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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

E-24

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

E-24

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Ministry of Heritage, Sport,
Tourism and Culture Industries

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Wednesday 18 November 2020

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

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

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Mercredi 18 novembre 2020

Chair: Peter Tabuns
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Peter Tabuns
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 18 November 2020

Mercredi 18 novembre 2020

The committee met at 1539 in room 151 and by video conference.

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE, SPORT, TOURISM AND CULTURE INDUSTRIES

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to resume consideration of vote 3801 of the estimates of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. There is now a total of six hours and 34 minutes remaining for the review of these estimates. When the committee recessed yesterday, the official opposition had four minutes and 13 seconds remaining.

Before we go to the official opposition, I want to say to the committee, I want to say particularly to the minister and I will say this to MPP Andrew when she comes here, I regret that I did not actually take charge of the meeting yesterday. I thought afterwards; I regretted the fact that I had not intervened the way one needs to intervene. I'm glad that Mr. Miller is here. His experience previously as Speaker is an example that I will be following.

So if people use unparliamentary language, they will be asked to withdraw. If people refer to matters outside the policies and estimates of the ministry, they will be ruled out of order. I want people to be focused on policies, numbers, procedures, and I don't want to get into any personal discussions. I hope that with that and my attention, we will have a more businesslike—not necessarily quieter, but more businesslike—meeting.

I just want to say that this is not simply a ministry that deals with economic development, although it does and it's important. But I think culture, heritage and sport are really important prisms through which we understand who we are, and so you deal with things that are very emotionally powerful. I think that that's something we all have to understand when we're dealing with this committee and with this particular ministry.

With that, I will go to MPP Miller for the four minutes and 13 seconds remaining in this first round.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Chair, it's four minutes left on this one?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Four minutes and 13 seconds.

Mr. Paul Miller: Then I'll be going into the next section, too, the next few minutes and then—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Well, you'll get four minutes and 13 seconds.

Mr. Paul Miller: —after we rotate.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): The minister gets half an hour.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Twenty minutes comes back.

Mr. Paul Miller: If I get four minutes, she gets—that's a good deal: four minutes to half an hour.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Yes, it is a good deal, and I am glad that I am as generous as I am. With that—

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Chair. I'll try to be mellow Miller today, which is going to be difficult.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Never.

Mr. Paul Miller: Anyway, good afternoon, Minister and associates. I'll start off with question one, Minister. My office has worked with the sports sector, as you know. For many years, I've been the sports critic, and I have developed a relationship with stakeholders in most of the provincial sports organizations.

Way back in April and May, these PSOs provided my office with a copy of the "return to play" document, where they outline what they, as industry experts, require to keep their industry afloat during rough times. Many of the contributors to this document have reported to me as the sports critic that very little has been done, in their opinion, to actually address their serious concerns. Even today, after I brought up the question of sports funding in the House during question period, the minister—you, yourself—stated that this was the first time she had heard the word "sport" mentioned in the House. Well, I'm pleased to tell you that you'll be hearing a lot about sport in the next few hours.

I'm here today to see what I can do to actually help these PSOs and the sporting industry as a whole. If you'd like to comment on that, I'd appreciate it.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. Thanks, Mr. Miller. Obviously, you and I have been friends a very long time and share our love of sport.

We flowed all of our sport funding so far to date immediately, so we've met several times with our 66 provincial sport organizations, which we fund. We've flowed all of our money for Quest for Gold. I have a couple of nice compliments, actually, from the Coaches Association

of Ontario, who said: “On behalf of the Coaches Association of Ontario and the board of directors, we would like to thank” the ministry for their “investment in coaches and coaching in Ontario.” This commitment is “critical in ensuring that sport is ... safe.”

The Canadian Olympic Committee wrote to me. They’re “grateful for the continued commitment from the government of Ontario and Minister Lisa MacLeod, particularly during this critical and challenging time.”

All this to say that on top of meeting with the 66 provincial sport organizations on a regular basis with respect to return-to-play models, with respect to sport funding, as well as civil liability, we have in addition appointed two ministerial advisory committees that have helped us with return to play with the health table, namely an amateur sport panel, which is led by—

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —Cyril Leeder and Debbie Lowe—Debbie Lowe is with the Canadian Sport Institute of Ontario—as well as the professional sports organizations.

One of the things I think you will be excited about as we move forward, Mr. Miller, is actually leveraging those relationships now that we’ve never really had before with the professional sports organizations, to help us reconnect students and children and amateur athletes back to sport post-COVID-19.

Mr. Paul Miller: Second question: On September 10, 2020, the government announced \$21 million in funding for the Quest for Gold program. A breakdown of this funding would see \$6.36 million funding 1,438 high-performance athletes in their pursuit of their dreams. Another \$12.3 million has been allocated to the Canadian Sport Institute of Ontario over three years, and \$3.21 million has been allotted to the Coaches Association of Ontario over three years to support high-performance athletes and coaches.

While I admit that this is great news for the top athletes and coaches in our province, I must ask what is being done for the hundreds of thousands of other athletes, coaches and volunteers who may not be destined for a gold-medal podium, but are instead taking part in sport to feel a part of a community, get some exercise and enjoy the fun of the game.

Athletic groups ranging from figure skating to soccer are floundering with sport supports, as they have often had to forgo and often refund annual fees for athletes. Other sports organizations have been challenged financially to abide by social distancing and PPE requirements that have seriously hurt their ability to operate at full capacity and revenue. What more, Minister, can be done to help out the local leagues, teams and clubs that are struggling?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. We continue, as I said, to meet with the provincial sport organizations. We flowed \$8.2 million already through our provincial sport organizations. We’re going to work with the federal government to get Ontario’s fair share and flow well over \$1 million. We’re also looking at other avenues within the ministry, programs that may have been cancelled or shuttered and that may not require the same amount of investments,

which we may be able to redirect to support our provincial sport organizations in a more meaningful way—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I’m sorry, Minister. You’re out of time.

Now we go to the government. Who will be asking on the government’s behalf? MPP Parsa, you have the floor.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Oh, my apologies. My apologies. Habit is hard to break.

Minister, you have 30 minutes.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you very much for your strong leadership at the start of this meeting, talking about looking at making sure that we’re only talking about my ministry rather than others, and certainly the ability to maintain composure within this environment so that it is a safe space for all of us.

Earlier today, I was able to be in the Legislature to listen to debate on our government’s \$45-billion budget to support Ontario’s people and our businesses during COVID-19. I was taken by a statement delivered by one of our members. She said, “We ... propose some pretty good ideas,” and “listen to some of the great ideas we have.” I found myself nodding my head to the words of the NDP’s deputy leader, Sara Singh. Indeed, since the pandemic began, my experience working with politicians at all levels of government and with my counterpart ministers of different political stripes has been productive, collaborative, and delivered meaningful change for those in the heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries.

I think my cabinet colleagues would all agree that during these unprecedented and uncertain times, it has been refreshing to set aside partisanship and work for the good of all people. The best example, of course, is Premier Ford and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, whose remarkable friendship has guided good decision-making between Canada’s two largest governments through COVID-19.

I’ve seen the value of good ideas being proposed by former political rivals to advance important initiatives. I think of my work with my new friend, the federal minister of heritage, Steven Guilbeault, or with Ontario mayors like Jim Diodati, John Tory and Drew Dilken during this pandemic. I’m grateful that, in a crisis, I have such good working relationships with them. There is not time right now for partisanship.

Likewise, many of the ideas the ministry is implementing have come from our industry partners. I credit the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario and our regional tourism organizations with advancing a travel tax credit, which will now be available into 2021 to restore trust and confidence in our tourism and hospitality sector. I credit the Toronto International Film Festival, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Harbourfront, Soulpepper Theatre, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the National Ballet and the Canadian Opera Company for coming forward with the idea to increase funding to the Ontario Arts Council to support core cultural institutions. I credit the Canadian Sport Institute, the Canadian Olympic Committee and our provincial sport organizations for

their ideas on return to play, civil liability insurance and our allocations for sport funding.

I'm very much in agreement with MPP Singh's request. Unfortunately, yesterday, when offered the opportunity to provide these suggestions and recommendations, none were forthcoming—neither a mention of sport nor tourism from the opposition, and it was impossible to respond to questions because of constant interruptions and personal attacks against my character.

If I may, Chair, to respond to some of the claims that were made yesterday that were either wrong or false, first, the \$9 billion that was referred to was based on the FAO's report as of March 31, and was based only on one quarter early in the pandemic. To be clear, this government is spending more money than any government in the history of Ontario, and we are making record investments in all sectors, including heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries, where our estimates, tabled in May, were \$1.65 billion—up \$151 million from the previous year and now already outdated as a result of \$325 million in new investments for our sectors, taking our annual budget to \$1.97 billion.

Second, with respect to public libraries, the claim was made that the government has not supported local libraries and their staff during the pandemic. This is false. In 2020-21, the government has committed to providing \$27 million in support to the public library sector through the following programs: We invest \$18.74 million into the Public Library Operating Grant, which provides grants under the library act to almost 400 public libraries, First Nations public libraries and contracting organizations. A pay equity grant of \$2.01 million is provided to over 200 public libraries. The First Nations salary supplement is \$653,000; \$13,000 of that is provided to each First Nation library for staffing costs.

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Digital Archive Ontario receives \$1.446 million provided to the Toronto Public Library to deliver an online suite of research and research materials, with an emphasis on Ontario and Canadian content.

For Internet connectivity, we've invested \$460,000 through the Southern Ontario Library Service to help maintain and improve Internet connectivity, and we'll have more to say on that as the year progresses.

Support to the special library service boards is \$2.5 million, of which \$1.5 million goes to the Southern Ontario Library Service and another \$1 million goes to Ontario Library Service—North to provide programs and services such as collective purchasing, training and staff development, and consultation to public libraries.

The Centre for Equitable Library Access receives \$924,500 to support access to library resources for Ontarians with disabilities, and the Ontario Library Association receives \$40,300 to deliver education and training and coordinate marketing activities and events for Ontario library week, which we have recently supported and celebrated.

Third, with respect to the bizarre claims about museums, not only have we appointed Marie Lalonde to one

of my 14 ministerial advisory committees in recent weeks; the Ontario Museum Association—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Minister, I'm going to stop you for a moment. I'm not sure that the use of the words “false” and “bizarre” is unparliamentary, but given our experiences yesterday, if you could use more neutral language, I think it would be helpful, because I would then be in a very difficult position if the opposition were to use terms like “bizarre” or “false.”

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. Okay. Thank you very much—indicated my desire to modernize museum funding and enhance the digital experience, similar to ontario.live. In addition to that, in 2020-21, the ministry will provide nearly \$6 million to approximately 350 organizations.

The Community Museum Operating Grant is \$4.9 million, and it funds 166 community museums. The Heritage Organization Development Grant is \$234,000, and it goes to 176 local historical societies, smaller museums and heritage organizations. The Provincial Heritage Organization Operating Grant provides \$840,000 to 12 heritage organizations with a province-wide mandate—for example, the Ontario Museum Association—and we're also looking at ways to support the Ontario Museum Association with membership fees.

Fourth, with the LGBTQ+ community in 2021, we've invested \$1.75 million as follows:

—\$221,921 through Celebrate Ontario for Capital Pride in Ottawa, which received \$32,813; Pride Toronto, which received \$100,000; the Inside Out LGBT Film Festival in Toronto received \$77,320; and the Ottawa LGBT Film Festival received \$11,788;

—through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we've invested \$1.437 million to the Windsor-Essex Pride Fest, which received \$70,000 to assist with staffing and programming costs to pilot a weekly drop-in program for LGBTQ+ seniors in Windsor and Essex County; Egale Canada Human Rights Trust received \$71,600 to research the online hate and cyber-violence faced by LGBTQ2S youth in e-sport; Sunshine Centres for Seniors received \$40,000 to create recreational programming for LGBTQ+ seniors and their allies living in long-term-care facilities and retirement residences; the Art Gallery of Windsor received \$74,700 to assist with staffing and other related costs to design and launch LGBTQ+ educational programming for youth audiences; Yorktown Family Services received \$75,000 to study how peer-led support programs can provide youth with opportunities to build social, emotional and learning skills; and Ten Oaks Project, which is fabulous, received \$20,000 to host community events, an eight-week close support program for parents of transgender and/or gender-diverse children and a monthly discussion and education group for prospective 2SLGBTQ+ parents.

