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• (1305)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.)): I now call to order this meeting of Friday, December 4, for Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on October 23, the committee resumes its study on the challenges and issues faced by the arts, culture, heritage and sports sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today we have two rounds of witnesses. I'd like to remind everyone that when you are not speaking or not recognized by the chair, please put your microphones on mute, and when you're asking a question, please ask our witnesses directly.

Before we get to that, we're going to extend five minutes each to our witnesses. Our first witnesses are Mike Roma, president, and Cathy Jo Noble, chief executive officer, of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association.

Following that, we have Mélanie Raymond, general director of Carnaval de Québec, and David Shoemaker, chief executive officer and secretary general of the Canadian Olympic Committee.

We're going to start with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. Mike and Cathy, you have five minutes. I'm not sure which one of you is going first or which one would like to speak.

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll start.

The Chair: Go ahead, for up to five minutes.

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble: Good afternoon, everyone, and happy Friday. On behalf of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, thank you for inviting us to share with you the impacts COVID-19 has had on the parks and recreation service, and how together we can face that challenge.

CPRA is the national voice for municipal parks and recreation. We're the playgrounds, the arenas and the bike trails in your community. We're also the yoga classes, swimming lessons, summer camps and soccer leagues that you and your family participate in. Our impact is felt by Canadians day after day. We're not a single event, but the places and spaces where events take place.

Public recreation provides a fundamental service to communities, especially the most vulnerable. Our services are a direct link to return normalcy, health, wellness and connection back to Canadians.

When the pandemic struck Canada, public recreation facilities and programs were shuttered, and the vast majority of them have not returned to full service. The result was an immediate disappearance of crucial services for children, seniors, families and at-risk Canadians to ensure their physical, mental and social health. For example, work-from-home parents no longer had summer camp or sports programs for their children. Seniors no longer had community drop-in centres and youth at risk no longer had their weekly sports program.

Municipal parks and green spaces have become essential for Canadians for safe exercise and socialization during the pandemic, and spaces that are normally used for recreation have been transformed into COVID-19 testing centres, overflow shelters for the homeless and standby field hospitals.

Parks and recreation service providers are working hard every day to return community sports and recreation to Canadians. However, the challenges of facilities closing and reopening, trying to keep up with ever-changing regulations and dealing with frustrated Canadians who want to be active but can't are taking a toll on parks and recreation service providers.

Mr. Mike Roma (President, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thanks for the airtime today.

As governments continue to unfold a restart strategy, it's essential to recognize the critical role that community sport, parks and recreation play. Equitable access to public recreation programs and facilities is fundamental to Canadians, especially for the most vulnerable in our society. It must be understood that the social costs that will result without the full return of these services are profound. Recreation leads to healthier people and more connected communities.

The economic contributions that municipal parks and recreation make have been absent throughout the pandemic, from youth employment to sport tourism to program user fees. Further, Canada's economic recovery relies heavily on the productivity of parents, who require safe and secure child care, camps and programs for their children or day programming for their aging family members.

The challenges of returning community sport and recreation are significant. Municipal systems are struggling to return to the same level under new operating conditions, with some communities facing such severe financial challenges that they're actually closing pools and arenas, some permanently, despite being able to have them open as regulations allow.

Government funding announced to date is well-intentioned but is not accessible to our sector. For example, municipalities do not qualify for the Canada emergency wage subsidy. Returning to a full staff complement for a restart will thus be difficult and costly. The government provided \$72 million in funding for sport to support national sport organizations to prepare for the return to play, but the return to play cannot happen without the facilities and spaces that we provide.

The government reallocated existing infrastructure funds via a COVID-19 resilience stream, but this is not new funding, and there remains a significant infrastructure gap left unaddressed. Municipalities will continue to face the same difficult decisions on how to allocate infrastructure funds that do not equate to the magnitude of the infrastructure needs in our communities.

The government recently announced the Canada healthy communities initiative, which will provide \$31 million to communities to make needed adaptations to spaces as a consequence of COVID. This is an excellent initiative, but we call upon the government to provide significantly more dollars, as \$31 million will not even begin to meet the demand.

Our sector has come forward with two requests of the federal government to help return community sport, parks and recreation services to Canadians.

The first is that we call upon the federal government to create a community sport and recreation recovery fund to support the full return of recreation and sport programs across Canadian communities. A multi-year burst of funding will ensure that community sport, parks and recreation services can be returned to the most vulnerable in our society and that rural communities are not left without these fundamental services as a legacy of the pandemic.

This is not an infrastructure funding program. Instead, it is for activities such as promoting and destigmatizing the return to community sport and recreation, adapting recreation and sport programming, supporting practitioners and volunteers to adapt to post-pandemic realities and ensuring that our services are still able to support the most vulnerable in our society.

• (1310)

The Chair: Mr. Roma, thank you so much. I'm sorry, but I have to be very cognizant of time here, and that's your five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Raymond, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond (General Director, Carnaval de Québec): Good afternoon.

Thank you for the invitation.

In 1954, the Quebec Winter Carnival's founders created the event with two very specific objectives in mind: to cure the winter blues

and to stimulate the local economy. Those two necessities are still written into the Carnival's DNA, because 67 years later, the current crisis has plunged us into a very similar situation.

The internationally recognized Quebec Winter Carnival secures Canada's reputation as a welcoming destination. It's a must during the winter both for Canadians and for international tourists. The festival has grown and now generates \$16 million in economic spinoffs, in addition to creating 254 permanent jobs.

Despite the extremely challenging situation we are in right now, our organization continues to play its community role. In fact, in response to the current crisis, we chose to hold Carnival events on Quebec City's main streets and to turn our iconic Effigy, traditionally worn as the festival pass, into an incentive to buy local. Given the situation, our decision makes a lot of sense. We are working together for the greater good.

When we invest in events, we invest in our communities. Festivals and events have an enormous leveraging effect. I would like to take the opportunity today to share with you some concrete solutions that will help us weather the storm and then contribute to the economic recovery.

First of all, I would like to thank the government for the enhancements to the emergency wage subsidy. This emergency assistance has made, and continues to make, a huge difference to our organization. It has helped us to keep essential resources in place for our day-to-day operations, to transform our product and to plan our recovery.

It is our fervent wish that it be maintained at its current level for the duration of the crisis. Please keep in mind that our organization is seasonal in nature. Eligibility guidelines must be tailored to our reality in order to secure our access to funding and preserve this expertise within our industry.

A number of event producers are in dire straits. Most of us are not-for-profit organizations, so we don't have a lot of savings or equity. Going into debt is not a option. Direct support is the best way to keep our organizations alive and quickly absorb the economic impact of COVID for an effective recovery.

We are encouraged to see that funding has been renewed for the building communities through arts and heritage program at the same levels as for the past few years. To maximize the program's reach, we are asking for flexibility. For example, our digital and virtual content development initiatives have to be eligible and hybrid programming must be allowed.

Although our industry is known for being agile, innovative and creative, we have all been deeply affected by the current crisis. It has stunted our growth. We have a long-term vision to continue to play our role as an economic driver that's essential in the ecosystem of our communities. It's therefore imperative that this program's budget be sustained well beyond 2022.

I reiterate that we must be seen as a driver of the economy, of tourism, and of social and cultural activities. Investing in us carries multiple benefits, because the Carnival generates tax revenues of \$1 million for the federal government and \$2 million for the provincial government.

I personally remain very optimistic for the future, because our festivals' basic ingredients for success are meeting the demonstrated common need to celebrate our cultural heritage together and keep our festive spirit alive.

To foster a rapid recovery, new capital must be injected into our organizations. That is why we would like to see a new program to attract more tourists and therefore more new money, similar to the marquee tourism events program in 2009. It's important to note that 72% of the money spent at our event comes from visitors from outside Quebec.

The Quebec Winter Carnival is a fine example of tourism-generated economic growth. It is a strategic tourist asset. We need to work together to make the Carnival even more attractive in order to cement the status of Quebec City and of Canada as winter tourism destinations on the international stage.

I will end by telling you what I feel remains our most important impact: our social impact. In my opinion, we are an essential service for individual and public health. Artisans, performing artists, workers, volunteers, producers and broadcasters can all count on the contribution from the events community.

● (1315)

Preserving that ecosystem is essential if we want to bounce back quickly and rekindle that community spirit. It was that very same community spirit from which the first Quebec Winter Carnival was born 67 years ago, bringing about the success for which it has been known ever since.

Thank you, everyone.

[English]

The Chair: Merci beaucoup, Madame.

Mr. Shoemaker, the floor is yours. You have up to five minutes, please.

Mr. David Shoemaker (Chief Executive Officer and Secretary General, Canadian Olympic Committee): Thank you.

The mission of the Canadian Olympic Committee is, in its simplest expression, to do everything we can to put Canadian athletes atop the Olympic podium.

The COC itself is privately funded by 27 marketing partnerships, including some of the most prominent Canadian businesses—RBC, Hudson's Bay, Bell and Canadian Tire. Those partnerships are intact. We are, generally speaking, weathering the pandemic, but we

are also an umbrella organization of 62 national sports organizations—big ones like Soccer Canada, Curling Canada and Swimming Canada, and smaller ones like Rowing Canada and Luge Canada—and these NSOs are generally not weathering the pandemic. They are funded in large part by government and from club fees. With participation levels at near nil, many NSOs are in peril and the Canadian sport system is in near crisis.

