support them in that important work.

Obviously we have the Queen Elizabeth II Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, the Ontario Senior Achievement Award and the Senior of the Year Award.

Arts and literature awards as well: a plethora of awards to recognize the great Ontarians past and present in our province and the contributions they have made to our

province, growing Ontario and to our country at large as well.

I was just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on these awards and your ministry officials, but also on how, in addition to the work the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism is doing to combat racism and hate in Ontario—can you highlight some of the work you're doing to honour the past achievements of Ontarians through the variety of initiatives I mentioned, and maybe more that others may not be aware of, and how we need to do more of that, in my opinion, Minister?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you for the question, and I agree, specifically when you talked about the paramedic bravery medal. I think paramedics have got a tough job. We hear from the paramedics in Peel. I understand there's a new local Toronto paramedic president who was just elected this week or last week, so I'm looking forward to meeting them, as well, and seeing how we can support their members. They go through a lot. On any given day, when you meet a paramedic as a resident or as a citizen, it's the worst day of your life when you're meeting with a paramedic and paramedics do that every single day. So I ditto your comment about recognizing them, and certainly I think our government and our ministry is always looking at other ways so we can acknowledge people and support them.

I'll talk about what you've talked about with the volunteer service awards. Colleagues, MPPs on the committee, if you haven't been out to your local Ontario Volunteer Service Award event, it's just incredible. I've had the honour of attending the Brampton ones the last two years, and you get people from all kinds, all different walks of life, down to the teenager who's showing up getting their five-year medal, to seniors who are there for years who have been volunteering at their local hospital or cleaning up parks or whatever it is. The most precious thing that we can give to society and give to our province is our time, because that's the one thing that we can never get back. And for the ministry to engage in that work to recognize all of those volunteers, I think, is critical.

I think a smart thing the ministry did, as well, was wrapping the June Callwood awards into those volunteer service awards. It's something that used to happen in downtown Toronto. Now that happens in community—I see MPP Bresee nodding along and smiling in agreement. By taking that all-Ontario approach—Ontario is bigger than just our big municipalities, and getting those volunteer service awards out into community, I think, is critically important.

The Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat is a government department that's doing their job exceptionally well and honouring people across Ontario. It's a well-oiled machine. They roll it out year after year. I hope they're not blushing behind me. This is something that the government is doing well, something that we're getting right, and it's something that we want to continue to support, whether we can do that by expanding awards that

people receive or just making sure that people know that the awards exist.

Like I said, when people give up their time to do something for the benefit of other people, I've got all the time in the world for that; I think we all do. And I think it's up to government leaders, all of us here in the room and the government—we should recognize that. I don't know if you're ever going to be able to pay them back for their time, but that medal, that bit of recognition, makes a world of difference for folks. So I think that's a really well-run program that the ministry is doing. Of course, we're always looking to innovate, but I think it's something that we're getting right.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I agree. Obviously, I think it's on all members of the Legislative Assembly, our job to sort of highlight that. Everyone thinks of the Order of Canada usually, because it's the sexy award given out, but the Order of Ontario and many others—the volunteer service awards: I've had the pleasure of attending one in my area of the province. I really do appreciate bringing some of those awards—they're all prestigious awards—out into Ontario, because Ontario does not end at Bloor; no offence to our Toronto colleagues. It's a big, beautiful province—so ensuring that we share that celebration across Ontario.

That kind of segues into my second question, around the Premiers' Gravesites Program. I know it's an important acknowledgement of those who have passed but made important contributions to our province. I'm just wondering, Minister, if you could expand on the work the Ontario Heritage Trust is doing with the Premiers' Gravesites Program and how it contributes to the preservation of our heritage at large.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to call one of our colleagues up, because I think this is a program that I'll talk a bit about, but I want to make sure it is properly done justice.

I'll say this is a dedicated commemorative program administered by the Ontario Heritage Trust. It honours their service to Ontario by marking their gravesites with bronze markers. The most recent commemoration happened on June 4, 2024, when a marker was unveiled and installed in Brampton for former Premier William Davis, Brampton Billy. The legacy that he left behind in our city is stark; I remember it every time I drive by the William/Grenville courthouse.

More recently, we got accreditation for our medical school with TMU in Brampton. That's a project that even after Premier Davis was out of office, I know he always advocated for: a post-secondary institution in Brampton. There's no way TMU would have picked Brampton if it were not for Premier Davis lobbying for it, well past after he was done public life. Seeing that we got our official accreditation, students are going to be in class next fall—I think starting in the late summer, actually. For Brampton students to become Brampton medical students and eventually Brampton doctors supporting Brampton families, it's a dream come true.

This Premiers' Gravesites Program is, I think, a very important one. I'd ask our friend from the Ontario Heritage Trust to come speak to it in a bit more detail.

1500

Ms. Helen Chimirri-Russell: Thank you, Minister.

Through the Chair: As the minister mentioned, we have now recognized all of the deceased Premiers so far, and there is a plaque at each of their gravesites that recognizes the role that they have played as a Premier to the province. One of the important things that it does is it not only recognizes the person, but also the role that they have played within the province and the decision-making that they have helped to oversee and helped to steward throughout the province. It helps folks to be able to connect how we got to who we are today and how the province has been shaped over time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Two minutes remaining. I acknowledge MPP Rae for the next line of questioning.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I just want to thank the minister for filling in today. I don't really have any questions. I'll just take the last minute and a half to thank the minister for the important work I know he did as PA before his most recent couple shuffles—now as Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform; I appreciate that—with PA Sabawy, and the important work they have been doing there to ensure that we make Ontario a more welcoming place for all communities and all cultures. We grew by—I like to always use this stat—1,000 people per day in 2023, the fastest-growing subnational region in North America. So I know the work you're doing at the ministry of multiculturalism is very important.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I know I gave a big shout-out earlier, and this guy didn't ask any questions today, but the tireless work and leadership shown by PA Logan Kanapathi in his work as the PA to citizenship and multiculturalism as well—this is a ministry that has undergone huge changes, programs that I talk about that never existed before this government took office. These programs wouldn't be possible without the support, the hard work, the determination of everybody, but I want to give a special shout-out to MPP Kanapathi for his great work and his great leadership.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): Still one minute left.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I'll give everyone a minute back in their day. I'll be nice.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong): We're going to move to our voting. I'll ask the ministry staff and any guests who wish to leave at this time, before voting starts, to do so now.

Thank you, colleagues. Now we're going to start the voting phase.

This 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 the estimates. Are members ready to vote?

Shall vote 4601, ministry administration, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hand. Those opposed? The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall vote 4602, Anti-Racism Directorate, carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. Any opposed? The motion is accordingly carried.

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

Shall the 2024-25 estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism carry? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? The motion is accordingly carried.

Shall the Chair report the 2024-25 estimates of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism to the House? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? The motion is accordingly carried.

Thank you. This concludes the business for today. The committee is now adjourned until October 9, 2024, at 1 p.m.
The committee adjourned at 1505.

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