In Kitchener-Waterloo, we've invested \$606,000 into Kitchener-Waterloo Counselling Services Inc. to hire staff to expand the research of the OK2BME program, in order to help develop strong emotional and social skills among LGBTQ+ youth in Cambridge, North Dumfries and Guelph-Wellington. In my city of Ottawa, Family Services

Ottawa received \$479,600 to assist with staffing and program costs to expand the reach of a postpartum depression group to better support parents of high-risk infants and newcomers, with a focus on LGBTQ2+ families. Finally, \$100,000 went to the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce to develop hyperlocal marketing campaigns in tourism, as I discussed yesterday.

Fifth, there was a suggestion that the ministry has not supported individual artists. As I explained to the opposition, many of the supports they were asking about either come from other ministries, such as finance or community and social services, or are provided by the federal government. However, we do provide support in a variety of ways through the Ontario Arts Council. More than \$2.48 million so far this year directly supported 176 Indigenous artists, ranging from as little as \$1,100 to more than \$69,000 to support art collectives and more than \$220,000 so far this year to support 12 Indigenous art organizations.

For dance projects, we have flowed \$1.7 million to organizations and \$96,500 to individual artists. For franco-phone projects, organizations and theatre, we flowed \$2.1 million. For music, \$4.7 million was invested into organizations and \$650,000 for individuals. In theatre, \$6.5 million went to organizations and \$105,000 to individuals. In visual arts, we have invested \$880,000 to organizations with an additional \$517,000 going to individuals.

In the north, in addition to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, which is not within this ministry, we allocated \$84,000 to organizations and an additional \$90,000 directly to individuals.

For the BIPOC community, my ministry invested \$13.5 million to allow children and youth in identified priority areas across Ontario to participate in fun, safe supervised activities at low or no cost. Our after-school program funds 112 different programs throughout 400 different locations across Ontario, supporting 21,000 children between grades 1 and 12 so they can have an opportunity for activity, healthy eating habits and better confidence.

Ontario Creates, which is an agency of my ministry, has also invested in a number of programs that benefit diverse communities. The Industry Development Program supported mentorship and workforce development through marketing the Access Reelworld database to help fund BIPOC professionals in the creative industries, the Being Black in Toronto mentorship and training program presented by the Toronto Black Film Festival, the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival's Reel Ideas industry initiative, imagineNative's Indigenous development day and industry program, the International Film Festival of South Asia's master class series, the 2020 Festival of Literary Diversity, Caribbean Tales: The Creators of Colour Incubator Program, and the Ontario Book Publishers Organization's diverse internship initiative. The Ontario Creates Business Intelligence Program has provided support to a number of organizations undertaking business intelligence initiatives aimed at BIPOC communities to the tune of \$109,000.

I firmly believe, as you know, Chair, in the healing power of sport, which is why I'm proud our ministry has invested \$5.25 million annually into Indigenous sports programming through the following programs. Through the Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Program, we invest \$1.45 million to support 27 First Nation communities to employ a recreation coordinator. The Sport Pathway for Ontario Native Wellness receives \$1.3 million to support a regional network of opportunities for Indigenous peoples, and Youth Culture Camps receive \$2.5 million to develop as part of Ontario's response to calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report.

Further, in the Legislature today, there were a few other unfounded—excuse me, Chair; I'll change that—a few other issues that need to be addressed.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: With respect to restaurant restrictions, the ministry continues to work with the health table and the Ministry of Finance, as well as Restaurants Canada and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association on safe reopening. We've allocated as a government, but not through this ministry, \$300 million to businesses in hot zones to access property tax and energy relief. We are directly supporting ORHMA with relief for membership fees through this ministry. Their president, Tony Elenis, is on my ministerial advisory committee for hospitality, and the ministry will be running a support local campaign to support restaurants across Ontario, particularly those in hot zones.

With respect to a question regarding sports and tourism and my accessibility, I can say without a doubt that there is no minister who has engaged stakeholders as much as my team and me in this ministry. I've appointed 14 ministerial advisory committees that met weekly for the first three or four months during the pandemic, including in tourism and sport. I've held 12 telephone town halls with over 1,200 stakeholders on each call—one telephone town hall in northern Ontario and 13 round tables throughout our regional tourism organizations. I've held town halls with all of our provincial sports organizations multiple times on funding, return to play and civil liability insurance, and a viewing party with stakeholders for the budget. This is on top of my 11-week tour across Ontario with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, where we engaged hundreds of stakeholders to share their views and the multiple virtual town halls and meetings that I've been invited to or that we've set up one on one.

1600

There are many outlets to work with me and the ministry, and there will be more, considering, as I mentioned yesterday, we are releasing a white paper in the next few weeks to once again solicit feedback for our partners on our five-year strategic plan. In fact, I want to say that the relationship I have with those that my ministry supports is a deeply personal and fulfilling one. Given the critics have not seen these relationships up close, let me share with you some of the kind words that our partners have said about me, our ministry and this government.

First is Minto Schneider, the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario: “The steps announced so far will make a huge difference for our industry. Thanks for listening to TIAO.”

“We thank Minister MacLeod for her ongoing support for Ontario’s tourism industry, including such creative platforms as Ontario Live, where Windsor-Essex can showcase themselves virtually.” Gordon Orr, TWEPI CEO.

“On behalf of Ontario’s hospitality industry, I would like to thank you and the Ontario government for all you have done and continue to do to lead the province of Ontario through the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, we as an industry very much appreciate you making delivery and takeout of beverage alcohol in food orders permanent.” Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association.

“We are so appreciative of being a part of the recovery fund. This will boost our sector’s ability to drive a locally driven campaign encouraging Ontarians to enjoy the range of resorting experiences available right here in our vast open countryside and lakeside settings.” Jerry Feltis, the president of Resorts of Ontario.

“We are very grateful for the additional one-time funding from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. For a region that relies on tourism for economic development more than any other in Ontario, this announcement is very much welcomed as we continue our diligent efforts to help our tourism stakeholders survive and thrive.” James Murphy, executive director of Explorers’ Edge.

“I want to personally extend Blue Mountain Village Association’s appreciation for the work you and your ministry does in support of our members. It is reassuring to hear all of the recovery planning still to come. Further, we are extremely grateful to the province for a successful Celebrate Ontario grant, which we will use alongside our investments to grow the local and provincial economy.” Andrew Siegwart, the president of Blue Mountain Village.

“With funding support from MHSTCI, we’re excited to be able to kick-start our program ‘The Great Taste of Ontario Road Trip...’ Thanks to the support of” the minister, “we can continue working with businesses along the culinary tourism value chain to get Ontarians out to explore just how delicious this province is!” Rebecca Mackenzie, president and CEO of the Culinary Tourism Alliance.

“The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario strongly welcomes the series of measures designed to support the tourism and hospitality industry announced in today’s provincial budget.” TIAO.

“Thank you, Lisa MacLeod, for your continued advocacy and support of our hard-hit industries because tourism matters.” Cheryl Finn, general manager of Tourism London.

“Great to see such support for the tourism industry in today’s budget. Thank you, Lisa MacLeod, Rod Phillips, Doug Ford, TIAO.” That’s from Wine Growers Ontario.

“Many thanks for hosting this budget-viewing party and for all you have done to get our tourism centre on the budget radar.” Jim Hudson, executive director of South-west Ontario Tourism Corporation.

“This travel tax credit from @MacLeodLisa is a great idea to encourage Ontarians to move around our province and support those businesses that really need us.” Michael Crockatt, president and CEO of Ottawa Tourism.

“Ontario’s 2020 budget, released today, offers support for food and beverage and hospitality businesses and has been applauded by @ORHMA.” RestoBiz.

“Considering the circumstances around this pandemic, what a comforting and positive provincial budget for all Ontarians. On a personal note, I can honestly say that of all my years at RBG, I have enjoyed working with Minister MacLeod the most.” Mark Runciman, CEO of the Royal Botanical Gardens.

“Glad to see this investment. It will give main street and tourism businesses a huge leg up.” Aaron Binder, president of Corktown Toronto.

“Thank you, Lisa MacLeod, for recognizing the importance of the arts sector in the province’s health and recovery. This increased investment in the Ontario Arts Council is the best mechanism to deliver that support.” Souleppper Theatre Co.

“Lisa MacLeod, thank you for your tireless work in seeing through that the art and culture sector survives through this pandemic. Ontario art galleries appreciate the support for the Ontario Arts Council.” Zainub Verjee, video artist, curator and cultural administrator.

“On behalf of all the members of FilmOntario, we would like to thank the government for their actions to date in addressing the economic impact that COVID-19 has had on our industry and the entire province. Minister MacLeod has been a tireless advocate for the sector, and we greatly appreciate her commitment to open and transparent communication, as well as her recent announcements of financial support for the export of ... film and television.” This comes from FilmOntario.

“COVID-19 continues to have a disproportionate impact on live entertainment and local culture, creating ongoing challenges for the artists that bring our communities to life.... At musictogether.ca, we welcome the minister’s announcement of new funding for festivals and events.” Raja Khanna, CEO and founder of Dark Slope.

“Book and magazine publishers are a vital part of our literary lifeblood and the continuing support from funders like the Ontario government is crucial to ensure our cultural ecology of writers, publishers, bookstores and festivals survives, and” continues “to thrive.” Roland Gulliver, the director of the Toronto International Festival of Authors.

“One of the most important things is to maintain the current level of funding across programs like the Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Creates and Celebrate Ontario. We’ve been really pleased to see the flexibility from the funders to adapt to the new digital environment.” Hot Docs.

“The Ontario Museum Association ... thanks the government ... for their leadership during the pandemic. In particular, timely release of heritage and museum funding grants was welcomed.”

“Thank you, Minister, from every artist and arts organization in our province and from everyone at the National Ballet of Canada. We have a long way to go, but we are on

our way and grateful for your advocacy.” Barry Hughson, National Ballet of Canada.

“Thank you for creating, through your ministry, new programs like Ontario Live’s virtual hub that will help promote and connect online concerts, and performances with a broad audience and the new Reconnect Festival and Event Program. For hundreds of dance studios and thousands of artists, students and dance professionals in Toronto, Ottawa, Peel and York, this is a huge milestone.” Amy Hampton, executive director of Dance Ontario Association.

“The arts funding, in combination with the broadband funding, will make a great difference for artists right now reaching out to new and established audiences online.” The Writers’ Union of Canada.

“Merci and thank you, Minister, from TAPA, the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts, representing 164 professional theatre, dance and opera companies in Ontario, grateful for the additional support to the Ontario Arts Council and for your support of a new, hyper-micro-marketing campaign.” The Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts.

“Accessible industry-led skills training and education has been a leading piece of the recovery roadmap for the sector through the many consultations and working groups we have engaged in with Lisa MacLeod over the last nine months,” Emy Stantcheva from MusicOntario.

“Visual artists in Ontario will be applauding this additional \$25-million investment in Ontario Arts Council.” CARFAC Ontario, the voice of professional artists.

“Thank you, Minister MacLeod, for this much-needed support at a critically important time,” Antoni Cimolino, the artistic director of the Stratford Festival.

“Thank you, Lisa MacLeod and Doug Ford for this crucial aid for culture and tourism. Actions like this will make a big difference.” Stratford Festival.

“Thank you Lisa MacLeod for always advocating for film, television and digital media.” The Directors Guild of Canada in Ontario.

“Great to see the extension to retain film and TV tax credit eligibility. Thank you for this, Minister.” Cynthia Lynch, managing director and counsel at FilmOntario.

“The Ontario government and Minister MacLeod’s continued budgetary support for Ontario’s film and television credits is a critical accompaniment to our sector’s long recovery and continued growth, while producers globally can see plainly Ontario’s leading role in partnering with industry to protect and enhance the explosive economic and jobs impact that we bring to the table.” Jim Mirkopoulos, the VP of Cinespace.

“On behalf of the board musicians and staff of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, I would like to express our thanks for your effective advocacy to support Ontario’s performance art sectors in 2020.” Matthew Loden, the chief executive officer of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

“The Ontario Association of Art Galleries would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to you for your leadership throughout this challenging time on behalf of the arts and culture sector. Your work as Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries is crucial in building

strength and support for Ontario’s arts and culture legacy.” That is also from the association of art galleries. Oh, there’s another one from the association of art galleries. I’ll skip over that one and we’ll go right into sport.

“Quest for Gold has played a significant part in my success as a high-performance athlete in Ontario, I’m so grateful and thankful to the ministry for directly contributing to the success of athletes in Ontario and, ultimately, to Canada’s performance at Tokyo 2020.” Madeleine Kelly, reigning Canadian Women’s 800-metre champion.

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On behalf of the coaches association—oh, I’ve already read that one. I’ll go right to the Olympic committee: “The Canadian Olympic Committee is grateful for the continued commitment from the government of Ontario and Minister Lisa MacLeod, particularly during this critical and challenging time.