Also in crisis is our nation's relationship with sport. Once one of the more sporting nations in the world, the pandemic has accelerated a decline in sport and physical activity across Canada. With facilities closed since March all across the country, Canadians have sunk further into a sedentary lifestyle, which is all but certain to bring about a wave of physical and mental wellness challenges unless tackled head-on.

Fortunately, if we reintroduce Canadians to sport, the results can be dramatic. Sport has long been understood as a powerful tool for building healthy and inclusive communities. It can deliver on our national priorities of promoting health and wellness, fostering safe communities, improving education outcomes, stimulating economic activity and assisting with the social and cultural integration of new Canadians. Sport can and should underpin our national recovery.

Now, describing where we are is not simple. The impact of the pandemic on the sport system is varied, just like the sports themselves, but in almost every case, the needs are considerable, and there are some key themes.

The first theme is flexibility. Many NSOs need budgetary flexibility. Critical relief funding has been delivered—thank you very much—but with their activities still largely stopped, they need government flexibility to spend money later and for different purposes. We're working on that.

The second theme is training environments. Many NSOs need a safe daily training environment. With pools, clubs, gyms and other athletic facilities largely closed, most national athletes have been struggling to find safe ways to train. We've been working on that too.

Next is major events. Many NSOs need to stage events or they won't survive. These include Curling Canada, Soccer Canada and Freestyle Canada, just to name a few. Despite Tennis Canada's best efforts, their signature Rogers Cup events were cancelled in 2020, forcing them to incur a \$31-million loss, causing deep cuts to their programs and a 40% reduction in staff. This in turn will decimate their efforts to develop tennis in the years to come.

The last theme is memberships. Many NSOs have lost their members. Many of them, such as Gymnastics Canada and Skate Canada, rely on membership fees across the country. With clubs closed, these revenues have dried up.

Here's the rub. Where we can, we're working hard with Sport Canada to address our high-performance needs, but these organizations are not just responsible for identifying elite Olympic talent; they have responsibility for growing their sport and an entire continuum, a pathway from, as we say, the playground to the podium. It is the beginning of the pathway that warrants attention. Even before the pandemic, NSOs on average devoted only 12% of their budgets to developing their sports—to the grassroots, to getting younger athletes engaged, to introducing them and exposing them to rules and coaching and broadening the base of participants. To recover from the pandemic, we need to reintroduce Canadians to sport through real investment in these NSOs.

My remarks before this committee today can't do justice to the nuanced needs of the sport sector, but I'd like to frame two needs in two areas of focus. One is to enhance emergency funding available to sport organizations and athletes under financial duress in order to manage through the challenges of the pandemic. The second is to make a \$50-million increase in annual funding to the sport system to address long-term need and reintroduce Canadians to sport at the grassroots and community level.

We're not alone in facing this challenge. We have seen others, with New Zealand as a prime example, implement significant investments in supporting their sport systems and linking sport to overall wellness and economic recovery. Just this week the United Nations passed a motion encouraging member nations "to include sport and physical activity in their recovery plans post COVID-19".

The sport industry contributes roughly \$6.6 billion annually to Canada's GDP and supports roughly 118,000 jobs, but the real impact of sport extends exponentially beyond these numbers. It contributes to the physical, mental and social wellness of our communities. As we build healthy and inclusive communities, so too are we building the foundation for our economic recovery.

• (1320)

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shoemaker.

"From playground to podium"—that's nice. Very good.

[*Translation*]

We now begin the first round of questions with Mr. Godin of the Conservative Party, for six minutes.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased to be with you today. I don't usually sit on this committee, but your witness is an organization that I know well, from Quebec's beautiful national capital region. I have some specific questions for the General Director of the Quebec Winter Carnival, Mrs. Raymond. In my opinion, the Carnival is the world's largest winter festival. That has to be said. Let me use this forum to declare it.

My thanks to Mrs. Raymond and to all the other witnesses for taking part in this exercise. The purpose of this study is to understand, and to find ways to help you even more. As you so rightly said, it's very important socially and economically. The event was originally created in Quebec's national capital specifically to spur

economic recovery and cure the winter blues. In light of what we are currently experiencing, we know that the event directly delivers what our community needs. That's why I say, well done.

Mrs. Raymond, my first question will be very short, because you know that our time is limited. How much money do you receive from the federal government?

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Thank you for the question, Mr. Godin.

Although the Quebec Winter Carnival is less than three months away, not everything has been confirmed yet. We have had a response from the Department of Canadian Heritage's emergency support fund for cultural, heritage and sport organizations. We have heard from Economic Development Canada, or EDC, from which we receive a three-year grant. Normally, out of a total budget of \$9.3 million, we receive just over \$700,000 from the federal government and just over \$2 million from the provincial government.

Mr. Joël Godin: You are still waiting on funding in this pandemic situation. I know that you recently released your festival program. You announced that the parade is cancelled this year and that you will be decentralizing so you do not encourage gatherings. I feel you are following public health guidelines.

As of today, you have yet to receive a final response from the federal government. It must be hard to manage your budgets. Furthermore, I've learned that you will not be selling effigies and that people will not need them to gain access to the site. So you will lose effigy sales and parade sponsorship revenue, when the parade is the festival's main attraction.

Given that situation, how are you going to make the event happen?

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Our total budget has decreased by 25%, given the current context. We are very cautious because, as I mentioned earlier, 72% of the money spent at our event comes from tourists from abroad. Since the borders are closed, we will only have local tourism. So we will only get tourists from neighbouring provinces. We have been very cautious in our forecasts because holding an outdoor event in the winter means that we can't know what most of our costs will be before the festival starts. We don't have a crystal ball to predict how much snow, freezing rain or rain we will have to deal with, as we do every year.

Not only has the pandemic made us more cautious, but it has also taken us back to our roots, that is, why our event came to be. It was to stimulate the economy. Officials both from the Institut national de santé publique du Québec and from Quebec City have therefore approved our request to hold events in various neighbourhoods. We are very well supported, but we really wanted to make a community effort to bring us closer to the businesses.

However, we are not going to kid ourselves. The number of artists we hire this year will obviously be different, since the Carnival normally takes on 600 artists every year. Given the current context, we can't hire as many.

As far as private funding goes, the Quebec Winter Carnival has had very loyal partners for more than 20 years, and most private investors are still with us. Even given COVID-19, we even welcomed a new major partner, Scotiabank, which has invested over \$100,000, which is extraordinary and very welcome news. In terms of federal funding, to be more specific, we get a three-year EDC grant for the Quebec regions. So our grant has already been confirmed with EDC. That's the largest grant the Carnival receives.

• (1325)

Mr. Joël Godin: I understand that.

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: We're cautious with our forecasts.

Mr. Joël Godin: It's good to be "conservative".

Madam General Director, I'd also like to know how many Quebec Winter Carnival events are held in the Quebec City area.

Is the number the same as for other events across Canada? Is it equal to, or larger or smaller than, the average number for organizations holding these types of events in Canada?

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Actually, it depends on the programs. That would be the most cautious answer I can give you.

Some programs have criteria that give musical events an advantage over events like ours. Ours is a very traditional event, but it's also multi-faceted. It's as much about ice sculpture as circus performers or—

Mr. Joël Godin: Let me stop you there, Mrs. Raymond.

You spoke of flexibility in your opening remarks.

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Yes.

Mr. Joël Godin: What would you need to become more flexible and give you tools to become even more creative? Goodness knows, in 2020, you need to be.

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Thank you, Mr. Godin. I'm sorry, I misunderstood the question.

The important thing is really that we adapt our programming to create a digital, virtual or even hybrid format. Although we did announce that the Carnival was happening physically this year, part of our programming will take place online, since we can't generate large gatherings.

Each event experiences and does things differently. We have the opportunity to transform ours so that it can still play out on the ground and include a live portion. However, programs must embrace that distinction if we want to produce artists virtually or develop digital content with other types of artists who are not usually part of our programming.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Raymond.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the general director of the Quebec Winter Carnival.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone.

[*English*]

Speaking of podium, for our next question we're going to be splitting the time. I guess we're going to go atop the podium for the next two.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Bessette, you have the floor for three minutes.

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank our witnesses for being here today.

My questions are for the representatives of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association.

Sport Canada provides your organization with funding in order to distribute grants to support gender equality in recreational sports. I know that the grants have been in place since 2019.

Are your grants meeting the demand?

How are small community organizations that run facilities, such as a cross-country ski club, faring financially?

[*English*]

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble: Yes, we were pleased to receive funding from Sport Canada—we're now about mid-project—to encourage participation and retention of girls and women in sport, and often that might be found at a recreational level. We have a number of activities under that, including workshops and some activities in the north, but we also have community grants that are going out to small and large communities to implement solutions on the ground.

Due to COVID, there have been some adjustments to activities, and Sport Canada has been very generous in its flexibility toward some of those projects starting late. Certainly we're finding the program to be very helpful. Girls and women are just one section of the people we want to serve, and this program is serving us well right now. We're appreciative of it.

