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Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry



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• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number five of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, January 31, 2022, the committee is meeting on challenges related to the recovery of the arts, culture, heritage and sports sectors, which have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021.

Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using Zoom. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from health authorities as well as the director of the Board of Internal Economy on Tuesday, October 19, 2021 to remain healthy and safe, all those attending the meeting in person are to maintain a two-metre physical distance and must wear a mask when circulating in the room. It is highly recommended that the mask be worn at all times and, I'd like to add, including when speaking. One must use the hand sanitizer in the room.

As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I want to thank everyone for your co-operation.

For those participating virtually, I would like to outline a few rules to follow. You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please let me know as soon as possible so we can ensure that it's reinstated. When speaking, please try not to do what I'm doing, which is speaking very quickly. Please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

This is a reminder that all comments by members should be addressed through the chair.

This meeting will, in fact, be cut short by 15 minutes, because the committee itself has business to do. I will ask those who are virtual, because I think all our witnesses are virtual, that, when the clerk asks you to leave, you quickly log out so we can get on with the business meeting.

Thank you very much, and so we begin.

I want to thank you all for taking the time to have input into this meeting. As you well know, it is a really important thing we hear from you and that we get your sense of what worked, what didn't work, what you now need and how to go on in the future to create resilient arts, culture and sports communities.

I'm going to begin in order. As an individual, we have Michael Rubinoff, producer, Canadian Commercial Theatre League.

Witnesses, you can only have one witness speak or, if you want to divide it up—it's up to you—per organization. You have five minutes to present. I will give you a one-minute heads-up so you can wind up, and then you can answer some of the things you didn't get to say in your statement when you're asked questions. Then we move to a question-and-answer section.

I will begin with Mr. Rubinoff for five minutes.

Please begin, Mr. Rubinoff.

Mr. Michael Rubinoff (Producer, Canadian Commercial Theatre League, As an Individual): Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee, and gratitude to the clerk and her team for their guidance and support.

I'm a Toronto-based commercial theatre producer and representing the Canadian Commercial Theatre League, a relatively new organization.

The live commercial theatre industry in Canada is made up of independent producers, producing organizations, presenters and investors who generate and support the creation of new and existing theatrical work, and in the process employ thousands of artists, crew members, ushers and administrative staff and provide indirect employment to hotels, restaurants and local retail.

In addition, we support the not-for-profit sector by financially enhancing productions in these theatres and by commercially producing works started at not-for-profit theatres.

Private money is raised to support capitalization costs for commercial theatre and that money is injected into the economy. Our only sources of revenue to meet our weekly operating costs are from box-office sales, so the effects of COVID-19 on our industry have been catastrophic.

I had the idea to create a musical based on the extraordinary humanity, kindness and sense of community in Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador on 9/11 and the days following. I'm the originating producer of *Come From Away*, the most successful Canadian musical in history.

When COVID-19 gripped the world, five productions of the show in the U.S., U.K., Australia and Toronto shut down.

At home, our sector raised concerns that commercial theatre producers and presenters were not eligible for any emergency support under Canadian Heritage relief programs. With international precedent in hand, we had numerous meetings with MPs, ministers, staffers and bureaucrats, pleading our need for emergency relief, tax relief, and/or a government-backed insurance program due to the loss of business interruption coverage as a result of a pandemic.

We, like all other arts and culture organizations in this extraordinary moment, needed help.

The Americans passed the Save Our Stages Act, which established the shuttered venue operators grant. *Come From Away's* Broadway and North American touring productions each received \$10 million U.S. to support reopening and associated pandemic expenses. The Australian production received over \$1.6 million Australian from their restart investment to sustain and expand fund.

The London production of *Come From Away* benefited from tax relief measures implemented by the U.K. government, including a temporary reduction in the VAT. Commercial theatre producers and presenters were also eligible to apply for relief under the U.K. culture recovery fund.

Despite the lack of government support here at home, determined to reopen *Come from Away* in Toronto, \$1.5 million in private money was committed, and with heightened risk, Mirvish Productions reopened the show. Reopening coincided with the Omicron variant. Two days after reopening, the Government of Ontario placed a 50% capacity limit on theatres, further eroding consumer confidence in attending theatre.

After pausing the show due to cast illness, and with no Canadian Heritage emergency supports available, the excruciating decision to permanently close Canada's most successful musical was announced on December 27, 2021.

What was lost? It was good-paying jobs for those on stage and off, millions in HST revenue, and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact to the Toronto economy.