“This funding will help maintain a best-in-class amateur sport system in the province and support Ontario’s high-performance athletes on their journey to the Olympic podium as we navigate the complexities of a return to sport in the COVID-19 environment.” That’s from David Shoemaker, the chief executive officer and secretary general of the Canadian Olympic Committee.

“On behalf of the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario, I would like to thank Minister Lisa MacLeod and the government of Ontario for this three-year funding commitment of \$4.1 million ... to help support Ontario’s high-performance athletes achieve Olympic and Paralympic podium success.... We are grateful that the ministry’s support will continue to assist CSIO in developing a successful and sustainable high-performance sport system in Ontario, elevating athlete performances at future games.” That’s Debbie Low. She’s the chief executive officer at the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario.

We’ll go right to the city of Windsor now: “We wanted to pass on our sincere thanks to the ministry for continuing to fund our after-school program. Kids and parents are so happy to be back, and we are glad to have them back in our facilities. I often say to people when I speak to them about the program that if you close your eyes you wouldn’t know we were in the midst of a pandemic: You hear the kids talking and laughing and enjoying themselves. Again, thank you for continuing to fund these efforts. I would like to thank you and your team for all you’ve done to safeguard amateur sport in Ontario”—Laura Wilson for the Ontario Para Network.

“It is clear that your advocacy for all parties within your ministry was heard. On behalf of all of us, thank you. I know we will get through it together and we will be that much stronger when we do.”

Chair, I think you can see the relationship I have between my stakeholders and our industry partners on all sides of this ministry has developed extremely well over the last year and a half, and to suggest otherwise is not only hurtful, I believe it is troubling and misleading. I believe that the work that we have done together in order to rebuild these sectors as we recover, and we simply re-emerge later, it is important that we continue to advocate for this.

Again, I will just say simply this—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Excuse me; one second, Minister.

Gentlemen, I apologize. Please pass notes, but I can't hear the minister.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Chair. It's always an honour to be here with my legislative colleagues that I've served with for many, many years. It's an honour to be here with the ministry officials under the leadership of my deputy, Nancy Matthews, and her very strong team—a very small team; a very mighty team—as well as my political staff.

I'm just going to give you a little story of why we've got 11 pages of notes that we were able to read today, and several more that we didn't bring. The reason is that when this pandemic hit, my entire staff took every single stakeholder that we had contact information for—literally thousands—and we phoned every single one of them directly. That's why we decided to appoint these 14 ministerial advisory committees. That is why whenever there is a decision made by our government and our cabinet, the first one out after that announcement is made is a telephone town hall by this ministry to support those sectors.

Not everyone is going to get everything. Sometimes we don't get what we want, but this provincial budget and the increase we've seen from last year's estimates to where we're at today demonstrates the importance of these sectors, the reality that we need to preserve and protect them, and make sure that they're there to recover. But please, don't underestimate the value of the relationships between these sectors, the importance of collaboration amongst those sectors, and the level of importance that the industry partners play. So it is very hurtful when personal attacks without any basis in fact are levelled against me.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Minister, I can understand that you might find a personal attack disturbing. I think the difficulty we have is, the more that we get back into that, the more difficult it will be for us to operate on a businesslike basis because others will air grievances as well. I understand that this is something that's affected you deeply, but I ask you to refrain from going into that area.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Chair. I would encourage all colleagues to really look at—this is a way for us in a COVID-19 environment to salvage what we've got, stabilize our sectors and really look at how, in a post-pandemic environment, we can grow. The reality here is that every single one of our communities relies on the funding I've just discussed—

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —and every single community relies on these stakeholders I have just talked about.

I think the question we should be asking all of ourselves here today is, really, what does Ontario look like in 18 months, three years, and five years from now, and how do we redevelop and regain a competitive advantage, not just in Canada but globally? I think we need to think big. When you look at tourism, we want to make sure it's a global destination when it's safe to do so. That won't happen

overnight. It will happen over the next four to five years. So we need to position ourselves for that.

The same with respect to our cultural industries, which I believe will come out of COVID-19 in a stronger position, particularly in Ontario, as a result of so many advancements that we've made digitally.

Finally, with respect to sport, we became the first place in Canada to allow our high-performance athletes to get back to training. We did that because we want to make sure that Penny Oleksiak and Rosie MacLennan and Andre De Grasse are gold medal winners in Tokyo in 2021. That's our commitment, and I say it all the time: We have a dual mandate here, and we respect the double bottom line, and we're going to continue to grow it once it's been stabilized.

Thank you for that, Chair, and I look forward to questions that are related to my ministry.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): With that, we go to the opposition. Mr. Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Minister, for your presentation. I must confess, I've been at this a long time as the sports critic for this party. I must say, of all the ministers I've dealt with, you are probably one of the most involved in taking sports seriously. I will give you that as a kudos. I think you're sincere about your wish to improve the situation in sports in our province.

I did listen to you for half an hour with compliments and kudos, and that's fine. You read them all off, about all the people you had reached out to. But there are some you haven't reached out to, as well. I did notice through your presentation that a lot of the things you dealt with were in here, which I put in in last April and didn't get a word from you, and you're rhyming off—so I'm kind of feeling left out. I should have got a pat on the back, because you had about 50. One would have been nice, because I do believe some of the stuff you said was in here, which you said you overlooked or didn't read or it didn't get to you, or whatever. So I'm very disappointed—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, this is all part of it, with all due respect.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I would ask you to focus in—

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect, Chair, this is important, because this is my job as the official critic to enter into this consideration. If you're in government, the critic for the official opposition certainly plays a huge role—or should play a huge role—in assisting the minister in carrying out her duties. I kind of feel left out, to say the least, and I was not contacted since last April, which is terrible.

Anyway, I'll get into the questions. If the minister could—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Do you want to ask them all at one time, and then I'll answer them?

Mr. Paul Miller: No, I'm going to ask them one at a time, and I would like the minister to focus on the question. I'd appreciate it if she wouldn't rhyme off all the money she gave out, and focus on the question—or her deputy. I'd appreciate that.

In Ontario, sport and recreation contributes \$2.1 billion to Ontario's GDP and directly employs thousands. However, sport and recreation also play an important role in promoting and maintaining strong overall physical and mental health. The global outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in the closure of gyms, stadiums, pools, dance and fitness studios, physiotherapy centres, parks, and playgrounds. Many individuals are therefore not able to actively participate in their regular individual or group sporting or physical activities outside of their own homes.

Under such conditions, many tend to be less physically active, have longer screen time and irregular sleep patterns, as well as worse diets, resulting in weight gain, declining physical and mental health, and increases in addictions. The budget includes promises to build on the government's \$3.8-billion investment for mental health and addictions, provide more access to virtual mental health supports and provide funding for municipalities and not-for-profit sports and recreation organizations.

Despite gyms reopening and local sports trying to start again, gyms are finding it unsustainable to operate at a reduced capacity, and local sports organizations have had to cancel activities again, due to the increase of COVID-19 cases. As a result, our province has seen a continued decline in physical and mental health amongst the population, as access to sports and recreational activities has substantially diminished. This is especially true in terms of addictions and overall mental health declines. Sadly, many of my residents have begun shooting up instead of shooting hoops.

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As we all know, access to sport and recreational activities helps to maintain both physical and mental health, and yet in the budget, sports and recreation was only touched upon with one 100-word paragraph that provides no tangible plan as to how the government plans to encourage sport and recreation.

My question to you, Minister—it's great to rhyme off all of what you gave out and all that, but some of this stuff is more critical. You mentioned professional sports and high-performance sports. That's great, but the bulk of the population needs your help. I haven't seen a lot going on in my city. I can't speak for other cities, but there's not a lot going on in Hamilton, as far as I can see. I've had my soccer clubs and all of them come to me, and they're concerned.

The only thing that I felt you dealt with—and it was kind of hidden in a certain bill that you put through that said that you dealt with the insurance question, where people, volunteers, were afraid to get sued because of COVID and that. You did deal with that, which was beneficial, but I really feel that you have to back up what you're saying. In this particular question, I don't really see a lot of results, and I don't see a lot of people being helped in this very critical area of recovery. Maybe you can answer that.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Well, thank you very much, by the way, for the nice compliment.

Just so we're clear, sports and recreation actually contributes \$12.6 billion to our provincial economy, which

is incredibly important. Probably people didn't really recognize that, so I'm glad you recognize the value. We did bring in the civil liability insurance. We've invested \$8.1 million to our provincial sport organizations. There will be more money coming.

I know my ADM Steve Harlow is on the phone. I don't know if the man sleeps. When you look at the sectors that we represent, almost every single one of them was shuttered immediately on the week of March 15, and everything had to be reopened. So when you have 66 different sports—you have some that are combat, others that aren't; each age group is different than the next. We have been aggressively working with all of our provincial sport organizations, regardless of if they're amateur, recreational or professional, to look at the safe return to play. That has taken a great deal of time, a great deal of effort and a great deal of care to make sure that the health, safety and well-being of Ontarians is looked at, first and foremost.

One of the things that you may not have noticed in the budget is a \$100-million commitment to the Community Building Fund at the Ontario Trillium Foundation—

Mr. Paul Miller: Just a quick interjection, Minister: Thank you for that, but I don't really think you're answering my question about mental health and where you're going with that. You're talking more about what you gave out, but we need results.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm not the minister responsible for mental health and addictions; that's my colleague Minister Tibollo.

Mr. Paul Miller: But sports play a huge part in that recovery. You have to understand that.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Through this new fund—the Ontario Trillium Foundation has a \$100-million fund, and we talked a little bit about some of those investments today that deal with community capacity building for sport, recreation and mental health. That fund will grow by \$25 million this year and \$75 million next year, and all of those organizations will be eligible to apply.

In addition, I usually have a weekly conversation with our federal minister, my federal counterpart. These are conversations that we have on a regular basis with respect to sport and funding from our federal counterparts.

Finally, I'll say this with respect to brain health and sport: We've invested \$200,000 in addition to the money that we already spent to support Rowan's Law. Next month, or at the end of this month, I guess, I will be co-chairing a provincial-territorial meeting with the minister of heritage federally, and we will be talking about these particular issues.

There's no silver bullet; there is no playbook for COVID-19. We continue to reach out to everyone as best as we possibly can to get the answers. I think some of why we're probably both hearing the same thing is because we're talking to the same people. Very much, the budget that we presented, from our sectors, anyway, was basically ideas that have come from our sectors. In addition, the white paper, that I hope you're part of, will also participate in that.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. Thank you.

My next question: Arguably, one of the most essential resources that has become vital to reopening the economy in the wake of COVID-19 is having access to a consistent and large supply of PPE. This is especially true for the tourism and sport industries, as many of their events involve large groups of people congregating in close proximity. That is why for business, tourism and sports to successfully reopen and operate, they will need to purchase large amounts of PPE, which only serves as another major operating expense. In the budget, the government seems to account for this by promising to provide \$60 million in a one-time grant of up to \$1,000 for eligible main street small businesses. However, like the virus, this expense is not going away any time soon and will be a major expense for most main street businesses until we've conquered the virus. This expense further reduces the current and potential revenue businesses can count on in the future.

In a time where businesses are struggling to retain a healthy profit and need PPE to successfully reopen and stay open, why is the government only providing a one-time grant instead of steady—I repeat, steady—PPE procurement funding, which is absolutely necessary? In recognition of this importance of PPE to tourism and sport businesses reopening, why isn't the government providing more long-term assistance with PPE procurement since PPE is a necessity? Does the government have any intention to remove the sales tax on PPE or provide a re-occurring PPE benefit in the near future?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Okay, thanks very much for that; just a lot to unpack there. First of all, the \$1,000 is through main street; that's not through this ministry. It's through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

That said, we do have an \$83-million resiliency fund through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The next intake is December 2, so if you have an organization that would like to apply, I would encourage them to apply very quickly for this. I guess we'll be announcing the first intake very shortly, but this allows for organizations that are not-for-profit or sports-related, so they would qualify in that regard.

With respect to a sales tax, that would not be this ministry; that would be the Ministry of Finance. I would encourage you to have that conversation with the Honourable Rod Phillips.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would think, being a minister in cabinet, you would be able to discuss that with the—I don't have access. In fact, nobody even talks to us hardly, so it would be nice if a minister talked to the other minister.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'll let him know that this is a priority for you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Let him know that I'm concerned.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Okay.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll pass it on.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): The floor goes to MPP Gates—and I would ask, Mr. Miller, if you're not speaking, if you'd wear your mask.