• (1330)

Mrs. Lyne Bessette: Thank you very much for your answer.

[*Translation*]

How could the federal government help promote recreational sports and physical activity in the current pandemic, and given that Canadians are becoming more and more sedentary?

How can the federal government better support small community-based organizations in this regard?

[*English*]

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble: I think the first step is to have Canadians feel confident in returning to public spaces and places to become active again.

Of two of our focuses, one is to make sure that we have the infrastructure funding to make facilities pandemic resilient, both for now and in the future. That involves a number of things, everything from single-person workout zones to open-air change rooms to dealing with physical distancing at pinch points.

I think one of the most important things in getting Canadians active again and making parents feel comfortable about their children going back to the pool or the arena is ensuring that the facilities have the support they need to open, because we are seeing that cities large and small simply have too much demand and not enough revenue left from what's been lost in this year to open up the facilities again.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Sorry. You can finish your sentence if you wish.

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble: No, that's good. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you, Mrs. Bessette.

[*English*]

Mr. van Koeverden is next.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

C.J., it's nice to see you, and everybody else who is familiar. Mr. Roma, it's nice to see you.

Thank you for inviting me back to the heritage committee. It's great to be here.

I have a couple of questions for Mr. Shoemaker of the Canadian Olympic Committee. I hear you loud and clear on the need for more budgetary flexibility and training environments, and fees and revenues for national sport organizations and their associated NSOs, and certainly the community sport organizations.

As you're aware, last week we made available an additional \$14 million for community sport organizations, and we're also moving forward on the international single-sport events, as you recognized, with the major events sports that rely on these revenues.

We're making progress; and like you, I'm committed to making progress on this issue. However, I would like to hear from you on what more progress means and whether the recent news has been welcomed.

Again, thank you. I wore my pin. You probably can't see it, but I'm wearing an Olympic pin today.

It's nice to see you.

Mr. David Shoemaker: Thank you, Mr. van Koeverden. It's quite something to be on the receiving end of a question from you in this setting.

I must say, on behalf of our sport system of all these national sport organizations, that we're deeply appreciative for the \$72 million in emergency funding and the additional \$14 million top-up to community sport and clubs, which is deeply needed.

There has been quite the partnership to find solutions as it relates to single events, and so on. We're very confident that there are solutions that will allow an event such as the Rogers Cup or Skate Canada and other big sporting events to take place going forward.

For me, the focus continues to be at the beginning of the sport continuum, where it's very difficult to get people back into sport and where I think a national agenda for national sports is the type of thing we need to invest in that will have real, positive outcomes. The example is Skate Canada's flagship learn-to-skate program, the program by which all others are measured,

That's still the gap that I see in the system at the moment.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thanks very much for that.

You pointed out in your testimony, but I want to point it out again, that as the Canadian Olympic Committee is funded almost entirely by the private sector—and very successfully, I should add—so when you ask for money for the sports sector, you're not asking for support for the Canadian Olympic Committee but for your many stakeholder groups and all the NSOs that get by on shoestring budgets in many cases and rely on fees and revenues.

From your perspective in having discussions with those NSOs and the athletes over the past 10 months, how are the NSOs doing, how are the athletes doing and how can we do a better job of supporting both?

● (1335)

Mr. David Shoemaker: Yes, we're not asking for a penny for the Canadian Olympic Committee. The Canadian Paralympic Committee has come two budget cycles without asking for a penny for itself, and we're proud of that, but we do represent the system, and there are some nice stories. We read today about Nordiq Canada seeing a spike in interest in cross-country skiing and in the sale of cross-country ski equipment. However, by and large, there are incredible schisms in the system, and that needs to be addressed.

For athletes, at the top of the challenge is mental wellness. For elite athletes, the postponement of the Olympic Games for a year has created incredible havoc with their plans. In some cases, athletes who were going to compete are not able to do so, and they are financially challenged in creating an additional \$22,000, on average, to delay their competition a year.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shoemaker. We'll have to leave it at that.

[*Translation*]

Welcome, Mrs. Desbiens.

You have the floor for six minutes.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Raymond, first of all, I want to thank you and all the witnesses.

I'm going to address Ms. Raymond, of course, because I'm the member of Parliament for Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix and I'm a big fan of the Quebec Winter Carnival. I do not have all 67 figurines, but I have at least 50. The 50 figurines from the 50 times I was there are neatly stored in a small bag. I don't have them with me, but I promise you that I have them.

Thank you for having the courage to take this in hand in these difficult times. I salute you.

Ms. Raymond, I would like to hear more from you about the Marquee Tourism Events Program. For example, in my riding, there are three mountains: Mont Sainte-Anne, Le Massif in Petite-Rivière-Saint-François and Mont Grand-Fonds. We know very well that people who attend the Quebec Winter Carnival often come from outside the country and that, before or after the carnival, they frequently visit my riding, because it is part of an itinerary.

I would like to know if it would be appropriate for the program, which helped events like yours so much in 2008, to be reactivated quickly.

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: We would indeed like to see this program brought back as part of the recovery. We are talking about urgency and immediate needs, but we are looking beyond that. The winter carnival has been in existence for 67 historic years, so we aren't about to stop our activities. However, we'd like to see funds injected quickly, because in rethinking our product and reshaping our business model, if we want to recreate events and big productions that draw crowds—because one day or another, we will have the right to do that again—it takes expertise. We're talking about expertise for programs, but to imagine that big comeback, you also need expertise. We want to remain an attractive product for Canada, and even for Canadians travelling from province to province.

In winter, the carnival is what leads people to discover Quebec City. As you say, Ms. Desbiens, there are also important economic spinoffs in other sectors. That's why we think it's important to have access to money and to have predictability as well.

Other witnesses talked about flexibility. For us, too, it's important presently, but we also need predictability for the future, so that we can invest in this and other appealing products that are major international events.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you for your answer, Ms. Raymond.

With regard to economic spinoffs, do you have any figures that I would call “peripheral”, not only for the capital city, but also for surrounding areas?

• (1340)

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Unfortunately not, because all that is measured on our side is the direct economic impact. When we talk about the \$16 million in economic spinoffs of the carnival, this is a

calculation made according to a restrictive method used by the Quebec Ministry of Tourism. Only people who specifically and mainly came to Quebec City during the carnival period are included.

For example, the benefits generated by people who come first for the Quebec City International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament, which overlaps with the carnival, are not calculated. In this case, the spinoffs obviously have multiplier effects. We're talking about Quebec City, but people can come in through Montreal and then spend five to seven days in the Quebec City and Charlevoix region. What we want is to make people discover our destination in winter in a period that is not naturally busy from a tourism point of view.

It's new money and that's what we need.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: What you say is interesting. The \$16 million figure is already huge. But it's only direct spinoffs.

I can bear personal witness to this, having seen all those tourists roaming about with arrowhead sashes and carnival icons along the Côte-de-Beaupré to Charlevoix and even to Tadoussac. We see them all winter long. So I want the committee to correctly grasp the importance of the Carnaval de Québec, to apprehend its repercussions on the entire region and all the indirect benefits of this absolutely extraordinary event.

Do I still have some time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute left, Ms. Desbiens.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Good.

Ms. Raymond, regarding the funding you need right now, what would be the best way to give you funds quickly so that you can set up your January programming?

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: In the immediate term, it would be to have the answers regarding existing programs. The emergency fund also helps a lot, but the extension of the wage subsidy has a critical impact for us. Having the certainty that it would be maintained at 75% would make a huge difference.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: The Bloc Québécois insisted that this be increased from 10% to 75%. We are very happy that this helps you.

Thank you very much, Ms. Raymond.

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: Thank you, Ms. Desbiens.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Desbiens and Ms. Raymond.

[English]

Now we will have Ms. McPherson for six minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to all of the witnesses for joining us. It's been very interesting. I have a very active family. My children are athletes. Listening to a lot of the testimony and what is at risk is both frightening and enlightening, so thank you.

I have some questions for Ms. Noble and Mr. Roma, but first I want to ask a very quick question of Madame Raymond.

Since I'm from Alberta, obviously my connection to your festival is virtual, or is not in person as often as we would like, but we have our own festival in Edmonton Strathcona. My riding is the franco-phone heart of Alberta, I guess, and we have the flying canoe, or *le canoë volant*, in our riding where we actually ride canoes down ski hills. It's an entire festival. I'm just wondering whether or not you have considered sharing the expertise you have. Winter festivals seem to me like a very strong idea during this time. We can be outside and we can be distant and we can wear masks, and all of those things. Have you shared your expertise with other festivals? Do you communicate with other festivals across the country?

[Translation]

Mrs. Mélanie Raymond: In February 2019, during the carnival, we hosted about 20 events from across Canada. They held their events in the region specifically to benefit from our special event. Working in the event market during the winter is a completely different reality. It does exist, but we will have to resume those meetings. The COVID context has obviously changed everything in our business model.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: It would be wonderful if you could share the things you learned from your experiences with others. It would be good to spread that knowledge around.

I have some questions for Ms. Noble and Mr. Roma.