Subsequent to the closing of the show, the current minister and his staff have been responsive and engaged in a number of robust conversations regarding support for the commercial theatre sector in Canada, and we are grateful for those ongoing conversations.

Come From Away continues to run on Broadway, in London's West End, on tour across North America, and recently wrapped up in Sydney and will reopen in additional Australian cities later this year.

Come from Away is but one example of a number of shows in Canada that commercial producers and presenters have closed, postponed or cancelled at significant cost.

We need a recognition of the economic impact of what we do, and we need the implementation of similar programs for our sector that have catapulted the for-profit film and television industry into one of the most successful in the world. We need to operate at 100% capacity or we further erode consumer confidence.

To ensure our sector's sustainable recovery and to succeed now and in the future, we need immediate access to emergency COVID-19 funding; a government-backed insurance program; tax-credit programs in similar scope to what has been provided to for-profit Canadian film and television productions; support for encouraging diverse voices in the Canadian commercial theatre sector; and implementation of recommendations proposed by the Creative Industries Coalition so that the skilled people who make theatre have financial security and wellness supports to continue in our industry.

I remain grateful for the support the Government of Canada has provided to the arts and culture community and hope our recommendations for our sector are worthy of your support and implementation so that we can receive the necessary aid to continue our contributions to country and community.

Thanks very much.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rubinoff.

You were one minute under time, so that's really good. I'm pleased to hear that.

Now I'm going to go to Ms. Reeves, president and chief executive officer, for the Business/Arts community.

Ms. Reeves, go ahead, for five minutes, please.

● (1555)

Ms. Aubrey Reeves (President and Chief Executive Officer, Business / Arts): Thank you very much.

Greetings, Madam Chair and members of the committee. It's a pleasure to be here today.

I am the president and CEO of Business and Arts, a charitable organization that has existed for over 40 years with a national mandate to work in partnership with arts leaders, government and the business community to ensure a thriving arts and culture sector.

Throughout the pandemic, thousands of not-for-profit arts organizations, ranging from major cultural institutions to small community-led arts groups, have turned to Business and Arts to help navigate the waves of closures, restrictions and digital pivots, and now for planning for safe reopening and to chart a path to recovery.

Throughout the pandemic, B / A, in collaboration with the National Arts Centre, has been running a research project called the “Arts Response Tracking Survey”—ARTS for short—which I am going to tell you about today.

Since the spring of 2020, the study has been conducted quarterly by Nanos Research as a way to gauge Canadian culturegoers' comfort and perceptions around returning to indoor and outdoor arts and culture events, as well as museums and galleries. The data offers valuable insights to inform reopening procedures and programming models.

We conducted the latest survey in December 2021 and released the report on January 19. In it, we're happy to show that there has been a steady increase in the number of arts patrons returning to in-person events—from just 6% in May 2021 to 27% in December who have already returned to indoor events—and 35% who have returned to outdoor events. Meanwhile, 21% said they plan to return to indoor events immediately after cultural organizations are allowed to open.

However, there is still a significant portion of culturegoers who are hesitant to return, with 20% indicating that they intend to wait several months before returning. More troubling is the 24% who are so hesitant that they are simply not sure when they might return and the 9% who say they expect to never return to indoor arts and culture events. The data is similar is for museums and galleries, with 34% who have already returned, 21% who intend to return immediately and 15% who will wait several months. We still see, though, 24% who are not sure and 6% who say they intend to never return.

Not surprisingly, there are differences in the data when we look at demographics. The 18-to-34 age group is more likely to say they will return immediately, at 27%, compared to those in the 55-plus age group, with only 16% who intend to return immediately. With higher COVID risks in the older population group, we see 13% who say they intend to never return.

We are likely to see that the types of performances that attract the younger audiences—for instance, popular music concerts—will see stronger ticket sales than those that skew to older demographics, which will likely struggle for much longer to see their audiences return.

Fear is the biggest barrier to return, with 31% of respondents listing fear of being exposed to the virus as their top concern, and crowds or other people not respecting health measures as the second. Social distancing and masks continue to be top precautions. Culturegoers say they want to feel safe to return to indoor events. Arts and culture venues and facilities are doing an exceptional job

of following all safety procedures, and many are exceeding mandated guidelines. Unfortunately, fear is a powerful deterrent that is not easily assuaged.

For two years, the public has been told to avoid social gatherings and rolling closures have mandated the shuttering of theatres, performance halls, cinemas, art galleries and museums. Thus, it's going to take a lot of time and effort to change public perception about the safety of these spaces.