Mr. Paul Miller: I can do that; thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you, sir.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to try to do this as professional as I can, but I will want to say to the minister, who I know quite well, I was certainly disappointed at question period today on your response to my question. I was surprised and disappointed, and I want you to know that.

Yesterday, in listening to the minister talk, she talked about how she's looking for suggestions. I thought that was certainly a fair comment on her part, so I'm going to give you some suggestions before I get into my questions.

I also want to say, everybody who has been to committee knows that this is a marathon when you start. It's seven and a half hours. It's not thirty minutes like was said today. Everybody tries to take their turn on getting their opportunity to speak, whether it's a critic—in this case, for tourism, the critic is Paul, and Jill for her critic job. I just wanted everybody to understand how it works, so I'm glad I'm getting a few minutes here to talk. But I'm going to give you some ideas.

I will tell you that I received a call today from the hoteliers in my riding of Niagara Falls. They're very disappointed in the help that is being provided to the hoteliers in Niagara Falls. They said that they've gotten lots of help from the federal government but very little from the provincial government. I wanted to start that off.

I've got a list of questions and I've kind of broken them down because I thought it would be fair to give you an opportunity to actually listen to what I'm doing. A big issue for the tourist sector in Niagara Falls in my riding, which includes, obviously, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie—and I'm sure it's an issue right across the province of Ontario—is property tax relief. Municipalities are struggling to give that relief because they're not getting that tax base that they used to get as well.

One that I've raised I don't know how many times in the House is the insurance cost. When you look at your restaurants, small and medium-sized restaurants and bars and the hoteliers are telling me that their interest rates are going from \$6,000 to \$20,000, doubling and tripling in some of their establishments. The hoteliers are telling me, quite frankly, that in some cases theirs are going up as much as \$150,000 to \$200,000 at a time when their hotel bars are restricted on the number of people that can come in. On the insurance cost, some of the hotels are sitting at 80% on a good night. It might be 80%; most are at 90%.

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The other thing that I think you did a good job on, so I'll give you a bit of a compliment, is with our Niagara Parks. You loaned them \$25 million. You charged them a very low interest rate—I believe it was 1%—to be paid back within three years, or the interest rate goes up to 1.5% or 2%. That's the type of stuff that I think we need in the hotel sector. They're having trouble getting liquidity or loans, whether it be with the banks or through a credit union, so that's something that I think your ministry should take a serious look at.

I know you may say that's the finance minister's job. I have talked to the finance minister about this on a number of occasions as well. I didn't see it in the budget, but I will

say that you did do it with Niagara Parks. It was the right thing to do for the parks as they try to get another attraction to attract people as we come out of COVID, especially now that it looks like we do have a vaccine.

And then there are a couple of things that I put forward that your government has supported, but unfortunately, you haven't done anything with them, and that's on a couple of my bills that I put forward. One is Bill 209, which is on the unfair wine tax, where they're paying 6.1% in tax at small and medium-sized wineries, yet the international wines aren't paying that same tax.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): MPP Gates, I feel bad about interrupting you, but I don't—

Mr. Wayne Gates: She asked for suggestions.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): It's true, but they don't have anything to do with her ministry.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, they do, with the wine industry—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Unless I'm wrong, Minister, I don't believe you have anything to do with alcohol sales.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's the wine industry.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Just to be fair to the member, what he's talking about is all finance-related. However, the trick with this ministry, or the cool part of this ministry, is that while something might be administered by finance, it will be managed through stakeholders with us. I think that's probably what he's getting at, and he knows that I've had the conversation—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Then I withdraw my commentary entirely.

MPP Gates, my apologies. Please proceed, sir.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I don't set the policies there, but we would definitely work with the—

Mr. Wayne Gates: In fairness, I have worked with the minister on a lot of these issues. I'm just highlighting them, because I don't get a lot of time during the 7.5 hours and because—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I know. I'm just trying to focus in on the ministry, but if it's all covered, I'm a happy guy.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I think she understands the wine industry extremely well. We're being hit extremely hard down there. We have a lot of grapes that we need to convince some wineries to take, as well.

This one here, I'm sure she's familiar with: Bill 199. As you know, I put forward a bill that talked about a \$1,000 tax credit for domestic travel, and when I took a look at your budget, it was in your budget, but in a different form, worth 20% of provided receipts up to \$5,000, which is still \$1,000.

The problem with the way you do it, and the reason why I want to speak to it today—and maybe you will have some comments as well, before I get into an actual real question. I believe that if I'm, say, a low-to-medium-income-type family, I may go away for \$1,500, knowing I'm going to get \$1,000 back. There's not a lot of people, with COVID-19 today, who have got \$5,000 to go on a vacation domestically, but we have to do all we can. As you talk about, in my riding, 40,000 jobs are tied to tourism. I'm

sure Ottawa has the same types of numbers, and I believe that by doing this and doing it the way my bill says, it will give low- and medium-income earners an opportunity to go away with their family and support the tourist sector right across the province of Ontario.

Whether that's in your riding of Ottawa, whether it's up north—this year, the north was hit extremely hard because the Americans couldn't come, so a lot of them are sitting idle because they didn't have the Americans coming. This would give an opportunity, I think, and I would really appreciate you maybe talking that over with the finance minister, saying, “You know what? This may make sense, the way the bill is.”

I'll be honest: It's not about credit. It's about doing the right thing, and I think the right thing is to make sure as many people in the province of Ontario can travel domestically—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: —and enjoy a vacation because we've got a beautiful province.

Maybe you could address any of those things. I'm probably not going to get a big question here, but hopefully I'll get an opportunity to talk again over the course of the next six hours and get a few of these questions in. But it's insurance, property taxes, the struggling restaurant industry—they're all the things that I think are important in my riding. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, MPP Gates. The property tax and insurance are obviously best addressed, I think, by the Ministry of Finance. I will pass on the questions and concerns.

I think we probably would be better served if we had this as a national conversation. I have weekly calls with Mélanie Joly, who is my federal counterpart on tourism. I'll raise that. I'm sure it's being raised elsewhere as well. They seem to have the bigger issues.

With respect to the unfair wine tax, that's been something I've heard for quite some time. I was heartened that in the last month the LCBO has been working with our agency, Destination Ontario, to support more local wines. They did do a lot more pairing of Ontario products.

We'll have more to say on how we support local Ontario products through this ministry, but in terms of the tax side of things, that is the ministry. They did waive the fee, I think, this year—

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, there was an increase. It's different—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: No, I understand, but we are doing some work on that.

With respect to the tax credit, I really think that the federal government should complement what we're doing. I think it's going to be important for tourism recovery.

But more than anything, MPP Gates, I think the biggest challenge we're going to have in tourism, culture, sport and heritage is the fact that so many people are reticent to do things again, particularly as we start to see restrictions in some hot zones. Restoring that confidence is going to be key, which is why we opted for this travel incentive. We don't have the details on that right now because our

commitment is to ensure that we work with the industry, and it's industry-led.

We know, for example—

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): With that, we go to the government. Before we go further, I want to note that MPP Jill Andrew has joined us.

MPP Andrew, if you can identify yourself and state whether you're in Ontario.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, everyone. I am calling from Toronto, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): And you are MPP Jill Andrew?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Yes, I am.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): That was my best guess.

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's my twin sister, but nonetheless, it is me.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I understand. Before I go to the government, MPP Andrew, when I started the session earlier, I knew your schedule didn't allow you to be here. I wanted to extend my apology to you, as I had earlier extended it to the minister. Yesterday, I did not take charge of the meeting in a way that it needed to be taken charge of, and I think the two of you had a tougher time than you deserved to have.

I want to note that, in terms of today's proceedings, I will be taking action on any unparliamentary language, asking people to withdraw. I ask that people in their questions and responses focus on the ministry, its policies and its expenditures, and not on any personal interaction between the individuals who are engaged in discussion. My hope is that between now and the end of the session today, people will get a lot of information and hopefully leave with less adrenaline than they did at the end of yesterday.

With that, welcome back. It's good to see you.

I will now turn to the government. I don't know who will be asking the questions.

MPP Parsa? You're very discreet, sir. The floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Good afternoon, Chair. Thank you so much. I actually just want to start by thanking you for your strong leadership in that position. I know it's not easy, but I really do appreciate it because it goes a long way. I know sometimes in our discussions we all are very passionate about where we stand, but it's important to note that, especially during a global pandemic, Ontarians are looking at us to make sure that we get results for the people and that we have cordial discussions here, even if we disagree with one another. So I want to start off by thanking you for your strong leadership, Chair.

I also want to thank Minister MacLeod. Minister, you truly have been a great minister and I'm thankful to you for all the work that you've done. I think you're up 24 hours. I don't even think you go to sleep. I want to thank you and your entire staff. I know how much work you've been doing in the last few months to help Ontarians. We've discussed how this has affected people in various

sectors, and you have pointed it out and stood strong as an advocate for them to make sure that when we do get out of this they are supported through our government.

The many, many virtual round tables and meetings that you've had with members that affect your ministry—I appreciate it. Some were done with various stakeholders and organizations in my riding and I want to convey my gratitude to you for listening to my constituents and the people of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Minister, one of the points that I want to go over, and you alluded to this earlier, was this notion of the \$9.3-billion fund that was mentioned by one of our colleagues. I'm very happy that you started your remarks by making sure that people know that FAO report that was referenced only covered one quarter of the spending of our government, and since then, if you look at the rest of the budget, it's clearly outlined that 80% of that has now been allocated. In fact, of that amount, we're only left with \$2.6 billion. That is to carry us for the remainder of this fiscal year for unforeseen circumstances and certainly support for health, education and other areas where we need to make sure that Ontarians are supported.

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My question to you—and this is not going to surprise you—is going to be revolving around small businesses in particular. Many in my riding, Minister, have been impacted. I can think of, for example, the Aurora Cultural Centre, Hillary House, the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. I can think of Cosmo Music, with their annual MusicFest that they have every single year, the many sports teams. As you know, myself, I have participated in many sports over the years in my life. I'm still quite involved with many of these sports teams. The Aurora Public Library, the Richmond Hill Public Library—all of these businesses, all of these organizations have been impacted.

When it comes to our small businesses, we all talk about how important they are to our local communities. Nine out of 10 are small businesses; they truly are the backbone of not just the economy, but local communities. I can think of, for example, some of our sports teams. When we go from the service clubs that I belong to in my riding—every time we need funding for our sports teams, whether it's to buy those uniforms for our little soccer players or the other sports, it's always the small businesses that we go to for support: funding support and all kinds of support. So we need to make sure that they are supported now and in the future.

My question to you is, in particular, when it comes to tourism operators, many of whom, as you know, are small business owners as well, I was wondering if you could elaborate, please, on what our government is doing to help and support those in the industry.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, thank you very much, MPP Parsa, and PA Parsa. Thank you for your very kind compliments. I appreciate you taking the time over the pandemic to do a couple of things with me and speak out on sports and do some interviews for me, as well as host and invite me to a round table with respect to arts.

Right now, in terms of the not-for-profit sector—I'll start there first—we have the \$25-million investment on top of the \$60-million annual allotment for the Ontario Arts Council, and on top of the \$103 million in the Ontario Trillium Foundation, they will receive another \$25 million to support those sectors that we talk about, to get them started.

I fully recognize, as a hockey mom myself, and I used to be a soccer mom and I used to play sports myself, that small businesses often are the ones that help us out first to do the things in the community that we love and we support. So it is really important that these small businesses survive. I don't know if my ADM Kevin Finnerty is still on the line, but Kevin often says that this is the ultimate small business sector, and so supporting these businesses is absolutely critical.

We used to have a \$500,000 Tourism Development Fund. We have retooled that and tripled the funding to \$1.5 million to support tourism operators across Ontario. That funding is starting to flow very shortly, and we want to make sure that it's there.

Most of the business supports, however, would come through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade or through the Ministry of Finance. As you're aware, just yesterday, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services announced a portal that will be administered through her, but funded through finance—a \$300-million program that will support business in hot zones that have needed that requirement, through relief for property taxes as well as relief on energy bills. I think that's a critical step. We all recognize as well, as tourism ministers across Canada, liquidity issues, and that comes up quite frequently.

The other cool thing that we're doing is with the funding that we supply to the regional tourism organizations. They have provided funding for PPE to local operators, and of course we do fund those regional tourism organizations. We're going to have to do more, frankly, to support those regional tourism organizations on a go-forward basis, particularly in our gateway cities like Ottawa and Toronto who, we believe, once they have a refined post-COVID-19 product, will be able to offer world-class experiences. So it really is, at the moment, trying to stabilize the sector. We did have a fairly decent summer that was unexpected, but people really did connect within their own backyard. I think the big challenge for us now is that this is first and foremost a public health crisis, and we have now an indeterminate amount of time. I do appreciate the question.