Ms. Noble, you spoke about our urban spaces, our parks and our outdoor recreational spaces being highly utilized during COVID-19. In Alberta, we have a provincial government that is actually selling off our provincial parks and is threatening to dispose of some of our public spaces, saying that they are underutilized. Can you speak to the information that you have? How do you know that these spaces, in fact, are being used?

Mr. Mike Roma: Thank you for the question. I'll maybe take this.

They definitely have been utilized more now that they are the only show in town or the only option that people have.

I am familiar with the Province's intentions to do as you mentioned. A lot of the parcels they're talking about are actually provincial park spaces, so they're not necessarily in urban areas. They are park spaces that I would say are less programmed and more related to conservation, environmental stewardship and so on.

That being said, I think the CPRA board and our members are of the mindset that we don't have enough of all recreation spaces, whether they're indoor or outdoor, and that the demand for those types of spaces—whether it's during a pandemic, after a pandemic or before one—is insatiable in a lot of ways.

● (1345)

Ms. Heather McPherson: One of the things that you spoke about in your comments, Mr. Roma—I'll just keep going with you, if you don't mind—was the emergency recovery fund that you'd like to see. We know that the \$31 million that was allocated was not enough.

What would you like to see? Perhaps I missed that, but what amount would be appropriate, in your opinion?

Mr. Mike Roma: We've articulated an amount in our formal ask for two different streams of funding. One is related to infrastructure, which is similar to the one that you have alluded to and that we alluded to in our speech.

The other one—and it's probably more important—has to do with not necessarily infrastructure, but with helping stop the gap that's growing right now and helping municipalities overcome this period when there's extreme financial pressure on these services. We're only in Alberta. I'm a resident of Alberta as well. I realize that it's different across the country, but right now we're allowed to have 25% capacity in our facilities. That equates to 25% of any of the revenue that was going into municipal budgets, but with a lot of the same, if not enhanced, expenses attached to operating those facilities.

On top of that, ensuring that the users and the public do come back in droves, hopefully, or at least to levels where they were before, is going to require not just opening the doors; it's going to require convincing people that these places are safe and that the benefits of physical activity, recreation, sport—as mentioned by other speakers—and even community events outweigh the potential risks attached to public health concerns.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Wonderful.

My daughter is a swimmer. Her swim club has gone above and beyond to provide training for her and to provide those options, but coaching is very expensive, because it is now required to be one-on-one for those athletes.

The other piece that is shocking and quite stressful for these organizations—in my riding, at least—has been the lack of funding from the municipalities. Many of these organizations received grant funding from their municipalities, which simply cannot afford to do that anymore. For example, the City of Edmonton has stopped some of the granting that goes to these organizations.

Mr. Shoemaker, perhaps you could speak a little bit about the impact that the lack of municipal funding has also had on some of the smaller national sports organizations.

Mr. David Shoemaker: It's critical that there's funding there to allow clubs and other local facilities to be open. The provincial and territorial organizations in effect depend on a revenue source that's derived from that, which then flows up to the national sports organizations. There's an interconnectivity among all these sports organizations in our federal model that depends on all partners at all levels of government doing their part.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Sorry, but I have to leave it at that.

We're now going to go to Mr. Waugh for five minutes, please.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Welcome, everyone, to today's heritage meeting.

I thought I'd start with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, and Mike and Cathy.

The City of Saskatoon just announced for SaskTel Centre a deficit of \$3.6 million for 2020, and they're facing a \$1.6-million deficit for 2021, so you can see the pressure put on cities. We had a big uproar this week in Saskatoon when they said there would be no more nets in outdoor hockey rinks. It has caused a big kerfuffle because the 52 community-owned rinks outdoors are all volunteer-based, and now, all of a sudden, you can't have a net on these ice surfaces until December 17. We're seeing a lot of push-back from the public versus municipal, provincial and federal governments.

Please comment on that, because the pools are semi-shut down, the rinks now are almost shut down, and you can see the adverse effect in the communities that we serve from coast to coast.

• (1350)

Mr. Mike Roma: I'll start on that. Thank you for the question.

From our perspective, we have to follow the rules. We have to follow the regulations that are set forth for us, and I think our biggest concern is not about following those rules, because we will do that no matter what, but about what happens after the regulations and the restrictions are loosened.

If this kind of harm is happening, not just with relationships between groups in the public and the municipalities that are enforcing some of these regulations, but also the stigma of what's safe, what's not safe, given how beneficial these activities are to our communities and so on, we want to make sure that those recover as quickly as possible.

I can say that recreation and parks are resilient, and I can probably speak for sport and community events as well. We're part of community. We're driven by passion. We're part of what makes Canada what it is. We're not going to lose these services, but we want to make sure that in the future we're not starting from scratch with some of our activities, some of our participant bases and so on.

We're following the rules. We're hoping that the breakdown in relationships doesn't carry forward into the future, and that's part of the request that we have of the federal government and of other levels of government to help us better prepare.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I need to ask a couple of questions.

It's had a trickle-down effect. The Canada summer jobs that each of the MPs sends out every summer were affected, because we had no outdoor soccer, no playgrounds, and so on, and a lot of these organizations were never able to access the wage subsidy from the government. Could you comment on that? When these community organizations and cities could not access the wage subsidy to help out these programs, it had a major effect.

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble: Sure, I can speak to that. Yes, it's in the tens of thousands of layoffs that happened. One portion of the layoffs was full-time people, but a huge number weren't layoffs. They were hirings that didn't happen, because much of municipal parks and recreation activity takes place in the summer and employs a tremendous number of coaches, lifeguards, park attendants and so

forth. Because the employees in our sector are municipal employees, they did not qualify for the wage subsidy, so there were layoffs, and because they didn't get a wage subsidy, many of those people have moved on. When it's time to reopen, it will be a challenge to retrain and rehire.

The other challenge was the number of students who didn't get hired. I want to acknowledge, though, that Employment and Social Development Canada has been a great partner of ours, and we continue to be. We are just signing a contract now for wage subsidies going forward for youth in parks and recreation. I want to acknowledge that they are matching it as a 100% wage subsidy, versus 50% in the past, because they're recognizing that municipalities barely have the dollars to hire back the full-time workers, and students won't necessarily be the priority. I want to acknowledge that.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you. Mr. Shoemaker ran into that—

The Chair: Mr. Waugh—

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I still have a minute left.

The Chair: No, you had five minutes going in.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Oh, yes, I got five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Housefather is next.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to all the witnesses.

Ms. Raymond, thank you for your work at the Quebec Winter Carnival.

As my colleagues from Quebec have already asked you questions, I will address the other witnesses.

[*English*]

I have a couple of questions. It is very difficult right now for elite athletes, for age group and masters athletes, and for recreational athletes, because you can't train in most regions of Canada in a team, and even if you're in an individual sport and you train in a team, you can't be together. As a result, we're far behind in preparation. We're way behind the point where everybody wants to be.

My first question is for Mr. Shoemaker. Are there any countries internationally that have done this better than Canada and that have right now prepared their elite athletes for the Olympics in a better way? If so, which countries are they?

• (1355)

Mr. David Shoemaker: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

I'm going to interpret your question in a certain way. There's no country in the world that has done it as well as Canada, meaning that Team Canada's athletes in March decided that the important question wasn't whether they could train for the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020 but whether they could do so safely for their families and their communities. They decided "no" and became the first Olympic committee in the world to pull out of the Tokyo Olympic Games. We and they have, then, put the health and safety of them, their teammates, their families and their communities as the top priority.

Now, as we look ahead to the Olympics in 2021 and think about preparation, regrettably most other advanced swimming nations in the world, for example, have spent more days in the pool. Our swimmers have spent 120 days out of the pool this year, but we're rapidly closing the distance. Suffice it to say, however, that we are playing catch-up in most sports for which that level of access is imperative.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

This is addressed to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association.

Having been a mayor, I totally understand the importance of the roles that your association plays and that the municipalities play. I'd like to ask the same type of question. As we know, municipalities are under provincial law. Are there any provinces that have stepped up across the country to which you could point as examples of having provided adequate funding for their municipalities to deal with all of the challenges being faced?

Ms. Cathy Jo Noble: There's no province or territory that is jumping out at me, to answer your question. I think the provinces and territories are struggling as much as the municipalities.

One thing we're asking for is that federal infrastructure dollars go directly to municipalities, because sometimes when the funding goes through the provinces and territories, it's spent before the communities have been able to identify their needs. They know their needs better than anyone. I think I would leave that as my response.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I agree with you completely. As a Quebec MP, I know that the Quebec government would be adamantly against this, so we're constantly facing challenges. I personally agree with you, though, having faced this challenge as a mayor.

As my next question, in what areas can the federal government help you? Right now, a lot of confusing information comes out about safe reopening. For example, in my own sport, the one I know best, the national swimming federation is giving guidance, and so is each provincial swimming federation, as to how many people can be in a pool, how many people can be in a lane and what can happen.

You guys would be a great national organization, I think, that would be able to provide safe reopening guidelines and work things out so that there's clarity. Have you guys considered applying for monies under Safe Restart or other programs that would allow you to create a website to disseminate information to all of your members across Canada on the best practices for reopening?