With this data, what measures does the sector need to be viable during the reopening and recovery phase?

First, the ARTS data shows that we should anticipate a very slow and gradual return of audiences. It is reasonable to project a three- to five-year recovery timeline. Unfortunately, most arts organizations cannot break even with only a third of their audience intending to come back immediately. The sector needs support to offset the financial risks of getting back on stage or getting artwork into galleries when we know that revenues from ticket sales will be significantly smaller for the foreseeable future.

Second, the sector needs support to rebuild consumer confidence. We need dedicated funds for a sector-led marketing and public relations campaign that shifts the perceptions about the safety of our venues and facilities and also reinforces the many benefits of arts and culture for physical and mental health, as well as community well-being, inclusion and belonging.

Finally, as much as possible, the sector needs some semblance of predictability. I know that none of us, including the government, has a crystal ball to predict future waves and the possible needs for closure; however, we can't keep lurching from one emergency short-term funding program to another to fill the gaps. What is needed is a comprehensive policy framework and corresponding support programs that are in place throughout that three- to five-year timeline and can be relied on, whether or not there are future COVID waves or other types—

The Chair: Please wrap up, Miss Reeves. Thank you.

Ms. Aubrey Reeves: —of crisis situations to affect the arts.

That's it. Thank you very much.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now move on to the Canadian Live Music Association, with Erin Benjamin, president and chief executive officer, for five minutes, please.

Ms. Erin Benjamin (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Live Music Association): Thank you very much for inviting me to participate.

I'm Erin Benjamin, president and CEO of the Canadian Live Music Association.

Our membership includes both non-profit and for-profit entrepreneurs and organizations that together create the conditions for an artist to stand on a stage in front of an audience, venues, festivals and promoters, talent agents, service providers and many others whose work intersects directly with and supports live music performance.

I'd like to take my allotted time today to focus on one thing we consider to be key to the long-term success of the music industry, a simple shift that will see us through COVID recovery and beyond, that if implemented will increase impacts for government and artists substantially.

Canadian artists perform on all kinds of stages. Without what we call for-profit venues and festivals, however, most artists would have significantly fewer places to play. However, these businesses and other entrepreneurs in the live space are not currently eligible for Canadian Heritage programs as our non-profit members are. In other words, funding categorically excludes essential spaces serving Canadian artists, which today especially seems an obvious gap.

Coincidentally, it was one year ago today we launched a social media campaign with the rallying cry #ForTheLoveOfLive, to amplify the crushing impact of COVID on our entrepreneurs, artists, and supply chain and on our reputation as a competitive world-class live music market. That campaign now, with a reach of over 65 million, spoke directly to everyday Canadians, who were inspired to share stories and photos of how and why live music mattered to them. Government heard that united cry for help, diagnosed the indispensable nature of live music businesses and provided the historic \$50 million in temporary funding we saw in last year's federal budget. We thank you for that. That support helped in two vital ways: it extended the lives of many businesses and it signalled to our community that the government believes that live music companies and entrepreneurs matter. I can't tell you how meaningful it was to see the words "live music venues" in a federal budget.

Like others in the broader sector who are already permanently at the heritage table, our members also undertake activities that are central to the development of Canadian artists, the promotion of their music, and the expansion of their audiences. They work to ensure that Canadians have access to a variety of professional artistic experiences and they are key generators of both jobs and economic impact. In fact, as one of the hardest-hit industries, the live music sector—all of us, formerly contributing upwards of \$3 billion to GDP and creating 72,000 jobs—can't wait to unleash the full spectrum of music and entertainment activity we create so we can all begin to leverage the economic and social impacts that follow from Allison Russell to Elton John. Every city, town and village in Canada has some amount of local live music capacity, and therefore the ability to benefit from it. We'll draw people back into our down-towns; we'll enhance tourism as audiences reintegrate travel and hospitality through live music experiences, and we'll put more Canadian artists on stage than ever before. We know that the poten-

tial and power of live music can be fully realized through the modernization of programs and policies embracing live music entrepreneurs as stakeholders and harnessing their direct impact on an artist's ability to succeed.

COVID picked winners and losers. We know that. The live music industry of tomorrow is being built today on sheer determination and the understanding that artists need live music businesses not just to survive but to thrive. We've asked government, through our pre-budget submission, to provide a dedicated and permanent \$50-million Canadian live music support fund, because if there's one thing we've learned above all else it's that live performance is fundamental to an artist's ability to build and sustain a career. Sadly, we don't have to look very far to see that today.