I also appreciate the clarification of that \$9 billion. Yesterday there was a lot of confusion, I guess, around what this ministry is responsible for and what it is not. I appreciate you talking about that from that perspective and allowing us to stick to our knitting, as it were, in the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): MPP Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good afternoon, Minister. I know my colleagues have all said this, but I really do have to congratulate you on the work that you've done since

COVID hit back in March. I had the opportunity to sit on SCOFEA, on the subcommittee on finance and economic affairs, through the course of the summer. Of course, you were the first minister to step up to the plate, and not only once but twice we heard from you because of the importance, the value, the priority that you place on your ministry and all the sectors within it.

We heard from an unprecedented number of stakeholders. It was the largest-ever stakeholder consultation in the history of Ontario, and a majority of those were from your sector. While they were hurting and looking to us for guidance, they certainly shared their respect for what you and your staff have done since COVID struck in March.

Being from economic development, I want to ask you to speak to one of the programs that your ministry has moved forward with, in consultation with your own ministry, and that is the Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund program. Can you shed more light on what this program is and who it has assisted since it was introduced in August?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Sure, I'm happy to do that. Thank you very much as well, MPP Skelly. You've been a tremendous advocate for my sectors. I was happy to go to Hamilton with you and spend the day, make an announcement of a lot of money for your community, and then of course you've been very generous to me in actually hopping on a couple of the federal-provincial-territorial meetings for me with the ministry of tourism that I couldn't attend. I very much appreciate that.

I just wanted to point out that we fund these tourism RTOs to the tune of \$20 million, so this fund of the Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund is \$1.5 million in addition to that. Some of the funding that we've put out the door already was interesting, because what we allowed was the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario—we paid membership fees, so it was free, so that they could continue to support all of the tourism operators across the province who wanted to be there to get mentoring support, to learn how to go digital, get advice, so the industry association was supported.

I've also announced that we will be doing the same thing for the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association, as well as the Culinary Tourism Alliance and a few other organizations like that across the province, including the Ontario Museum Association.

Some of the other projects are the Cree ecolodge expansion, which received \$45,000 for support for engineering and architectural plans to expand an ecolodge. It will incorporate Cree hospitality and experiences and is located close to the entrance of the world's largest game preserve, the Chapeau game preserve.

We're also supporting the Under Gardiner outdoor tourism district, which is \$41,000 for the development of a partnership framework to better coordinate tourism products under the Gardiner Expressway.

Some 101 tourism experiences in northern Ontario will receive \$75,000 over two years for entrepreneur training to develop new Indigenous and francophone tourism experiences in northeastern Ontario, which I believe is going to be something that, post-pandemic, will be a heavily

sought after type of experience, particularly the authenticity of our Indigenous peoples.

Market readiness for cultural tourism experiences is receiving \$80,000 over the next two years for a development plan training module for operators of culture assets to develop market-ready tourism products.

Unlocking agri-tourism potential in southern Ontario is receiving \$25,000 to develop a road map for agri-tourism operators to attract more visitors and form partnerships.

And Stackt Market Crockicurl rink received \$30,000 in downtown Toronto to build a new outdoor recreation experience that will attract visitors. Our aim is to really bring people together in new experiences with innovative products, so we've done that.

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The other area we've invested in is a \$9-million reconnect fund. That reconnect fund has allowed many operators that want to come out with a different product during this particular time to do that, whether it's virtual, through pods, drive-in or drive-through entertainment. We're starting to release funds for that. I see Randy Pettapiece on there. I was able to call him a couple of weeks ago on a Saturday morning and let him know that the tree-lighting festival in his community of Stratford was a successful applicant.

We really want to make sure that during the Christmas season and Hanukkah, Diwali, or whether it's Remembrance Day, Halloween or even New Year's Eve, though we have to celebrate differently this year, we have a platform in order to do it. We're doing it with an economic development lens, the priority being, of course, the cultural fabric that we have as Ontarians.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Sorry. My apologies. MPP McKenna, you have the floor.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Chair. I just want to say something. It's an honour to be here with you today. We got off the phone this morning with our Sound of Music executive director, Myles Rusak, who was over the moon because your \$100,000 contribution to them makes them viable to be able to thrive and move on next year. I thought he was almost going to pass out when I called him to give him the good news at that time.

I wanted to thank you again, too—this is Halton, not just Burlington—but the regional toys with the \$350,000 that was given—I mean, these people are barely hanging on, right? The fact that you have stepped up, above and beyond, to make sure that these people can continue—they see the end of the runway, that they're going to thrive and move forward. It's overwhelming to me, to say the least. I'm just thrilled that I'm here to be able to talk to you today.

I understand the passion that's in this room. It just shows how wonderful that is, because you are very dedicated. You've got a great team here with you. You always step up, above and beyond.

Before I came in today, Derek had asked me if I could pull up from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development what actually wraps around with you, because you have other ministries that do wrap around you.

I'm not going to read everything because we'd be here forever, but I just wanted to point out a couple of things.

To help people retrain and upgrade their skills, the government is investing an additional \$180.5 million over three years in micro-credential employment services and training programs. The reason I bring that up is, re-designing the Second Career program to support workers laid off due to COVID-19, including prioritizing access to the program for laid-off workers in sectors most impacted by COVID: You had mentioned that yesterday. I wanted to get you to reiterate that, because I know it's full-time jobs in film, television, the animation sector, digital media, video gaming. If you could just elaborate a bit more on that, it would be great.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes. The \$180.5 million earmarked in the budget for your ministry and Minister McNaughton's ministry is incredibly important for us because it highlights the fact that it is predominantly for our sectors. We recognize that the hospitality industry is going to have to retrain given social distancing protocols, but more, I guess, is the rigorous sanitation levels that are going to have to be done and some of the changes that will happen as a result of even greeting people. That is going to be absolutely critical for our sectors, so we're working hand in glove with our ministries. Myself and Minister McNaughton, our chiefs of staff and of course our deputy ministers are doing that.

We also recognize that the creative industries have a number of possibilities and opportunities for what we would call below-the-line talent, which is electricians, carpenters. They need hairstylists, catering companies. So as we continue to grow in film and television, it's important for us to have the crews. My ministerial advisory committee and the actual panel that reports to myself and the Minister of Finance are looking at that as a key area for how we build that up.

I was pleased that Minister McNaughton came to Ottawa with me just at the beginning of the fall to talk to the film industry there. We've made a commitment on top of that as a ministry to really develop out not only the skill set here in the city of Toronto, but in southwestern Ontario as well as Ottawa and eastern Ontario, so that we can continue to ramp up that production.

I just want to say, I appreciate you raising the festival funding, whether it happened or not this year, or it was scaled down or they went virtual or whatever. I'm going to give all the credit to my deputy minister, Nancy Matthews, because the minute this pandemic hit and we were getting that money out the door, we recognized we were going to have to work with Treasury Board, as well as the Auditor General, to make sure we were compliant to fund a festival that didn't happen.

What we settled on was making sure that they would get their sunk and eligible costs. We recognize that many festivals take over a year to plan. They've already spent money on marketing. They've already spent money on down payments for spots, locations and venues. They've probably even put down payments on talent. And so we wanted to make sure that we had a good, solid business case to go to my colleagues in cabinet, but also go back to

those festivals and events and say, “Look, we get you’re not going on, and what usually would be a \$2.5-million production may only be \$150,000, but of that \$150,000, if we can continue to support you, we’re going to do it.”

And so we were able to do that, and we were also able to pivot and use the rest of that allocation to support other events that would now require the physical distancing, the drive-in, the drive-through and the virtual type. I was really excited about it, but all the credit to this wonderful woman to my left.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I just want to thank you myself, because in Burlington, there’s a community of—we always step up to the plate, but we have definitely gone above and beyond. I’m sure everybody in this room will say the same thing, because everybody is extending a hand. When we haven’t been in a situation like this in our entire lives—I know people talk about SARS, but obviously SARS was very isolated. Somebody stopped me in my condo yesterday and said about Spanish flu. That was worldwide, but we didn’t have the international travel.

What I totally appreciate from this ministry is that you recognize that these people were so panic-stricken, because this is their whole livelihood, and it’s one year. With our Sound of Music Festival, with Myles, they do plan for the whole year. They do line up who’s coming in, so all of a sudden to have that stopped—

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: —and then just to think, “Now what are we going to do?”

I’m just finishing off by saying that it’s an honour to meet you. It’s an honour to be here with Minister MacLeod and her team. You people have gone above and beyond, and I don’t think people really understand all the hard work you’ve done to make people feel like there is hope at the end of this tunnel, because you have extended a hand so they will be able to be viable for next year. Thank you very, very, very much.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Would you like to respond to that, Nancy?

Ms. Nancy Matthews: If I might, Mr. Speaker?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Yes, you may, and if you’d identify yourself.

Minister, if you’re not speaking, if you’d put your mask on, that would be great.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Thank you so much. I would like to say thank you so much for the lovely comments. Really, the credit for this is to the ministry staff. They are the brains behind this. My assistant deputy minister, Kevin Finnerty, and his team—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Deputy Minister, if you could introduce yourself.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Oh, I’m sorry. I’m Nancy Matthews, and I’m the Deputy Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. I would like to extend my appreciation to ADM Kevin Finnerty in the context of the Celebrate program. He and his staff team, as the minister indicated, pivoted immediately. They were responsive to the sector, listening in terms of how the sector was pivoting at the time, literally right in the moment, and working around the clock to ensure that we could continue with the

program and continue to support our sectors as they were adapting to their new realities. So my appreciation to you for that, but to my staff.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Wonderful.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): And with that, you’re out of time.

We go to the opposition. Who will be asking on behalf of the opposition? MPP Miller, the floor is yours.

Mr. Paul Miller: My first question, continuing with the sports line here—I guess my question would be to the minister or deputy minister. Are there any programs provincially, Minister MacLeod, that—as you know, registration fees for families struggling and people who are out of work are very expensive for travel hockey and things like that. I’ve encouraged our local service clubs to step up as much as they can—you know, the Lions, the Optimist clubs and these types of clubs; Kinsmen, Kiwanis—and they’ve answered the call as best they can, because they’re in a limited situation too, because they can’t run fundraisers, because they can’t have groups of people. That’s how service clubs make their money. Selling French fries at the battlefield or things like this: They can’t do that.

1700

Not only are the clubs struggling; the people in the community are struggling. Some of the kids who are financially strapped—their parents are out of work or laid off—are having problems paying for registration.

I’d like to know if there’s any program that you could introduce or is there to assist needy kids who don’t have the ability to pay to play sports. That’s a sad state of affairs, and I’m wondering if you’ve got a program, or you’re working on a program, or if something is going to happen.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: We are working on it; thank you. Yesterday in my presentation, I announced that we had 15 initiatives that we were looking at. We will be releasing a white paper with those initiatives and seeking input on how to best develop the programming around it from the sectors. You’re more than welcome to be a part of that, for sure.

One of the things that we’ve noticed during the pandemic, a bit of a silver lining, is that the ministry never really had relationships with our professional sports organizations before. In order for them to reopen, we’ve been working quite frequently with MLSE. It was our organization that really worked to help with the NHL bubble.

The reason I’m telling you this is because we now recognize that our professional sports and our high-performance athletes are concerned about the next generation because of two reasons. One is going to be the financial issue—and I 100% agree with you. The second thing is we know that it might be six months or longer before moms and dads will even consider putting their kids back in sport. So they recognize that in order for those feeder teams in every sport across Ontario—there’s going to be a real need to not only help fund and finance the stuff, but also build back the confidence.

It’s too early to announce at the moment, but it’s something that we were starting to work on early in the pandemic, looking at how we can best leverage those institutions. They’re ailing as well, right? They’re unable to play

or they've been shuttered or they've had modified play. That's one area where I'd be happy to hear from you on that one.

We also want to make sure that it's not just financially viable. For me, the key is having kids who maybe have special abilities or who may come from communities that are underserved.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's good. I appreciate that effort. Next time you're in Hamilton and you're making announcements on sports, I'd be more than happy to attend—especially if it's benefiting children and my constituents in the rest of the city and greater Hamilton.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, we've got lots of stuff to talk about in Hamilton with a potential Commonwealth bid, the Grey Cup, hopefully—

Mr. Paul Miller: Looking forward to it. So I'd be more than happy to assist you in any way, shape or form that I can. I'll be waiting with bated breath for a nice reply from your ministry.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Well, you'll get one tomorrow.

Mr. Paul Miller: I hope so.