Mr. Mike Roma: Definitely that was and is something that's top of mind for us, especially as it relates to guidelines related to spaces and places where all these activities occur.

Early on in the pandemic, we did strike a committee of a variety of different stakeholders to see if that was a role we should play as a national organization. The conclusion we came to was that since a lot of those regulations are driven at the provincial or territorial level, it wouldn't be relevant for us to necessarily do that from a facility and space perspective, because of the different states of affairs in each of the areas and the different types of expectation levels about the virus and so on.

We did attempt to do that. We do have a national online community where we can share and distribute information, but specific to guidelines and facilities and spaces, we were told by our membership that even though it would be great to have federal leadership in this area, just as you mentioned, it just wasn't something we could necessarily take on.

I wanted to add one last thing to your previous question. I think right now, as it relates to parks and recreation, municipalities are feeling alone as to what to do about the issues at hand, such as whether or not it's okay to close facilities or whether or not we need to fight tooth and nail to keep these services going, and so on. I think what we're hoping to get from both the federal and the provincial governments is an indication that other levels of government see these as important services and maybe instigate municipal decision-making.

We know that at the end of the day, municipalities pay for 90% or 95% of these facilities and spaces. We're not asking to change that, but it would be good to show some signs of support from other levels of government for these services and almost provoke municipal decisions to occur. As a mayor, you'd understand what I mean by that.

• (1400)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roma.

I have to end it there. We're exactly at two o'clock eastern. I want to say thank you to our witnesses for joining us. We appreciate the information you provided and, like us, I hope you look forward to the report that's going to come from it.

Let's suspend for a few minutes to make room for our next witnesses.

Thank you.

• (1400)

(Pause)

• (1405)

The Chair: Okay, welcome back, everybody. Sorry for the delay. It looks like technically we're up to speed. We'll try to get through this.

We're now of course in the middle of a study on the challenges and issues faced by the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have three groups with us here. From Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, we have Martin Théberge, president; and Marie-Christine Morin, executive director. We have Dana Peers, president and chairman of the board of the Calgary Stampede. Of course, we have Pitseolak Pfeifer, executive director of Qaggiavut! Nunavut Performing Arts Society. I will ask you to correct my pronunciation when your time comes.

We're going to start with Martin Théberge and Marie-Christine Morin. You have up to five minutes. Would one of you like to start?

• (1410)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Théberge (President, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française): Good morning, esteemed members of the committee.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to present the main impacts of the pandemic on our artists and cultural workers in the Canadian and Acadian francophonie.

My name is Martin Théberge and I am the president of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, or FCCF. As already mentioned, I am accompanied by Marie-Christine Morin, our executive director.

We are the political voice of arts and culture in Canada's francophone minority communities. At the outset, I would like to say that the pandemic is currently threatening more than 40 years of artistic and cultural development as well as our people's access to their language and culture.

When an organization like Les compagnons des francs loisirs in North Bay, Ontario, dies, it means that there are no more French cultural activities in this community, except those for students, at school. This is also true in Whitehorse, Yukon, St. John's, Newfoundland and everywhere else in the Canadian and Acadian francophonie.

The linguistic and community vitality of our communities is at risk without coordinated support for arts and culture. Knowing that the arts and culture are a refuge for the well-being of individuals and society in general, the issue is all the more serious for our local French-language communities. Thank you for taking action.

[English]

Our focus today is to ensure equity and inclusion for the Canadian and Acadian francophonie. Among the rest of our peers in the arts and culture sector, they too should be able to experience resiliency, recovery and revival from this pandemic. Outside of Quebec, the GDP from the francophonie culture sector accounts for approximately \$1.1 billion per year, the economic spinoffs are approximately \$1.2 billion per year, and there are more than 26,000 jobs. We present today with the intention of improving the rollout of government pandemic supports to our members while addressing historical systemic inequities that place further limitations on access.

[Translation]

As with all organizations in the sector, our groups are under enormous financial and personal pressure.

Mrs. Marie-Christine Morin (Executive Director, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française): Here are a few figures that show the particularly devastating effects of the pandemic on artists, creators and cultural workers in our communities. The number of hours worked in October is almost one-third less than the same period in 2019. In the performing arts sector, approximately three out of four jobs were lost compared to 2019. All indications are that the crisis will continue into 2021. This is not a very reassuring picture for the health of the sector.

The FCCF gratefully acknowledges the government's support for the arts and culture sector to date. We have worked diligently to ensure that our ecosystem has access to the support measures announced by the government. Nevertheless, we have faced significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to supports.

In order to reach our communities effectively, we need to consider the precise way in which our organizations are funded. Initially, the funding envelopes targeted for the distribution of emergency funds for the cultural sector did not target the official languages support programs on which many of our organizations are largely dependent. For the few organizations that were able to benefit from the funds granted in phase 1, the amounts were minute. Our groups are under-represented and underfunded in the arts and culture program envelopes, even at the Canada Council for the Arts.

The phase 2 offer of emergency funds at the end of August, which proposed a specific envelope based on equity, partly stabilized the picture. FCCF wants to ensure that the lesson learned on how to reach groups in the Canadian francophonie will be incorporated into the way we proceed in the future, during the pandemic and beyond. The government needs to maintain this focus in order to provide equitable support to our groups. French-language arts and cultural services are essential in minority language communities. The linguistic and cultural vitality of our communities is at stake.

It is therefore necessary to ensure the rapid availability of funding for the arts and culture of the Canadian and Acadian francophonie in all regions and in each discipline, in order to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, encourage recovery and continue to move towards equity.

The FCCF will work with government to achieve all of these goals. The strong and consistent support of your committee is invaluable to us.

Thank you for your attention.

• (1415)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morin.

[English]

If I had to pick two of the largest parties or cultural icons this country has ever seen.... We heard in the last hour from Carnaval de Québec. We're honoured today because the second one is definitely the Calgary Stampede.

Mr. Peers, you have up to five minutes, please.

Mr. Dana Peers (President and Chairman of the Board, Calgary Stampede): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

As one of Canada's premier community gathering spaces, the Calgary Stampede is rich in Canadian heritage, arts and culture. Stampede Park is a gathering place that connects urban with rural, educates on agriculture and agri-food, and for over 100 years has celebrated the sacred mutual gathering space of the five first nations of Treaty No. 7. It has also cultivated and showcased excellence in performing youth arts and been an annual celebration of western culture, welcoming more than a million local, national and international guests.

Our iconic brand represents a unique community spirit that differentiates Calgary and the surrounding region from anywhere else in the world. A not-for-profit organization with a unique business model, there are no comparatives in Canada. Many think of the Stampede as an annual festival like the CNE or PNE; however, the Stampede has many year-round operations, including a \$35-million meeting and convention business. As well, the Stampede operates year-round programming for youth, culture and the arts, agriculture and indigenous education.

The Stampede does not receive municipal support for any of our year-round programming or operations, including the annual festival. The financial statements include a provincial operating grant, which supports community-based programs.

The Stampede's year-round activities are further supported by 2,500 passionate volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to bring western culture to life for our community and guests. Pre-COVID, these operations included 350 full-time, 850 part-time and 4,000 Stampede-time employees. It's the last organization of its kind in Canada, and as such, finds itself in solitary territory as a result of the pandemic. Unlike other festivals and convention facility comparators, the Calgary Stampede has operated independently for more than 100 years, contributing annually \$540 million to the Alberta economy and \$700 million to the Canadian economy.

Stampede Park is situated on 206 acres of land and is largely leased from the City of Calgary, with many sizable facilities, such as the BMO Centre, the grandstand, the Nutrien Western Event Centre, the Big Four building and the youth campus, all of which are used for arts, culture and sports presentations.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Calgary Stampede took immediate action and made the difficult decision to initiate significant financially prudent measures. This included laying off 745 employees, of whom 154 were then placed on CEWS, terminating 227 employees and cancelling almost 4,000 jobs due to the cancellation of Stampede 2020. The remaining 10% of our workforce all took pay reductions. Despite these actions, which commenced in mid-March, we continue to face a reality of ongoing expenses against zero revenue. In a regular year, the Stampede's annual celebration and year-round event business brings in revenue of \$150 million annually from more than 1,800 events.

Over the past nine months, the Canadian emergency wage subsidy provided some relief. The support enabled us to stay connected

and to then bring back 600 people in September. This week's announcement to extend CEWS is hopeful.

Unfortunately, it is the lone federal support program that our organization has been able to access, so we are challenged. The Stampede is recognized as an organization that perseveres. It has successfully persevered through world wars, the Great Depression and natural disasters, including the flood of 2013 in southern Alberta. However, the ongoing impacts of the current pandemic are truly great, and as such can only be overcome with assistance.

Through the continued efforts to repurpose facilities, we have been able to see a slight improvement in our original year-end forecast, and for 2021 we are budgeting for a further decline as we try to bridge to a more normal 2022. This budget does plan for a Stampede 2021, with considerable adjustments as we try to anticipate what COVID-19 restrictions may be in place next July.

Management continues to actively work with both federal and provincial government partners on the most appropriate mechanisms to provide financial assistance.

We deeply appreciate the time and opportunity to address the committee today, and I look forward to answering any questions.