Canadian Heritage programs should change to reflect the way industry works so we can revitalize and rebuild the touring framework in this country, which we know our artists both need and deserve. That starts with all live music businesses, entrepreneurs and organizations being celebrated and supported as playing a vital role in the cultural, civic and economic lives of all Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I now move to Mirvish Productions Limited, with Kendra Bator, associate general manager, for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

• (1605)

Ms. Kendra Bator (Associate General Manager, Mirvish Productions Ltd.): Thank you.

My name is Kendra Bator, and I'm representing Mirvish Productions, Canada's largest commercial theatre producer.

Together with Michael Rubinoff and the Canadian Commercial Theatre League, we've submitted a brief on the state of the Canadian commercial theatre sector. You've heard from our partners in the labour and not-for-profit theatre sectors of the tremendous losses, challenges and risks, not only financial, suffered by the live arts industry since theatres were shut down in March 2020. We are requesting short- and long-term supports that will contribute to the rebuilding and sustained health of the commercial theatre sector, such as access to emergency funding; government-backed insurance schemes to replace the business interruption coverage we can no longer secure for pandemic-related losses; the development of tax credit programs to incentivize the development and production of live theatre within our borders; support for encouraging diverse voices in our sector; and implementation of the recommendations proposed by the Creative Industries Coalition, so that skilled people who make theatre have financial security.

We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in programs offered to all Canadian business owners and employers. CEWS, CERS and HASCAP loans have helped us keep our offices open. However, these supports do not assist with reopening our theatres.

Despite assertions and conversations with all levels of government that our sector makes significant contributions and acknowledgement that we have fallen through the cracks in the distribution of aid, these assertions have not been validated with actual financial aid. You can imagine our frustration and disenchantment when in one such conversation in which we asked why our colleagues in the not-for-profit sector benefit from emergency grants from the federal government, when the commercial theatre sector has received none for the same activities, we were told that the impression is that commercial theatre doesn't produce Canadian stories or contribute to Canadian culture.

I'm here today to tell you a Canadian story. Mirvish Productions owns and operates four theatres in Toronto, Canada, and produces and presents internationally celebrated works, sometimes written by Canadian playwrights, composers and lyricists, sometimes performed by Canadian actors and musicians, and always enjoyed by Canadian audiences and employing Canadian theatre practitioners and driving Canadian tourism.

Over the last 35 years Mirvish Productions has employed thousands of Canadian actors, stagehands, theatre practitioners and administrators, ushers and box-office personnel; invested millions of dollars in Canadian plays and musicals; and offered education programming to tens of thousands of students in the form of workshops, study guides, post-performance talkbacks and tours.

When Mirvish Productions is operating all four of its theatres, it welcomes more than 50,000 audience members per week. Ticket sales to productions at our theatres have generated tens of millions of dollars in tax revenue, and billions of dollars in economic activity in the neighbouring restaurants, hotels, retail and other sports and cultural institutions.

We accomplish this with private money and revenue from ticket sales. There's no contributed income in commercial theatre operations. If there is no box-office revenue, there is no income.

When Mirvish Productions closed its theatres, for the first time in the family's history of owning and operating theatres, in March 2020, the company's revenue was wiped out. It was not until after *Come From Away* closed in 2021 after a brief reopening that the outreach began to flow back to us. Since that time, we've had many conversations, and for the first time feel as though we're being heard and valued.

We now look to the upcoming production of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, the only production in Canada of this internationally acclaimed play. It will take \$28 million to mount and another \$850,000 a week to run. This is not a Canadian play, but it is a Canadian production. On a weekly basis it will employ 35 actors, 39 stagehands, seven stage managers, 35 front-of-house personnel, and 10 marketing, publicity and production personnel—all Canadian. It will welcome more than 12,000 audience members each week, 95% of whom will be Canadian, and more than 50% of whom will then spend money on Canadian restaurants and Canadian hotels and retail outlets. This production and the Canadian jobs, tourism, spending and tax revenue are imperiled by the heightened risks we now face.

We implore you to implement the recommendations in our briefing and we implore you to partner with us to craft a Canadian story about the rebuilding and brilliant reopening of the Canadian commercial theatre sector.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to move now to the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and Boomer Stacey, executive director, for five minutes please.

• (1610)

Mr. Boomer Stacey (Executive Director, Professional Association of Canadian Theatres): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the committee for undertaking this necessary examination.

My name is Boomer, and I'm the executive director of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres.