Okay, moving on: This is another sports question; I didn't want you to think that you didn't get any sports questions.

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has sent our economy into a downward spiral that has not been seen since the days of the Great Depression. Canada still has 1.1 million fewer paid workers than it did in February, before COVID-19 hit, and the unemployment rate is still above 10%. Depending on the sector, the unemployment rate is substantially higher, which is the case for the tourism and sport sectors. This has raised concerns regarding what to do with the large population of unemployed service and hospitality workers and getting them back into the workforce.

The government of Ontario has promised to invest an additional \$180.5 million over three years in micro-credentials, employment services and training programs, such as apprenticeships—which I am quite familiar with, being a tradesman. There are obvious gaps in our job market right now in front-line health care, PSW coverage etc., as we all hear about every day, and skills learned in the hospitality and tourism industry may be, could be, transferable.

Has the government of Ontario considered working with local colleges, LHINs and health organizations in order to quickly transition these types of unemployed workforces to sectors of our economy that are struggling to find workers? Has there been any research into areas of employment that are in demand and are also suitable for people working in the hospitality and tourism sector to quickly transition, such as personal support workers, for which our province is currently experiencing a huge shortage?

Furthermore, given that many tourism and hospitality workers live and work in northern and remote parts of this province, which experienced the shortage of health care workers even before the pandemic, has the government considered funding the transition of these workers into the

health care system, where there are evident gaps in support workers and front-line staff? It would be an extreme benefit to all the communities in northern Ontario and other rural communities in our province that are absolutely up against the wall in getting good help and not wearing down what help they've got to the point where they get sick and go home, and then they have nobody.

We really need to look at moving people in the right direction. Has your ministry got any programs in mind that might help that?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Many parts of that would be best answered by Minister McNaughton. However, several are relevant to us because when I became minister, I asked the deputy to work with both the Minister of Labour's team as well as with the Minister of Colleges and Universities' team for that precise reason.

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development would be looking at how they would position people into other areas that aren't ours—for example, PSWs. The active conversations that we're having and the plan that we've put in place, even pre-pandemic, with both Minister McNaughton and Minister Romano, was on the fact that we have a large skills gap in many of our creative sectors, because people don't think that the music industry or the film and television industry have a whole bunch of people behind them who make the sets, who put the costumes together. We recognized that we needed to up that talent, so that's where we started, pre-pandemic. Those conversations have started already, and I think we're going to be able to benefit there.

Through our ministry, the work we're doing with the Ministry of Labour is in terms of building up that new skill set in hospitality that's going to be required. Transitioning somebody from hospitality into maybe long-term care is what you're talking about. That would be more Minister McNaughton and PA McKenna's area.

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect, Minister, I think you could work in conjunction with that ministry—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, we have a table together.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, when you sit at the table—in reference to how to go through the transition.

Also, the fact that the people who are in tourism now—we never expected this; nobody expected what happened to happen. A lot of those people are second-generation tourist-involved, as opposed to being trained in other sectors of our society. So any additional training that they may receive through all the ministries working together to get these people employed—because a lot of them have lost total income on tourism, and they're floundering and suffering financially because they have never been trained in anything else or gone in another direction, like you pointed out.

I think we have to move with COVID, unfortunately, to put these people in a position where they can make a meaningful contribution to our society as well as not become a burden on the social system—and also the fact that they can earn decent money to at least keep them afloat till maybe, someday, they can go back to what they love most. But until then—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: And we might be able to, if we're able and we're successful in—we had a very successful summer in terms of the 11 weeks I was on the road. People were travelling across Ontario. If we can do that post-pandemic and really rebuild—before we get that international travel back, if we get Ontarians moving again, there might be opportunities for them to stay in their own sectors. That's my hope.

Having said that, maybe, Deputy, you would want to add to the work that we're doing with the other ministry. But we're certainly identifying the skills gaps within our sector, and others would do that as well.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Through you, Mr. Chair, I think the other connection—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I'm sorry, Deputy Minister. You have to identify yourself each time for Hansard.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Oh, I apologize; Deputy Minister Nancy Matthews.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: I would just say that we connect, yes, across ministries for sure, but I think what we also bring to the table is the connection and the work that our regional tourism organizations and TIAO, the tourism industry association, do. They have been doing a lot of work on the ground in terms of understanding labour training needs and making those connections that we can bring in through our ministry and then connect across to our colleague ministries—labour, training and skills development, health and so on and so forth. That's another opportunity that we are certainly looking at and working closely with our sector partners on.

The minister also indicated the relationship in terms of film and TV. Our agency, Ontario Creates—

Mr. Paul Miller: I think we're dealing with sports mostly here, but—sorry to interrupt.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: —has been working in the film and TV sector similarly in that way.

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Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you for that, but I'd like to see the fact that—as the minister pointed out, you've got a cabinet there. Cabinet deals with each other probably weekly, and they deal with what's going on in the community. I'm sure that if you need to do something quickly, you don't have to go through the Parliament to put conditions in place. I think you'd be able to work side by side to get things moved quickly, because it doesn't have to be a bill to get it done—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: No, in fact, what you're actually talking about is something Minister Romano is doing. When I brought him to Ottawa and he came to Algonquin College and la Cité collégiale, when we were looking—sorry to go back to the creative sectors, but he was able to talk to them about changing the curriculum very quickly for them to adapt to some of the job needs in the community. These are conversations that are ongoing, and he's working with them. I believe that he has been able to be very successful with that turnaround.

Mr. Paul Miller: How much time have I got left?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): You've got about nine minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. So following on that line of thinking, I would hope that you would continue to work side by side, because sports, as you know, plays a huge part of our society, as Lisa knows more than anybody. I've dealt with it all my life. I think there are a lot of people who are straining and unhappy and boxed in at home, and they don't know where to go or where to turn. I'm very concerned about the health of some of our citizens. If this continues much longer, it's going to have a very negative impact.

So the quicker that people can find a way—I know it's difficult, but find a way—to get these sports groups moving in a reasonably safe manner that can get the kids out of the house and get them exercise—you know what happens when we get into these situations, and it has happened in the past in our country. What you get when there's no money and there's no resources, no ability to exercise and that, is obesity. You get sickness. You get disease. I don't want to help COVID along by making our people more vulnerable because they're out of shape or not prepared to deal with it from a physical perspective, as well as a mental perspective.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I forgot to mention, as well—you had asked me a question about mental health and sport. It slipped my mind, and I do apologize. I actually did have the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions on a call with our provincial sport organizations earlier, just to best address how we can move forward. We included, as well, the Rowan's Law working group. Sorry; I'm just thinking of it now, as you raised it again.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, that's fine. Anyway, I think I'm going to leave sport for a little while, but I'll be back next week probably. Now I'm going to go over to tourism, so we're changing the channel here a little bit. I believe I have seven minutes?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): That's about right.

Mr. Paul Miller: Good guess.

Okay. My first question is, at the beginning of the pandemic, economists argued over the need for commercial rent subsidies or wage subsidies to help small businesses, especially in the hospitality sector. Their main argument was that since many businesses in the hospitality industry would fail in their first few months, premature financial relief would be squandered, for whatever reason.

At this point, businesses in the hospitality industry that are still operating after nine months are in the most dire of circumstances. They have proven their ability to survive, despite the challenges that they're facing on this, for the long haul. As many regions are looking at further restrictions and with my party calling for circuit-breaker-style targeted and fully funded programs in hot spots to stop the skyrocketing COVID-19 infections, what is in the budget for the tourist workers and operators who are barely hanging on?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much for the question. I must say, your questions are very, very good, and they're things that we hear about quite frequently.

A number of the things that are in the budget for tourism operators would be through small business and supported through the Ministry of Finance. There is a \$1.8-billion jobs and people fund that they'll be eligible to apply to through the Ministry of Finance. We also have a \$60-million main street fund, which is through economic development and trade, and an additional \$60 million on Digital Main Street that they may be eligible for, also through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Through the Ministry of Finance and the ministry of government, community and social services—community? What is it?

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Community, children and social services?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: No, no. It's the other one—consumer services.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Oh, consumer services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: There's \$300 million available for rent relief, as well as energy relief. Most of our tourism operators would be small businesses or medium-sized businesses, so they would be eligible through those programs.

Specifically within our ministry, I referenced a little bit earlier the Tourism Economic Development and Recovery Fund. It's a \$1.5-million fund that is available, and we have the reconnect fund in order to help organizations that have pivoted to do festivals and events in a different way.

The biggest budget increase that we've seen in the ministry's history was through this budget, \$325 million, as you know. But predominantly, that is for not-for-profits and organizations in arts and culture. Then the \$150 million is for tourism and travel. That would be our side of things. The more direct business supports—

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you on that. I just wanted to follow up so that I don't lose my train of thought. Sorry, Lisa.

Many stakeholders in the sports sector, not just in Toronto, have expressed concerns that this budget does not provide urgently needed immediate relief. Though saving thousands of dollars on tax cuts may help, like the cuts to the employer health tax and property taxes, the budget does nothing to ease the biggest concerns of many businesses. Right now, businesses are worried about how they will survive and generate revenue until the next tax return.

I recently spoke with Jeff, a local business owner in my riding who operates a virtual indoor golf course, a patio and outdoor golf. Winter is the busy months for him. He's now faced with operating with only 10 people at a time in his indoor facility, which can accommodate 50 to 100. What is being done to make up for these losses? He's confused as to why so many people can be at a Costco or a Walmart on a Sunday while he's limited to 10 people. You might have 200 people in a store; I'm not quite sure they're social distancing as best as they could. He's concerned.

What I'm trying to say here is that a lot of these outfits that are seasonal or tourism are dealing with restrictions on the amount of people. For example, a casino: You've got, say, 50,000 square feet in a casino, and they're allowing 50 people. That's like a football field. I could yell to

the next person at the next slot machine. I'd have to send a messenger to get a message over to him. That's not realistic, and I don't think the government is looking at square footage and maybe putting in systems for clean air, to add to the safety of their customers.

It just doesn't seem to be a fair playing field, because like I said, maybe at a Costco or a Walmart, the grocery store, sometimes they have counters and the counter goes for a coffee, and then you get 50 more people slipping through the door. But these people are restricted, and they're saying that's not fair. What is the ministry or the government going to do to make the playing field—no pun intended—fair?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Listen, there is no fairness in COVID-19, and we've seen that time and time again.

In terms of if they're a not-for-profit, they would be eligible for the \$83-million resiliency fund through OTF. If they're a business, then it would be programs outside of my ministry. I've indicated what they are and would support them.

The ministry is also dedicated to supporting hyper-local marketing. We'll be running a campaign, I believe, in December to support businesses through our sectors, reminding people of what you said earlier: The small business in your community, the local pizza shop, is probably going to be the first person to put their name on the back of a kid's jersey so that they can support them. We're trying to figure that out. It's very sentimental and very emotional.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm going to just pass it over to my associate deputy minister, Kevin Finnerty, to talk to you about the restrictions.

I can't say enough about my team. I almost get emotional thinking about what you guys do. Almost everything that needs to be reopened in this province, about 94% of it is us. It goes through us to the health table and it comes back.

Kevin, did you want to add anything about some of the challenges—

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, he's on the screen.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I think so.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I would just ask, when he does come on screen, he has to introduce himself for Hansard.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: There he is. I think you're on mute, Kev. Can someone unmute him?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Can you unmute him? Yes, he's unmuted.

Mr. Paul Miller: Come on, Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Finnerty: Yes, hello? Sorry. Can you hear me?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Yes. If you could introduce yourself.

Mr. Kevin Finnerty: My name is Kevin Finnerty. I'm assistant deputy minister of heritage, tourism and culture.

Unfortunately, I was disconnected for a few minutes before I was allowed to join back in, so I didn't hear the

question. If that could be repeated, that would be great. Thank you very much.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Kevin, it's about the work that you and Steve do on the reopening plans with the ministry and the restrictions and, sometimes, how unfair they seem to be.

Mr. Paul Miller: Square footage.

Mr. Kevin Finnerty: Yes, absolutely. How the process essentially works is that through the reopen Ontario process, ministries are assigned as leads for various sectors. I can speak for my division. We have been assigned lead responsibility to work with the restaurant sector, events and spaces, which includes everything from banquet halls to hotels to convention sectors. We've been assigned the lead to work with live music venues and performing arts centres. So we are the interface between those sectors, ultimately, and the Ministry of Health when it comes to the consideration of proposals for reopening, and we have worked closely with sectors during the summer to submit proposals to the Ministry of Health and to the public health measures table—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I'm very sorry to say that you're out of time, and we go back to the government.
1720

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Kevin.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Who will be asking questions on behalf of the government?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Randy Pettapiece.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Ah, MPP Pettapiece. The floor is yours.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Chair. I want to thank the minister for her openness and candour in answering these questions that she has been asked today.