• (1420)

The Chair: Well, sir, we asked you for five minutes, and you gave us exactly five minutes. I've never seen that before. Good stuff.

Now we go to Mr. Pfeifer from Nunavut.

Mr. Pitseolak Pfeifer (Executive Director, Qaggiavuut! Nunavut Performing Arts Society): Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, committee members.

On behalf of the Qaggiavuut! board of directors, chaired by Ms. Terrie Kusugak, we would like to thank this committee for extending the invitation to us way up here in Nunavut.

Ms. Kusugak, some of our board members and many of our artists are located in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut, which is currently experiencing a massive COVID-19 outbreak, given the small resident population. As of yesterday, Nunavut had a total of 198 confirmed cases, with 75 active cases. Our hearts and thoughts are with the families affected.

With our very limited health care, crowded housing, epidemic of depression and suicide, and meagre social and economic supports, the threat of this virus has put a disproportionate stress on our communities. We have only recently come out of a complete territorial lockdown, which has heightened the impact on our arts sector in Nunavut.

To set the stage, I am asking you to envision how cultural traditions have been a means of survival for Inuit as a people, historically sustaining us through times of crisis and times of joy. I am asking you to envision how the otherwise necessary public health measures have prevented performing arts from being the lifeline for many Inuit youth. It is the platform through which we all, up here, get inspired to pursue healthy choices and contribute to the well-being of our communities.

At Qaggiavuut!, we constantly ask ourselves how our elders' songs and stories can continue to be guarded and passed on to future generations via performing arts in such a crisis and its aftermath. Our culture and way of life is at risk for many reasons, even beyond the present global pandemic. Our not-for-profit society is guided by a focus on Inuit-led healing and wellness to preserve and promote our language and culture and to bring life to our communities through performing arts.

Our impact is beyond our communities. Our artists have brought their talent, Inuit stories and performances to Canadian art stages like the National Arts Centre and have gained accolades internationally.

The investments in the Inuit artists and performing arts put Canada on the global stage and serves a larger cultural purpose. Inuit have played a key role in Canadian cultural diplomacy and identity. Even though this role is greatly admired and appreciated artistically, for the most part it has been undervalued financially. Nunavut is the only jurisdiction in Canada that still does not have a performing arts centre, for example. We hope that in the post-pandemic context, we will see federal funding to address this inequity, to build the Qaggiq Hub performing arts centre, to train emerging artists through Qaggiq School of Performing Arts and to continue developing professional touring productions for the world stage.

The name of Qaggiavuut! has gained recognition, and we have become a source of collaboration and partnership. We have grown quickly and built a reputation of being a responsible, action-oriented, inclusive and diverse organization founded by a grassroots movement of Inuit and non-Inuit northerners together. This has shown in how we have fundraised over the years to advance our mission to strengthen, promote, advocate and create space for Nunavut and Inuit performing artists. From ordinary Canadians to celebrities to community members and territorial and federal stakeholders, we are grateful to all who have contributed to the cause. Through their giving and our COVID-19 special fundraising efforts, we were able to put money directly into the hands of our community members. Yes, we can call them artists, and rightly so. Throughout this past summer, we mobilized and created our artist emergency fund. We continued to adjust our programming to the new conditions.

We must transform the current pandemic challenges into an opportunity for economic recovery through arts and culture. The post-

COVID world will be one with an increased appetite for the performing arts. We realize that now, more than ever, Inuit need the space and the support to create art at home and contribute to the economic recovery of Canada.

Thank you.

• (1425)

The Chair: I asked you for five minutes and you just gave me exactly five minutes. These are great witnesses today. This is really going well, beyond the content that you bring, which has been very important and very good.

All our witnesses are virtual, so I'd like to ask my colleagues before we start if you could just point out the person you're questioning and direct your question to a particular person so that they know.

We're starting with Mr. Shields for six minutes, please.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. We very much appreciate your participation.

Mr. Peers, it was probably 1953 when I remember sitting on the sidewalk for my first Calgary Stampede. It goes back a ways.

We're very familiar with the Calgary Stampede in many ways, but could you talk about the arts and indigenous participation and the effect that COVID has had on those two elements of the Stampede, so that people understand the arts and indigenous participation in the Calgary Stampede and what difficulties COVID has created?

Could you expand on this subject, please?

Mr. Dana Peers: Thank you for the question. To give you a little more insight into specific programs related to the arts and the indigenous community, I might just mention a few specific ones.

We have an indigenous youth program. Approximately 124 students in 2019 went through that educational program. I would certainly draw attention to such programs as our Young Canadians School of the Performing Arts, which again had about 131 students. We have our show band and our 4-H programs. All of these are affected.

Most people aren't aware that about 50,000 kids a year in one way or another come into contact with our various educational programs and other programs that are offered here at the Calgary Stampede.

As we, again against zero revenue, continue trying to work with the creditors to be sustainable through this period, inevitably that debt inhibits our ability to offer these programs.

I hope that answers the question.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you. I very much appreciate that in this day and age, urban students can access knowledge about agriculture, which is what you do year-round, but also extensively during a Stampede festival.

We talked about where you stand financially. For 2021, what kinds of numbers are you looking at? Are you looking for concessions? Are you looking for dollar amounts?

What are you looking at in terms of what you may need?

Mr. Dana Peers: At this point in time, the Calgary Stampede will be seeing a loss of approximately \$28.6 million in 2020. That will increase dramatically in 2021, by approximately another \$11.7 million, as we try to form a budget, which will go to the board here on December 8. That budget will hopefully show an opportunity for us to bridge across 2021 to Stampede 2022, when we hope that more normal circumstances will prevail and we'll be back to our regular generation of revenue.

Mr. Martin Shields: As we understand, the Calgary Stampede is probably the peak performance for many people in that particular profession, but as a feeder system it also supports many athletes and communities outside of your organization that feed into it because it is the peak.

What effect do you believe this pandemic may have had on the grassroots feeding into your world-class event?

• (1430)

Mr. Dana Peers: You're absolutely right. I'll just point to 4-H and the 4-H Rodeo. These athletes have of course been unable to perform and participate.

All of those programs are in jeopardy. I'll even draw a bigger line to our own Stampede ranch and of course to the bucking stock and the equine athletes that support the Canadian rodeo athletes. The industry has been virtually devastated throughout the pandemic.

Mr. Martin Shields: Looking toward 2021, if things change enough, you will be looking to provide the full Stampede festival by June and July of 2021, will you? Will you be able to recover enough?

Mr. Dana Peers: It's certainly our hope. We're looking at several scenarios currently. These scenarios take into consideration what might or might not be possible because of the COVID pandemic. The organization is working hard to see what we can provide for 2021. We certainly are in the planning stages.

As we were with the conventions and meetings sector, we were leaders in helping Alberta Health Services establish the guidelines for reopening. We'll continue to work with Alberta Health Services closely as we talk about Stampede 2021 and what might be possible.

Mr. Martin Shields: There's one last thing, just quickly, and that's the volunteer base. A couple of friends of mine have spent every summer for 30 or 40 years volunteering for the Calgary Stampede. That's their summer holiday.

You mentioned the volunteer base. Do you want to touch on that topic one more time?

Mr. Dana Peers: I'm very happy to touch on the volunteer base. I myself have been a volunteer with the organization for more than 30 years.

We have approximately 2,500 volunteers here. With COVID, we've been trying to re-engage them in a safe manner. We have all of them looking at their programs and trying to understand under these different scenarios what might or might not be possible for this coming year. We definitely have a very strong volunteer contingent. We hope it remains that way and that we keep it intact.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, folks.

Mr. Louis, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, you brought up a good point, which is that we're all remote. Since we are from all different parts of the country at this meeting, I want to acknowledge that I'm attending on the traditional territory of the Anishinabe and Haudenosaunee and Neutral people.

It's an honour to be here today. I'll try to get to as many witnesses as I can in this short period of time.

Mr. Pfeifer, you made a very moving opening statement about the importance of arts. Any of the questions I had were out the window. I ultimately wanted to talk about mental health and how we can tie in mental health with the arts, how we can help our artists help deliver that and how we can keep our communities safe physically, and also in terms of mental health.

You talked about protecting culture. There may be two ways of doing that. For one, I'm wondering if you could elaborate on the performing arts centre you were referring to, the Qaggiavuut centre. Could you tell me about the importance of a hub like that?

I know that Mr. Peers also mentioned a school for performing arts. Can you tell me the importance of a place where people can gather and share culture and art?

Mr. Pitseolak Pfeifer: I very much appreciate the question, Mr. Louis.

The performing arts centre that we are trying to work on is valued at something around \$45 million. This would be a bit of a legacy project for the territory and for Canada as well, I would say. Hopefully, it would be located here in Iqaluit, Nunavut, where tourism plays an important role. It's hard to imagine, at this point in time, a performing arts centre that could seat several hundred people in this day and age of COVID, but it does take a few years. What do we do in the meantime?