PACT is a collective voice of professional Canadian theatres representing over 160 professional theatre companies across the country, as well as supporting the needs of the English-speaking theatre community. Our sector is diverse, ranging from the largest performing arts organizations in Canada to small, independent theatre artists, from rural to urban, from festivals to theatre for young audiences, from culturally diverse to indigenous, all serving audiences in diverse communities from coast to coast to coast.

We are grateful for every dollar that has been made available to help our sector survive and the speed at which the government has responded. We would not still be standing without the support that we have received as a community. We ask you to continue the investment for our survival as we look towards recovery.

I know that you've heard on many occasions that our sector was the first to shut down and that we expect to be among the last to recover. You know we have faced unprecedented and extended closures of theatres and the cancellation of productions, including, of course, *Come From Away*, resulting in massive layoffs, under-employment, unemployment and a loss of skilled trades workers. We are aware of the ripple effect on restaurants, parking, hotels, etc., and the massive loss of regional revenues negatively affected by our closures.

You know that we've been through several cycles of lockdown, limited capacity and attempts to reopen. You might know that we've faced audience hesitancy in returning to venues and a lack of confidence in buying tickets. You may also know that we are experiencing severe burnout in trying to survive and a growing mental health crisis in our sector, so perhaps you understand a little of where we currently stand.

I want to dig just a little bit further into the nuances of some of our challenges to give you a deeper understanding of our road to recovery from our current state of survival.

We are not a light switch industry. From artistic development to performing on stage in front of an audience, it can take months to years to achieve. Even with a predetermined line-up of productions waiting to happen, from contracting, hiring and rehearsing to actual opening night takes at minimum a month, with additional time for marketing and box office. Lockdowns, local restrictions and capacity limits all affect when that clock starts in production. We don't have products sitting on a shelf ready to go.

One size does not fit all. Part of the strength of our sector is our diversity, but it also requires solutions and support to be equally diverse, flexible and sometimes tailored to meet a subsector's specific needs.

In order to get federal support out the door quickly, most of it has flown through Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. For companies not currently on CCA or Heritage funding, it has been difficult or impossible to access funds. Many of these companies represent traditionally underfunded, marginalized artists and companies. Additional funding is required in order to expand greater access to funds.

There are over 50 companies across the country that create work solely and specifically for young audiences. Touring into schools or schools travelling into venues is currently impossible. These companies already face a challenging financial model with less revenue realized through ticket sales and now face an even greater strain and a disconnect from their audiences.

Likewise, there is also a robust national contingent of festival or summer season theatres. The specific seasonality of their operations often makes funding metrics impossible to achieve.

Finally, there is no normal. The only certainty is continued uncertainty. Live streaming and digital opportunities have become part of our menu but cannot replace the hunger for live and in-person performances. Audience confidence in buying tickets in advance is at an all-time low, making traditional subscriptions and advance ticket sales less reliable. Last minute or walk-up sales affect company cash flow and forecasting, and create operational challenges.

Likewise, the nature of seasons is being redefined. Traditionally sales-rich holiday shows between November and January are being reconsidered based on the past two years' peak in virus waves and subsequent cancellations.

Full-season programming from September to June is also risky, so instead, shorter programming periods are being considered. This affects touring. There are fewer pre-sales opportunities and greater marketing challenges as well as the challenge of attracting a workforce back with shorter term contracts.

This is a very short overview of just some of our current and ongoing challenges, and while we may look forward to recovery, we're still very much mired in survival mode.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stacey, you have 15 seconds if you want to wrap up.

Mr. Boomer Stacey: Thanks. I'm wrapped.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll go to the final witness, and that is Sophie Prigent, who is president of the Union des Artistes.

[Translation]

Ms. Sophie Prigent (President, Union des Artistes): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is Sophie Prigent, and I have been president of the Union des Artistes, the UDA, since 2013. The UDA represents 13,000 artists: dancers, lyric singers, pop singers, actors and comedians to name only a few. We represent professional artists who work in French in Quebec and the rest of Canada, as well as all artists who work in languages other than English.

I want to thank you for your attention to the situation of artists.

First, I will outline the current situation of the artists we represent. That situation has been broadly reported in our media, but here are a few telling numbers.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

I apologize for interrupting Ms. Prigent's remarks, but her camera doesn't appear to be working.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry. Perhaps we can look after that.

She's there now.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: I was discussing the situation of the artists the UDA represents. Between 2019, that is, before the pandemic, and 2021, the incomes of performing artists fell by 46%. I repeat: 46%. Since performing artists earn \$16,000 to \$25,000 a year, you can imagine what a 46% decline in income may represent.