My question isn't about sport, but I wanted to mention one thing. The other night I saw a documentary about Willie O'Ree, who some of you might know as a Black hockey player from eastern Canada. He ended up playing for the Boston Bruins in his professional career, and some of the things that he went through to get there, certainly—but it was through his work with children that he got involved with sports. If anybody gets to see that documentary on him—it ended up with him being inducted to the Hockey Hall of Fame—have a look at it, because it's very inspiring and certainly pertains to a lot of the things we've been talking about here today.

Minister, I do know that you sleep once in a while, because I actually saw you do that. People say you must not sleep, but I do know that you get a few winks once in a while—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I think we need to clarify that you and Jane once, when I was on tour, let me stay in your spare room. That's why.

Interjection.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That's how rumours get started, Randy.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): And recorded in Hansard, so please, proceed. This is a live broadcast.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: But anyway, yes, you did grace us with your presence one night, and we had a lot of fun.

Minister, this is a big province, and you know that. I think anybody on the panel knows that. It's a huge province, and something that we haven't talked about at all is northern Ontario and some of your programs that you are making investments in in northern Ontario.

I have been to events up there. I've been to some powwows and I've certainly been in fishing camps and whatever else, and I do enjoy the north, as every Ontarian can enjoy it. I don't think a lot of people go to northern Ontario as much as they should, because it's a beautiful place to go to and it has so much to offer.

I wonder if you could explain some of the things that this government is doing to support northern Ontario tourism during this pandemic.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, thank you very much, Randy, and great question. Obviously northern Ontario is very important, and they were hurt particularly hard because of the border closures. A lot of their summer travel is US visitors, and so we're working with them to see how we can best pivot.

I had a conversation just yesterday morning with Beth Potter, who is the president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, just to see how we can best get other Ontarians to go visit there. As you know, because I was in your community in Stratford—we did a round table, and I had the great opportunity to go to the Justin Bieber museum with you; that was pretty incredible—I did get to take a week of that 11-week tour and I went up north with David MacLachlan, who is the regional tourism organization president and CEO for northern Ontario.

We started up in Sudbury, because we have an agency there called Science North. It actually owns the Big Nickel. It's on a fault line—it's actually incredible—and we do have a mine that the ministry actually owns. It's part of a living museum. So we went up to Sudbury and I did an announcement at Science North, and we invested \$8.3 million into Science North for their operations. We continue to work with the president and CEO there, Guy Labine, but we're very proud of that.

From there, we went over to North Bay and I joined our colleague Minister Fedeli. We invested \$690,000 into the North Bay Museum and the When Hope Calls film set. We were really excited to do that.

But I've got to tell you, probably the most emotional thing I did in the north was going to the Dionne Quints Museum. We walked out of there and we invested \$20 million to support a community garden for that home in memory of the sisters—there's one remaining—who had been effectively, I would say, abused.

We went from there over to the Soo with Minister Romano, and were able to do a canoe excursion. We went to the GFL Memorial Gardens and the Kinsmen Centre at Hiawatha Highlands, and I was able to kayak and canoe with Minister Romano. We invested \$1.2 million there for marketing, as well as for museums and other things.

We were also able to go for a tour with Councillor Pete Sewell at the Sault Ste. Marie Canal National Historic Site. I'll tell you, when I was there, I was actually invited by the World Tourism Organization to appear at their meeting. I

remember it was so surreal, because I was speaking to the entire world, effectively, and all of these relevant bodies as the tourism minister from Ontario, and right behind me was the United States and a closed border. It was really impactful at that moment to recognize that challenge.

From there we went up to Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay is an important place for this ministry. We actually have Fort William Historical Park. We announced about \$14 million to support Fort William Historical Park, but we also took some time to do two other very important things when we were there. One was to go to the Ahnissabae Art Gallery. Yesterday—or the day before, I guess—I was wearing a mask and a scarf that I received there, that I bought from Louise Thomas's art gallery. Her husband, who is now deceased, Roy Thomas, is one of Canada's greatest Indigenous artists. He has passed away, as I said. But it was really incredible.

The other thing that happens in Thunder Bay is that that was where Terry Fox took his last steps in the Marathon of Hope. The government of Ontario, along with the government of Canada, actually has a monument not too far from where he took his last steps. I was really pleased to take a visit there, just to see that, and I really got to thinking: The emotion that we should all have whenever we visit our own communities is something that's really important, because the reality is that in each part of Ontario we have incredible experiences like that that are authentic. It really is also the intersection of heritage, sport, tourism and culture, and by combining all these parts, it's really important.

I'll just conclude on this; I don't want to take all your time. Through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, they also have a Northern Ontario Heritage Fund which is not through our ministry, but we work in concert with Minister Rickford so that we can continue to collaborate and support those in the north. Then, just on a final note, we have done some significant investments not only to the regional tourism organization in the north, but we've also invested heavily in hyperlocal marketing. I'll never forget the week I was on the road there, and I encourage all Ontarians to visit northern Ontario when it's safe to do so.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, it's a great place to go. We have so many wonderful things to see in this province, and like I say, a lot of people sometimes forget the north and what it can offer.

I'd like to bring you back down to near my riding, in Stratford. Certainly that was a lot of fun, the round table we had at the Stratford Perth Museum, where you were shown around the exhibit with Justin Bieber, who I might say—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Well, a cardboard cut-out of him.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes—who I might say was on the other night. Apparently he knocked them dead at an awards program the other night on TV. He's paired up with a few people who are doing duets now, and I guess he did quite a performance.

He's quite a young man. I've never met him, but after what he went through as a young man or as a young child, living out of food banks and that type of thing, now he gives back to his community. It's very nice that he does

these things, supporting charities. He certainly supports the House of Blessing, which is the food bank that he used to go to. He has done a lot of wonderful things for Stratford, and a lot of people don't know that, what he has given back to his community.

The Stratford Festival certainly is a huge part of my community, and, in my riding, the Drayton festival, another wonderful organization that certainly was going strong. These theatres, these companies, these theatre groups—certainly you know as well as anybody the hard time they've been having and are probably going to have for a number of years, because they do depend on ticket sales for most of their income.

1730

The Stratford Festival is building a new theatre, the Tom Patterson Theatre, right next to the Festival Theatre—not next to it, but down the street from it. A beautiful theatre it's going to be. I've been in it a couple of times. It's not finished, but it's going to be quite a theatre when it's finished. But unfortunately, it's sitting empty. I wonder if you could help us out with what your ministry has been doing with the theatre organizations throughout Ontario.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks for that question. Obviously, the \$25-million earmarked increase for the Ontario Arts Council should be of value to the Stratford Festival. They were quite pleased with the budget, and we continue to work very well with them.

We have also worked very hard through new emergency orders to figure out a way that, for example, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra—or the National Arts Centre in Ottawa—is able to do performances virtually but in their performance studio. That has provided quite an outlet. In fact, I've never been to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, but I think it's probably going to be, when it's safe to do so, one of the first things I do, because I've started to really love the music that the symphony produces. They often will send me little clips. So we've been able to start doing that in that way.

The other thing the ministry is looking at, and I did mention it yesterday, and perhaps even today—I can't remember, but we are looking at ways we can support those live music venues in some way, shape or form. The finance minister has always been very clear that there are going to be budget bookends, because the budget that was released a couple of weeks ago will take us through to the spring, and so there will be another budget in the spring and we're working right now on how we support those. He and I have had those conversations, so we'll be looking at that.

In addition, if they're a not-for-profit, they'll definitely also have the ability to apply through our community building program, which has now \$100 million more for the Ontario Trillium Foundation than they traditionally have. We are working those details out on how the application process will work, but the funding allocation has lifted a huge weight off our collective shoulders at the ministry.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I do know that the Festival Theatre has—you can watch plays virtually now. That's one avenue they're trying to keep open and they've done

a very good job at. I've heard very good comments from the management at the Festival Theatre, from Antoni Cimolino—he's certainly one of them who understands the severity of COVID-19 and how it's hurt everybody. He's been appreciative of your efforts, certainly, and of the vigour with which you've undertaken those efforts.

I've known you for nine years, I think, and we served a few years in opposition, but one thing you never lack is enthusiasm, and that has sure shown since this pandemic has hit this province. So I want to thank you for what you've done and what you are continuing to do.

People should realize that this is an evolving situation. Things could change in a week or two—who knows?—hopefully for the better. But we have to accept that and we also have to be able to show that we can adapt to the situation as best we can. I know that your efforts and many efforts of the government have, I think—we've received a lot of compliments on what we're doing and how we're doing it, and certainly your ministry is no exception.

I wonder if there's anything else you'd like to say about your ministry that we maybe have missed here, in the tourism business.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Well, I think the biggest issue—and I was just thinking of this when we were talking about performing arts studios that are closed. I can't say this enough: The financial component is there, and that's important, but the other issue is, and we're very open with our stakeholders about this, is the market research we have in terms of people's confidence in wanting to return to live music venues, for example, to a festival or an event, putting their kids back into sports, going to after-school programming, returning to watch a movie, eating in a restaurant—these types of things that affect our sectors, the consumer behaviours that we've been looking at, demonstrate to us that even once COVID is over, it's going to take years for people to want to do the things that they used to do, and that's going to be the biggest challenge for us. The money piece is important, but that reconnecting and having confidence in reconnecting is going to be a big challenge for us. I often would say during the pandemic, and I'll say it even now, “Sure, open your doors. Even if we open them, it doesn't mean you're going to be back to capacity.”

Now, certainly, we do have those experiences in some of the hot-spot cities that, once it opens, some of those establishments might be a bit crowded, particularly with a younger cohort age. But I think, by and large, we still are recognizing that there's probably 20%—according to our market research that we've obtained through Ipsos Reid, there's at least 20% of our population that are okay with not leaving the home. They're okay with just hanging out in their own backyard. So the challenge is really going to be this reconnect piece, and you'll hear this ministry talk a lot about reconnect, and how do you reconnect safely, and how do we work with our industry partners to demonstrate that?

I was invited early on in the pandemic to meet with the Canadian tourism alliance—I believe it was, Deputy—where I spoke with most of the largest companies and brands in the country with respect to hotels, restaurants,

the hospitality sector. They asked me what my advice was, and my advice was, “Don't just try and sell a seat. Don't just try and sell a pizza. Don't just try and sell a night's stay. When you're doing it, the value added is proving that it's safe for you to do it.” Obviously in Ontario, we wouldn't open an establishment or a business unless it was safe to do so and therefore we have the confidence. But in order to get people through that door, there needs to be that additional confidence. That's something we heard time and time again through our market research—which, by the way, in an unprecedented manner, we have shared with our 14 ministerial advisory committees so that they get a sense.

I'll tell you, the success model there and the data that we shared—and I know the deputy agrees with me, probably—I don't want to put words in your mouth, but we've received such great feedback. For example, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra told us that given the data and the understanding that they had, they were able to pivot their programming so that they had a path forward.

The same thing with our agency Ontario Place: Typically, in the summer, it would be utilized. This past summer and even into the winter, we're utilizing that space in a way we'd never dreamed of. The Lavazza film festival, the first film festival in Canada during COVID, took place at Ontario Place as a drive-in, drive-through event, and we actually hosted the Toronto International Film Festival there, too. They were able to change their operation based on the understanding of that confidence piece and what people were willing to do and when they're willing to do it.

I can't say enough that all Ontarians, particularly those of us who are public policy-makers and those who are effective advocates and activists in the fields that we support, should really understand the level of reticence a majority of Ontarians still have, particularly with respect to heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries, which were hit first and hardest and will take the longest to recover. If you look at the emergency orders that come out, particularly when they came out on, I think, March 13, and again the most recent ones, you'll recognize that those that have been shuttered—

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Two minutes remaining.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —or had to scale back operations were mostly sectors that are aligned with this ministry.

I'll just maybe—a final comment over to my deputy, just to talk a little bit about what Kevin was talking about in terms of the reopening proposals, because I don't think a lot of people recognize the level of work that goes on through this ministry to get things back up and running, and with health.

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Deputy Minister Nancy Matthews. Through you, Chair: Building on what Kevin had indicated, we have been meeting on a regular basis—Kevin has, as well as Steve Harlow, our ADM of sport—with the various sectors to convene, understand their proposals, work with the sectors in terms of ensuring that they have the most up-to-date information with respect to the

guidelines, pointing them in the direction of those resources, and basically facilitating engagement and discussion with our colleagues at the Ministry of Health in terms of understanding the things that the sectors can be looking at to support reopening where that is possible, or starting to plan for reopening. It has been a tireless effort on the part of the ministry staff—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: You should tell them about the 500 emails on the long weekend, the dance studios.