In that sense, I think mental health and the continued connection between elders, youth, women and children and so on is so important. What we've been lacking and what we've been trying to pivot towards is the infrastructure around media and remote learning. This Christmas we hope to be able to launch an important event where we will encourage children and community members to be able to replicate a traditional Inuit song. It's that constant engagement that we're trying to do to alleviate some of the necessary precautions or lockdowns, whatever we call it. We are trying to make innovative pathways towards alleviating those very important concerns that you have been mentioning.

Thank you so much for the question, sir.

• (1435)

Mr. Tim Louis: If I can follow up on that, the words “innovation” and “innovative” have come up a number of times. There's the physical space at some point, as we'll get through this and we'll be able to meet again, but there's an opportunity, possibly, to also have some sort of digital outreach or hybrid outreach through which you're doing performances and maybe reaching a wider audience.

Perhaps you can tell our panel what kind of investments we can make to make sure that not only the people who are in the seats in your theatre can share this culture but that you also get this out to a broader audience.

Mr. Pitseolak Pfeifer: There are obviously some current northern and remote Internet and telecommunications capacity issues. I think it's well recognized, especially in the small communities, that there is a high cost to having Internet at home. There's the high cost of having to purchase perhaps a laptop. There's the high cost of a monthly Internet service. These might seem like small investments, \$50 to \$100 here and there a month, but it adds up, especially when we have 1.8 million square kilometres to consider for just 26 communities.

Having said that, though, I think the investments, albeit it on a macro scale, are improving the Internet and telecommunications capacity of this country. You know, we're looking for investments about digital equipment and being able to have those types of conversations even within a community—for example, a community of perhaps several hundred people—and being able to connect from one end of the village to the other.

That's the kind of opportunity we're looking for. It's really about this improved Internet infrastructure and the cost of it, and offsetting some of it so we can continue to have children and moms and elders engage in this new platform.

Mr. Tim Louis: Yes, we'll call it an investment. I know that our government is very aware that rural and remote Internet access has become such an important thing. It will end with some low-orbit satellites for places that are maybe too remote. I thank you.

I'm running out of time. I did want to switch to Calgary, where I have to say I've spent a number of years as a musician, Mr. Peers. I spent about three weeks in July at the Stampede every year working at least five or six jobs a day. I do understand their importance and all the businesses around that benefit from the festivals. We would

play in restaurants, clubs, breakfast events and right up to the evening events.

The way I look at it is we need, as a government, to support the businesses that rely on the festivals for all of those funds. All the festivals around the country bring so much to communities. That's why there's the wage subsidy and the CERB for these artists who are travelling around.

Can you also tell us about about some sustained support that is not just support in the short term? How can we support the arts and festivals over a long period of time? What would help you?

Mr. Dana Peers: Thank you.

Thank you for that question. You're exactly right. It is a much bigger picture than just the Calgary Stampede itself. What it means to the community—just the 10-day festival that you alluded to—is over \$200 million during those 10 days.

The ongoing support is always required, especially as we continue to work with all age groups from the very young to the older and professional artists. It's certainly a challenging time for us right now. We have been moving from a more physical and active role through things such as the Young Canadians School of Performing Arts, which has had to go digital, and we're trying to move and pivot here—I guess that's the new term—in trying to make sure that we can continue to offer some of these services. It's becoming incredibly difficult, though, when we look at just our debt service and paying the fees for the professionals required to educate and teach in these programs.

• (1440)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Peers. I have to end it right there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to the witnesses for appearing before the committee today to help us with this study.

I would like to speak with representatives of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française. I want to thank Mr. Théberge and Ms. Morin.

Ms. Morin, you spoke earlier about the difficulties that the people you represent have had in accessing the arts and culture emergency fund during the pandemic. I'd like a little more information on that.

Can you tell us what went wrong and how your intervention helped to rectify the situation?

Mrs. Marie-Christine Morin: Thank you for your question.

The funding access analysis revealed a weakness in the application of what might be called an “official languages lens” on investments. The \$500-million emergency fund was divided into two phases. It was built on existing funding channels. Our organizations on the ground had very little presence in the channels identified for phase 1. The channels that did not exist were the official languages support programs. Obviously, this had the effect of excluding several organizations of the Canadian francophonie from the funding channels, since they were not there.

Fortunately, things were rectified in phase 2. Teams within the ministry worked with us to find solutions. An announcement was made at the end of August, and we received a special envelope of just over \$1 million. This allowed official language minority communities and equity groups, among others, to access this funding. If we look at the way the majority of our groups accessed phase 2 funding, we can see that they did indeed go through the official languages support programs. This certainly met a need. Even though this equity objective was superimposed, the fact remains that our groups had to scramble hard to obtain some funding.

In British Columbia, Ontario and Acadia, some small cultural presenters still do not receive funding because these organizations do not have an exclusive cultural mandate. Among the criteria defined for the funding envelopes, there was a requirement that there be an exclusive mandate in culture. However, this is an uncommon reality in our country. We have organizations in a minority environment, which are in remote areas and have several hats. For example, some cultural centres provide a daycare service with their activities. These players have been excluded from funding. Clearly, the criteria for granting emergency funding ignored some of the unique characteristics of our small groups operating in fragile environments.

Mr. Martin Champoux: There are a number of actions that can be described as priorities, but which ones would you like to see implemented as quickly as possible and which would have beneficial structuring effects for the sectors and communities of the Canadian and Acadian francophonie that you represent?

Mrs. Marie-Christine Morin: I would say two things. The first is that we're going to have to adjust this official languages lens in the machinery of government and make sure it's rigorously applied. In the economic statement presented earlier this week, an additional \$181.5 million was announced for the sector. This is certainly welcome. There is a consensus that this pandemic is not over and that the cultural sector will continue to need this support. We will therefore need to ensure that this lens is applied to future investments. This means targeting the programs in which our groups are present and taking into account the realities in the funding criteria. That's the first thing.

Secondly, I'm going to pick up on what my colleague Mr. Pfeifer said. For us too, the digital dimension is important, and our sector is lagging behind in this regard in the Canadian francophonie. Access to broadband is also a challenge in many remote communities. The computer stock and equipment are difficult to renew. There are very few sources of funding to do this. In addition, in general, in the Canadian francophonie, there is a lack of French-language assets and expertise in the field. Not all organizations have the capacity to implement these new digital ways of doing things.

This leads me to say that, for us, there is a real need for investment in this area, but we also need accompanying measures to help organizations make the shift. Finally, there is a need for a digital strategy that is specific to the realities of the arts and culture sector in the francophonie.

• (1445)

Mr. Martin Champoux: I'll turn to Mr. Th  berge.

In your presentation, you spoke about historical systemic inequities. I want you to elaborate on this. I don't want to provide the answer for you. However, I imagine that, when you talk about this, you're referring to the fact that francophone communities outside Quebec are often left out of all these programs.

Is that right?

Mr. Martin Th  berge: You're right. However, my colleague Mrs. Morin touched on this issue in one of her answers. The inequity stems from the fact that funding is provided to existing organizations according to very specific arts and culture criteria. These criteria often don't align with our organizations. Our organizations align more closely with the official languages measures.

As Mrs. Morin said, an organization that operates a daycare centre, that provides after-school French classes for parents or that runs day camps, meaning an organization that carries out all types of community activities, doesn't align with several of the arts and culture funding programs. The organization's mandate isn't completely related to arts and culture. This alone points to the historical challenge of trying to align programs very specifically with the activities of the organizations. As a result, our organizations end up being funded by the official languages support programs.

We're often told that our contacts are the people responsible for official languages support programs. However, we do more than this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you both.

[English]

The Chair: Folks, my rudimentary math skills tell me that we're going to extend by five minutes, based on what I have left. I hope I can receive the blessing of the committee to extend five minutes past the top of the hour—or the bottom of the hour, if you're in Newfoundland.

Ms. Morin, when you speak again, could you please hold the microphone closer to your mouth?

As a matter of fact, up next we have Ms. McPherson. She'll show you exactly how to do it. Go ahead, Ms. McPherson. You have six minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I will start with a demonstration of holding my mike up, I suppose.

Thank you, and thanks also to all our witnesses today. It's been very interesting.

I get the great privilege of going after my colleague, so I can sort of fill in the gaps in questions that may have been there.

It would be remiss of me as an Albertan to not start with Mr. Peers and the Calgary Stampede. I'm not a Calgary member of Parliament, but I can tell you that this has not stopped me from attending the Stampede a number of times. Your hockey team is not as good as ours, but your Stampede is vastly superior.

One of things my colleague Mr. Louis spoke of that I would like to follow up on is the deep impact on the community. We know the Calgary Stampede is not something that happens on the Stampede grounds alone. It happens in the entire province, and certainly massively in the entire city of Calgary.

Do you have some of the numbers of what the impacts have been? Do you have some actual facts on what that impact looks like in a normal year?

Mr. Dana Peers: If we compare with a normal year, what I would say is that here in the province, the economic benefit of the Calgary Stampede throughout the year is about \$540 million, so as we've been drawn to, really, zero over the course of the pandemic here, it has had a huge impact on what we would normally be seeing in the province.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Hopefully there will be a rollout of a vaccine and hopefully we will be able to have a Stampede in 2021. One of my concerns as we go forward is whether people will be comfortable attending the stampede. Do you have worries about what that will look like in terms of participation?