In January 2021, we conducted a study on the mental health of our members to get a clear picture of the situation, and 61% of respondents said they had lost all interest in their artistic practice. It's very hard to maintain personal convictions when the telephone stops ringing and you aren't practising your art.

In addition, 35% of respondents had sought help because they were psychologically distressed. Sadly, 15% of them had contemplated suicide during that time and 47%, nearly half of all respondents, had considered or were still considering leaving their artistic careers in the long term. The impact on mental health is critical and, in some instances, unfortunately irreversible.

What scares us even more at the UDA is that the worst is likely yet to come. Artists were entitled to the Canada emergency response benefit, the CERB, the Canada recovery benefit, or CRB, and the Canada worker lockdown benefit, the CWLB, but we know that all those benefits will terminate at the end of February. What will happen to those artists who still need aid?

In our view, the worst effects are just starting to be felt. For example, we at the Union des Artistes see that people are making withdrawals from their RRSPs, not to deposit the money in the bank but merely to pay the rent and buy food for their families.

All of which thus brings us to potential recovery measures.

First, to ensure the transition to recovery, we believe that a widespread promotional campaign will have to be organized to bring audiences back to see their artists in poetry, dance, opera, theatre and music. Canadians have learned to entertain themselves differently in the past two years. While good habits are unfortunately lost all too quickly, the cultural sector was setting traffic and attendance records before the pandemic.

The real recovery will be made possible by direct transitional assistance to artists and by the cultural institutions and production and broadcasting organizations supporting our members' artistic works. Together we must take back our culture.

Second, recognition of the work that artists do is an inevitable prerequisite for a robust and sustainable recovery. By recognition I mean the creation of some form of employment insurance available to self-employed workers and tailored to their situation. It is essential that we create a social protection plan for artists and ensure that

atypical and contractual workers are entitled to an adequate social safety net...

[English]

The Chair: You have one minute.

[Translation]

Ms. Sophie Prigent: ...when a crisis such as this occurs or when economic challenges resulting in income losses arise.

In conclusion, I believe we have barely started to understand what the worst long-term consequences of the pandemic will be for artists and arts and culture. I know I have enormous concerns for the future of our culture.

Too many people are saying they intend to change careers. However, it is they, the creators, who form the core of our culture, who are the soul of our society. Without creators, there is no culture. Without creators, there are no future artists.

Thank you.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Prigent.

[English]

Those are startling statistics. Thank you.

Now we're going to move to the question and answer session. Members of different parties will ask questions. The amount of time allocated is for the question and the answer. I wanted to remind everyone of that. I will continue to give you a heads-up when you have 30 seconds or one minute left.

I'm going to begin, but before I do, there is a member of Parliament in the room. He is the member of Parliament for Spadina-Fort York. He is not a member of the committee. I wanted everyone to be aware that he is in the room.

I will go to the question and answer session. The first is John Nater from the Conservative Party for six minutes.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our witnesses, as well.

This has been, once again, a very informative panel. I look forward to the conversation that we're going to have today.

I wanted to begin with Mr. Rubinoff and Ms. Bator.

I think we all appreciate the somewhat cruel irony that the most successful Canadian musical in history is being shown for four productions internationally and none of those locations are in Canada. I think we appreciate that cruel, unfortunate reality that we see with such a wonderful production. I remember promising my wonderful wife, after the 2019 election, that I would take her to see *Come from Away*. I may have to find an alternate location. Hopefully, we can do that once again in Toronto in the somewhat near future.

I wanted to start with the capital costs. We're talking about commercial theatre and the capital costs that you must raise to begin the production before a single actor steps onto the stage—those upfront costs. I want to get your thoughts on the hesitancy, the stigma and the uncertainty that we have going forward to be able to raise those private funds in order to put the productions on in the first place.

What is the reaction you're getting? What challenge are you facing when you have that uncertainty in raising the capital?

Ms. Kendra Bator: Commercial theatre is always a risky endeavour because it is all private capital and because you do rely solely on box-office income to not only meet your weekly needs, but to return that initial capital. We're facing increasing risk because of rolling shutdowns that are happening in other markets because of COVID-19 illness. They're having to shut down for a week or more at a time and then reopen. We're also seeing increased risk because of the lack of insurance, which we've mentioned in our briefings and in our conversation today, where we can no longer get coverage for business interruption due to pandemic-related loss.

We're also seeing increased risk because our vendors and other people we work with are also feeling pressure and experiencing increased risk. We're being asked for guarantees of months at a time of weekly rentals from our vendors who are having to purchase equipment in order to fulfill our needs.