1740

Ms. Nancy Matthews: Yes—and as the minister has indicated, with a great volume in terms of interest from our sectors. We have dedicated staff in both the sports division and in our culture and tourism division who are basically doing this on a full-time basis at this point.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you. With that, the government's time is over.

I want to say to all who are present that typically, the time that is remaining now would be going to the independent. There has been no independent, so on the advice of the Clerk and reflecting the standing orders, I divide the remaining time between the government and the opposition: 10 minutes each.

The opposition gets 10 minutes. The floor is theirs now, and then we come back to the government for 10 minutes. MPP Andrew, the floor is yours.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you very much, Chair. My first question to the minister: Before COVID-19, the median income of Ontario artists was \$23,500, which is well below the median income for Canadian artists and far below the median income of all Ontario workers, which is around \$43,000. As the minister knows, Indigenous, racialized and women artists have lower median incomes than their non-racialized, non-Indigenous and male counterparts. For example, the median income of Indigenous artists in Canada is \$16,000, while non-Indigenous, non-racialized male artists have a median income of roughly \$27,000. That is far less than the minister's income or any of our incomes on this call.

I'm wondering, on behalf of my constituents and stakeholders who sent me the very information that I have been speaking to, today and yesterday, if the minister is interested in and willing to advocate on behalf of individual artists and cultural workers for basic income. Artists and cultural workers were at the bottom of the barrel even before COVID-19, and they are struggling. And what I've heard and what I know the official opposition has heard is that many folks are struggling and need basic supports.

Two questions: I'm wondering if the government and if the minister, in her capacity, will advocate alongside the government to create basic income, which will go a long way to support individual artists and cultural workers, who, frankly, received no increased support in this government's or in this ministry's budget. That's question one. You're free to answer. Will you support basic income, yes or no?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Chair, that's not within this ministry; that's within community and social services. I can—

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm actually speaking about supports for artists and cultural workers. I'm putting forth suggestions, since you asked for suggestions. The suggestion coming from the artists and stakeholders, many from St. Paul's, and others from across the province is—artists are asking for basic income. Lower-income Ontarians are asking for basic income, and that includes artists. Will this minister work with her government to at least put forth the idea and advocate for this idea on behalf of artists and cultural workers, who are struggling and cannot make rent?

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): MPP, I appreciate the question. I think all the minister can do in this case is state the position of her ministry or the responsibility of her ministry.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes. So we wouldn't typically deal with that. That would be community and social services. I can speak to general supports of what we do for artists—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Okay. Understood. Thank you very much.

I guess what I'd like to ask the minister next, then, is, in the minister's budget, can the minister outline exactly how much funding is for individual artists and cultural workers?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: My opening statement—perhaps you weren't listening to it—

Ms. Jill Andrew: I wasn't here.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Okay. There you have it. We did outline that, so I'm happy to reread it—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Please do.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —provided it's uninterrupted.

There was a suggestion we hadn't supported our artists. However, more than \$2.48 million so far this year has gone directly to support 176 Indigenous art projects, ranging from as little as \$1,100 to more than \$69,000 to support art collectives and more than \$220,000 so far this year to support 12 Indigenous art organizations. For dance projects, we have flowed \$1.66 million to organizations and \$96,500 to individual artists—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you, Minister. I am going to interrupt. Since you said that you said it earlier, I will simply look at the Hansard, and I will trust that what you said is actually about individual artists and cultural workers and not only arts organizations and institutions.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Chair: I don't think questioning my motive is appropriate.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): That wasn't a question—

Ms. Jill Andrew: The second question I have—or actually, comment—comes from another constituent of mine who would prefer not to be named, but I am reading her comments word for word:

“Furthermore, Jill, the new grant for arts and culture Reconnect festivals and events is an even larger, more onerous application to write, and requires orgs to come up with yet more programming in this time of the pandemic. We decided that to apply to this would break us, Jill. We can't manage the workload of the application, which is immense—the largest funding application I've ever encountered—let alone the new programming we would

like to deliver. So we did not apply, we couldn't apply, and we feel regretful. But it shows that the Ontario government is out of touch with the capacity challenges faced by already stressed organizations and arts professionals.”

So my question is, when this government makes decisions on policy and on the programs that you all are creating supposedly to help small, local, community-based organizations, is your government taking into consideration the human capacity—or should I say lack thereof—of many organizations that simply have one or two or three staff and are unable to take on cases like this? Are you considering that?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Well, we're guided by Treasury Board guidelines and we're guided by the Auditor General and making sure that there is value for money and that, at the end of the day, we're complying with those audit rules.

Having said that, I only suggested that we have a Reconnect program. I rely on a dedicated and strong team of unbiased, impartial public servants who put these frameworks together, and so what I will ask is for my ADM Kevin Finnerty, who has been developing this and been able to pivot so that we would be able to have this type of program, to talk to us a little bit about the framework.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Mr. Finnerty, can you hear us?

Mr. Kevin Finnerty: Yes, I can hear you. It's Kevin Finnerty, assistant deputy minister of heritage, tourism and culture.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Finnerty: The Celebrate Ontario Reconnect program—the guidance material for it is about 16 pages. We simplified as much as possible the application process and streamlined it as much as possible to be able to enable organizations to apply as quickly as possible, given the needs that they had.

In terms of where we are today, we have already received upwards of 40 applications, which are being reviewed as they come in. So organizations are applying—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you very much, Kevin. I understand that my time is very limited today, so what I have done is written down your name and I will follow up, and hopefully you can get back to me and I will share that information with my constituent. Thank you very, very much.

I have two quick pieces that I'd like to just say on the record so that the minister can think about it. In our riding here in St. Paul's, and I'm sure in yours, we have many comedians and we also have many fashion designers who have historically been left out of funding eligibility through the Ontario Arts Council—quite frankly, through any funding where culture is concerned. I think we can both agree that comedians are artists and they are cultural workers. And most certainly fashion designers are artists and they are cultural workers. In fact, fashion contributes quite a hefty load of our GDP.

So I'm hoping that the minister will consider including comedy and fashion either within the Ontario Arts Council eligibility list or that they will consider creating another stream of revenue for our fashion designers and our

comedians who are broke right now and are not sure where their basic needs and necessities that all of us on this call enjoy are coming from.

Minister, will you consider including comedy and fashion in your culture budget as an eligible item in the Ontario Arts Council, or will you create a council on its own for fashion and comedy so they can also reap the benefits of your government's support for artists?

1750

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much for the question.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Sure.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): I'm sorry, Minister. You're out of time.

We go to the government for the last round. MPP Cuzzetto, I recognize you. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Minister. I want to thank the minister for coming out to Mississauga–Lake-shore to visit our Mississauga walk of fame and, a few months earlier, to come out to support our local artists who were going to Hollywood to perform there. I have a lot of letters here saying thank you to you, Minister, for coming out and recognizing our artists here in Mississauga, as well as our great talent, our young girl Roberta who won the Golden Buzzer award to represent Canada at America's Got Talent.

As you know, I'm really into arts and culture, especially with the Bollywood Monster Mashup, MuslimFest and, my favourite, Italfest. That is my culture, my background. I really enjoy all these cultural events that we have in Mississauga.

What has the province done to support our arts, our culture sector in Ontario through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, MPP Cuzzetto. Listen, can we just start with that wonderful day that we had in Mississauga? It was a great day. We announced \$5 million. We had a lot of your business community there. A warm, beautiful day. We got to do the Music Walk of Fame, which was quite incredible, actually, just to be part of that, with that organization. We were able to announce a lot of money at the Streetsville Village Square—I think over \$5 million. Deepak Anand took me on a virtual ski hill in Mississauga when we there too, so that was quite great.

Look, the ministry pivoted very quickly with the Celebrate Ontario grant. We ensured that we got \$9.75 million out the door for sunk and eligible costs for those festivals and events that were either cancelled, shuttered or had to be postponed or go virtually live; so that went out the door.

We created another \$9-million fund, which we were just talking about, with respect to Reconnect, which we're starting to now start funding. I know MPP Pettapiece was able to notify a successful grant recipient recently on that in his community. We're going to continue to roll that out.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation, which is generally a \$103-million fund through the ministry, pivoted with \$83 million immediately to COVID response and has now been allocated an additional \$100 million over the next two years to support community capacity building.

Our Ontario Arts Council, which recently saw a one-time increase in its budget from \$60 million to \$85 million, spent, I believe, \$1.6 million in order to support the arts sector in terms of the new costs that they would receive.

We continued to flow money to our museums, our heritage organizations, our public libraries, to our after-school programming, and we really have heavily invested in tourism.

I think the centrepiece of our budget asks this year was that Ontario travel tax credit, which is valued at \$150 million, but it's going to do what we talked about with MPP Pettapiece, which on the one hand is going to circulate more money so we'll be able to get people shopping again or staying in a hotel or taking a plane or whatever, and on the other hand will allow people to know that when we open that up, the province will be safe for people to travel again, and restore confidence. That's a big part of what we do.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Another thing I wanted to ask you: What is the economic impact of our culture sector in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, that's a great question. You guys are probably all tired of me saying that I'm responsible for a spectacular double bottom line, because we've got a dual mandate. But I'll tell you, it's an impressive story to tell.

Tourism is responsible for \$36 billion in GDP, culture is \$26 billion in GDP, and sports and recreation is \$12.6 billion. Combined, you're looking at over \$75 billion, which is larger than agriculture, mining and forestry put together, and it's larger than the GDP of Manitoba. That's how many jobs and that's how many incomes and that's how many parts of the economy are affected by this. Kevin Finnerty will often say that we're the ultimate small business sector. We're also the largest volunteer sector, and we work with some of the biggest brands in the world, whether that's the Toronto Raptors or Air Canada, even the biggest hotel chains in the world, like Marriott. That's who we work with. Everybody in this sector can be from the local soccer coach for the Timbits hockey league or they could end up being the CEO of a major international corporation. We've been working with all of them tirelessly throughout the pandemic.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Another question: Here in Mississauga-Lakeshore, we have the Bradley Museum and we have a lot of public libraries. What is your ministry doing for them at this present time?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: We continue to flow money to them despite them being shuttered. We worked early on with the libraries in order to make sure that they had the ability to do drop-off and delivery. That was something that made a big difference early on in the pandemic. We continued to flow important funds to them simply because we felt that they needed to have that level of support.

I can give you a sense of what we've supported. In terms of the heritage sector support, we deliver over \$5.7 million to 166 different community museums and 12 provincial heritage organizations. Heritage development

grants—MPP Andrew might be interested to know that we also support museum pay equity as well as library pay equity. We invested over \$25 million into Ontario's libraries. That breaks down into equity grants there as well; 375 libraries get operating grants. Two library services receive pay equity. We fund 44 First Nations library services, a virtual reference library and other library sector support and interconnectivity.

One of the cool things, I think, that we're going to be able to start doing now—in the ministry, we're already thinking about it—is how to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure on their broadband commitments to enhance the support for our libraries, as well as our museums, to get more of their content online. These are conversations that we're having. How we best do it is that we're going to heavily consult with the industry and we're going to continue to work through that.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That's what we do. We fund all of those things that really are about our communities and why we love to call where we live home.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'll pass this on to Andrea; I think Andrea wants to ask you a question really quick.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): MPP Khanjin, the floor is yours.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Minister. Thanks for all your support for every sector. You were talking about how at the end of the month you're going to be having a provincial-territorial meeting about Rowan's Law. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to speak about all the supports you gave to the sector—even before COVID started, not to mention during COVID—and all the supports you had talked about at the finance committee this summer as well.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, thanks very much. We fund 66 provincial sport organizations. Our sport budget is about \$35 million. We flowed that very quickly to the sectors.

I've been able to work with the federal government. I believe we need our fair share for sport funding; we haven't received that yet. It's the only area with the ministry where we're still trying to work out those details. At least I have a good listening ear with my federal counterpart, the minister of heritage, and so we want to make sure that we continue to do that.

In terms of sport hosting, we typically spend about \$3 million. We want to be more aggressive in outer years. We have been very clear that the ministry is looking at major sporting events in the out-years, not only to talk about high-performance athletics but simply because we believe it will be a good opportunity for us to bring in tourism.

The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns): That concludes our time for today. It also brings to the end our consideration of the 2020-21 estimates. I'll be reporting back to the House tomorrow afternoon.

The committee adjourned at 1800.

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