• (1450)

Mr. Dana Peers: We're certainly aware that this is going to be an element that will have to be addressed. What I can say is that in the short period of time that we were allowed to open some of our events here in October in Stampede Park, in terms of our convention facilities and meetings and trade shows, there was definitely a demand. People wanted to get back out and participate, and I would hope that's going to be the same come July.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Well, if it's possible, I can tell you that I will be there, and perhaps, Mr. Chair, could I suggest a field trip for the committee?

The Chair: Oh, my.

Ms. Heather McPherson: We could all visit. I'll host.

For my next question, I think I'll go from one fantastic festival in Alberta to another.

I'm from Edmonton Strathcona, which of course I've said in the previous panel. We have a massive francophone community, and so I'd like to ask some questions of Ms. Morin and Mr. Théberge.

In terms of equitable access and support for the francophone outside of Quebec in other areas of the country, I know you've given us quite a lot of information, but could you please give us your top three recommendations for the federal government that we can take forward to the government right now? What would those three things be?

Ms. Morin, I'll start with you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-Christine Morin: As I said earlier, my first recommendation would be to systematically apply the lens for upcoming and future investments; to clearly understand how our organizations are funded on the ground; and to ensure that the affected envelopes and programs target a sufficient amount of francophone organizations in the sector and that the organizations are funded fairly.

My second recommendation would be to make digital investments to ensure support. It isn't enough to have funding for digital projects. Our organizations and artists must also receive assistance with this digital shift. Even though Canada has a digital strategy or wants to allocate funding to this area, we need people, "digital officers", to help our organizations structure their activities and their artistic approach in this digital shift.

My third recommendation would be to ensure that all arts and culture organizations across the country have systematic access to the allocated funding; a systematic way to transfer money with specific conditions for equity groups; and performance indicators to track the progress of this funding.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Is there anything that you would like to add to that, Mr. Théberge?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Théberge: The only thing that I'd add to what Mrs. Morin just said is the underlying issue of data. We had to conduct our own research to determine the number of jobs, the investments and the benefits of our work.

To ensure that we can answer your questions properly and that the government can effectively and efficiently allocate its funding and run its various programs, you must address a current shortcoming. We need access to data that has been properly collected, verified and assessed.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Mr. Aitchison, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): I must admit I feel a bit at a loss for words. A lot of the questions I was thinking of have been asked and answered. As a result of that, I'd like to focus a bit more on the performing arts that Mr. Pfeifer was speaking about.

Specifically, I'm wondering, Mr. Pfeifer, if you could elaborate a bit more on it. Also, has there been any formal application process or anything commenced by your organization to request support for the construction of that facility?

• (1455)

Mr. Pitseolak Pfeifer: Thank you very much, Mr. Aitchison. I appreciate the conversation we're having and your question in particular.

Yes, our performing arts centre concept has gone through a couple of years of really purposeful study. We've made substantial investments in going through that process. For example, we developed a feasibility study and spent a year of consultation with all sorts of different levels of stakeholders. At one point, there was interest from a federal minister of Canadian heritage. That was really starting to signal a potential upswing in very necessary tripartite investments with different levels of government.

The political investment climate at the moment is usually that within the federal family there is interest and appetite in filling this Canadian gap, as I was espousing. The trouble with the territorial government is that there is this management by crisis. A lot of the necessary operating and investment programming dollars goes just to handle crises. About 60% to 70% of its budget is just to deal with crises in health, education and transportation, so what is left over to invest in legacy projects such as the Nunavut performing arts centre?

Dollars to donuts, this performing arts centre would have tremendous return on an investment. It would signal that Nunavut and Iqaluit are a cultural Mecca where people all over the world can come—safely, of course.

When you have something that's concrete, that's a bricks and mortar place like this, it's akin to building a university. We don't have that here either. The point is, sir, that it's really about the momentum we've been building. It has been a wonderful opportunity to be able to share it with you.

Lastly, my point is that this infrastructure investment really is about tying in the work we're doing at the school with performing arts nationally and internationally. Again, it's this homegrown generational effort. I think you would agree that the performing arts are an incredibly important panacea, perhaps, in growing the next generation of self-actualized, healthy Inuit.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: You spoke the magic words to me: self-actualized. That's a very powerful message. Thank you. I wholeheartedly agree with you.

I'm wondering if you would be prepared to share some of that information, such as the feasibility study and that kind of stuff, with the committee. I would love to pore over that and understand it better, and perhaps do a bit to help with the next stages of it, if possible.

Mr. Pitseolak Pfeifer: Thank you, sir. I'll do that, absolutely.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, that's pretty much all I wanted to focus on. I'm happy to give out some time to somebody else.

The Chair: Mr. Aitchison, good job. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Up next is our newest permanent member here on the committee. Ms. Ien, you get to end off today. There you go; we're ending with the newest member.

First of all, thanks for joining us and congratulations on being here. You have the floor for the next five minutes.

Ms. Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you so much.

This has been such an interesting conversation. Thank you to the witnesses for sharing what you have.

I have just a couple of questions, the first of which is for Mr. Pfeifer.

Mr. Pfeifer, you talked a bit about the impact of COVID-19 on your communities in Nunavut and how you're just coming out of things now. The community has been ravaged in many ways. You also talked about mental health and the impact of arts on mental health.

Can you tell us a bit more about that and your experience with regard to it?

• (1500)

Mr. Pitseolak Pfeifer: Thank you very much, Ms. Ien, for your question and your interest. Congratulations as well.

The role of mental health in the performing arts, that connection, is really a very deep one. In the GTA and huge Canadian cities, in a very multicultural, faceted, intergenerational perspective, yes, there are a lot of very traditional foundational Canadian perspectives on what the performing arts are. In Nunavut and for Inuit, embedded in our cultural survival are the ability and the power of transmitting knowledge of a simple song within deeply coded cultural rules. It is that process of learning what might be a 30-second song that is really the code for becoming a strong, self-actualized, responsible person who takes control of that learning process, of becoming ephemeral with that song. It's such a.... I haven't had the pleasure of doing that; I wish I would.

That mental health component is really.... When you have the joy of young people getting together and learning a fun children's song, you can appreciate how, in any community context, that is such a return on investment. The point here is not to forget that Nunavut has so much beautiful land, so much beautiful *sila*, which is an important part of this connection with mental health.

If there is this connection between the land, the stories and the families, I think you start to see that there is an immediate remedy here. What the performing arts centre does is help to visualize in more of a.... Well, if you have sat in a theatre and experienced a play, we can all appreciate the joy that it brings. I think that's kind of the mental health aspect.

We have so many young people who are, unfortunately, experiencing and dealing with the effects of suicide and domestic violence. There are single moms, children who are in foster care. You can imagine how promoting and investing in performing arts is not something as flippant as saying, "Let's give these kids some money to develop a stage play." It really is, ladies and gentlemen, much deeper, and I very much appreciate your question.

Ms. Marci Ien: Mr. Pfeifer, thank you so very much.

This last question is for all of our witnesses today. We spoke a little bit, and you did, about moving to the digital world and pivoting that way, but what I realized is that incentives have to be created for people.

Can we talk a little bit about that, or can you share with us how to get people to actively participate in virtual events for arts and culture, heritage and sport? Virtual attendance, as we have seen, has significantly low participation rates.

Mr. Peers, can we start with you? As a reporter, I covered the Calgary Stampede for several years. I know what it offers. Do you have any thoughts about how to move participation rates up and move in that direction digitally?

Mr. Dana Peers: Thank you for your question.

Yes. We certainly have seen, whether it's screen fatigue or whatever you want to call it, that participation can be difficult. I have to say, though, that for the most part, through our youth programs, we have seen a real uptake by the students and by the individuals, not only with programs such as the Young Canadians School of the Performing Arts, but with the others where we have pivoted.

They just want to be part of something they believe in strongly. They want to participate. It's certainly not the same experience, but most definitely we have had very good uptake.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-Christine Morin: I'd add that the current way of connecting with arts and culture is like a big laboratory. We're in an exploratory phase and we certainly don't have all the solutions. We know very well that the current approach will never replace the in-person experience. We'll never have that feeling of being part of an event and sharing the moment.

However, the hybrid format of these events is one feature that will likely stick around. It would be in our interest to find ways to make this feature a high-quality and enjoyable format, so that a new audience can access the events.

Our members come from across the country. We've never been more connected to our events than since the virtual shift. It opens the door to discovery. It has shown us things that we wouldn't have been able to see otherwise. I think that we must look at innovative ways to ensure that these means of connecting with the works are as good as we could hope for.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Morin.

[*English*]

I have to end it there, folks. Thank you so much, everyone, for doing this.

I want to thank our witnesses, who did a tremendous job today. Mr. Pfeifer, thank you so much for joining us from the Qaggiavuut! Nunavut Performing Arts Society. Thank you, Dana Peers, president and chairman of the board, Calgary Stampede, and Marie-Christine Morin and Martin Th  berge from the F  d  ration culturelle canadienne-fran  aise.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, everyone.

[*English*]

Have a great weekend, everybody.

Colleagues, we'll see you on Monday. We have the drafting instructions and committee business to discuss. Have yourselves a great weekend.

The meeting is now adjourned.

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