There's more and more risk, but fewer and fewer assurances that we'll be able to continue operating. If you add capacity restrictions on top of that, the entire endeavour really does just crumble because we need the opportunity to operate at a hundred per cent to be able to meet our weekly needs.

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: Mr. Nater, I'll briefly add to that.

The other issue around that in terms of stimulating this industry is competitiveness. We are competing against New York state, the state of Illinois, the city of Chicago, Louisiana and Ohio, which have implemented robust tax credits of 20% to 25% for labour and capital costs. That makes us a very unattractive destination to invest private money to start productions here, which could start with employing a number of Canadians.

We're at a competitive disadvantage. The state of New York has a proposed \$200-million tax credit to help come out of COVID-19 for commercial theatre productions on Broadway because they see the need to continue to make New York a destination. That's another challenge we face.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you for that, Mr. Rubinoff.

That actually leads into my next question about the tax credits we see here in Canada for television and film productions that

aren't available for live performances, whether it's the commercial theatre sector or the not-for-profit theatre sector.

Would aligning tax credits and providing tax credits similar to those that are available to film and television allow the commercial theatre sector to have at least a little bit more certainty going forward?

• (1625)

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: It would make a huge difference. We've seen the incredible film and television business that's done in this country because of provincial and federal tax credits. It's a world leader, and it's getting stronger and stronger. We know we're a small sector. We're trying to continually expand, and that tax credit would make an enormous difference to getting Canadian stories not only on our stages but launching them around the world, beginning them at home.

That's not just good for our industry; it helps drive tourism. We've seen what *Come From Away* has done for tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador. If we could find a structure that's similar to film and television that could either extend or complement the commercial theatre sector, I think that would be an incredible start.

We all know that these commercial shows can revitalize our cities and our smaller communities, and I think it would drive a lot more Canadian stories like *Come From Away* originating from this country and going out to be an international success.

Mr. John Nater: Talking about that economic impact, for every dollar that's spent on a ticket sale, how does that translate into economic impact within the community where that production takes place?

Ms. Kendra Bator: It translates into an additional \$10 in spending. For every dollar spent on a commercial theatre ticket, an additional \$10 is spent in the local economy, which translates over time into billions of dollars in economic activity.

Mr. John Nater: To Mr. Stacey, you mentioned the underfunding in the past because certain of your member theatres—some of which are in my riding, Drayton and Stratford—hadn't in the past received funding through the Canada Council for the Arts. In a few seconds, could you elaborate on how it has put theatres at a disadvantage if they hadn't previously received funding through that mechanism?

The Chair: You have seven seconds to elaborate.

Mr. Boomer Stacey: I'll say quickly that there are so many companies across the country that can't access that funding because they traditionally haven't had access to it. Those that have received funding in the past are much more likely to get that money, so companies that were already behind prepandemic are further behind now.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That's the end of that round.

I will move to the Liberal Party of Canada and Tim Louis for six minutes.

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today and for this important conversation and the impactful statements you've already made.

We know that the arts sector is going to be one of the last to recover, and the cruelty is that by nature artists are what brings people together. That's the sector that does that, and a pandemic is still preventing it.

I'd like to start my questioning with the Canadian Live Music Association, which everyone thinks of as the musicians themselves, but it's also the venues, the festivals, the clubs, the performing arts centres, the promoters and the agencies.

In the beginning, it was the CERB and the wage subsidy. We had CEBA for interest-free loans, then the relief and recovery fund for funding as well, and we want to make sure we can continue that funding. Recently we announced the Canada performing arts workers resilience fund, which is going to go to organizations to help support especially those independent and self-employed workers in the sector itself. Can you explain how you can get that funding to the ground as organizations for arts workers and get that to the self-employed and gig workers in the live performance sector?

Ms. Erin Benjamin: Absolutely, thank you for the question and for that \$60 million through that fund. As I understand it, Canadian Heritage's plan is to receive applications from organizations with capacity to deliver. I convened a meeting of the music industry on Friday to talk about the concept of submitting a super-application. I strongly believe that the fewer applications go into this program, the better, so the vast majority of the money can be spent in the community and not on administration costs and that we can relieve the potential burden of double-dipping, etc. The schematic of the program will be sound as long as we are all working together.

I'm looking at some of my theatre colleagues on this call like Boomer, because I know there are other large organizations working to support their disciplines. In the music industry, we're hoping to work with the Unison Fund and certainly Quebec partners as well. Perhaps Quebec partners will submit their own application, whatever makes the most sense for the artists and the workers. The plan is to make these applications by the March 4 deadline with a really strong plan and as soon as possible start administering that \$2,500 per worker.

• (1630)

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you for that.

I'm going to try to bounce my questions around and go to Ms. Reeves now.

It's very interesting, the Arts Response Tracking Survey. Previous witnesses have talked about obstacles to participation as we get back into the theatres and about how people need to have that confidence. Mostly right now, as the survey says, safety, as in not being exposed to the virus, is the top obstacle, and the precautions that people are going to need in order to feel safe.

Can you give some examples of how we can help with the messaging and how we can help with funding? When the time comes that we can get back, what can we do to help out?

Ms. Aubrey Reeves: We do find that people want to continue to have masking and social distancing. These are key for people's comfort level. But a large percentage still want to see a lower case count of COVID. That will determine when they feel comfortable returning.

In terms of being able to start that messaging around the safety of these venues, I think there are a couple of things to keep in mind. One, the arts community knows their own audience. If there are funds to be dedicated to marketing and PR efforts, I think it should be an industry-led approach so that those funds can be allocated and targeted at niche audiences.

There is also an existing annual national public engagement and awareness campaign about the value of arts and culture, called Culture Days, which could also receive more resources and support for a more blanket Canada-wide approach.

The third point is that I think it's really crucial to keep in mind that most Canadians really trust our public health officials. Hearing them talk about the safety of arts and culture venues would have a big impression. As well, if there was an emphasis on the value to our well-being, to both our physical and mental health, from public health officials, that would carry a lot of influence.

Mr. Tim Louis: Fantastic. Thank you.

I'd like to talk quickly about the partnership between private businesses and the arts. I know that you're promoting a program called "artsvest". Can you explain the ways in which we could help leverage private sector support for the arts?

Ms. Aubrey Reeves: I'm glad you're aware of our artsvest program. It is a national mentorship training and matching fund program. Annually, more than 350 organizations from across the country participate in that. They receive one-on-one mentorship, group training and peer training. They're also paired with a small matching fund that they can use as an incentive to go out and develop relationships with businesses in their local community. Through that program, which receives funding from Canadian Heritage, we have produced 20,000 hours of training, and 5,000 organizations over 10 years have participated. It has had a really huge impact.

Yes, those kinds of programs where we foster and develop collaboration and partnership between the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors can really help to create market-driven solutions to the problems.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will go now to the Bloc Québécois.

Monsieur Martin Champoux, you have six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First, I'd like to highlight the remarks that Ms. Bator made earlier in response to a question from my colleague Mr. Nater.

Ms. Bator, I very much appreciated the fact that you discussed the economic impact of culture. That's something we don't talk about or emphasize often enough. Culture isn't an expense; it's a treasure. I very much appreciated the fact that you discussed the actual economic impact of an investment in the cultural sector and the multiplier effect of a dollar spent by culture consumers.

Thank you for asking that question, Mr. Nater.

I'd like to speak briefly with Ms. Prigent, from the UDA.

Ms. Prigent, I was shaken by your opening remarks. The figures you cited are obviously quite startling. You mentioned artists' declining incomes, in particular. You also discussed the distress suffered by UDA members and all cultural workers across Quebec and Canada.

You said that 15% of the artists who responded to the surveys you conducted during the pandemic had experienced suicidal thoughts. I'd like to add a number to illustrate that figure more clearly. That means that nearly 2,000 of the 13,000 members you represent at the UDA had suicidal thoughts. That's a stunning figure. I don't want us to indulge in sensationalism, but that is truly very worrying.

You also discussed the promotional campaign that should be conducted to encourage people to enjoy cultural products once again. I found that remark somewhat encouraging because, the last time we spoke in this committee, we were discussing the crisis in which we found ourselves and the measures that should be taken to get through it. Even though the picture isn't rosy, I can see we're now thinking of ways to revive our cultural industry.

Do you view the situation in somewhat the same light, or do you anticipate a bleak future?

• (1635)

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Fortunately for us, the situation is changing. Performance venues started opening up again last Monday. On February 28, arts and culture venues will operate at full capacity as they did before the pandemic. Although masks and vaccine passports will still be mandatory, we'll still be able to fill our venues. We definitely think that's a good thing.

However, we won't necessarily fill theatres simply because we can. That's why I mentioned the promotional campaign. In the past two years, people have become used to spending their money on culture in different ways, via digital platforms. We'll have to become extremely appealing and seduce pre-pandemic audiences into coming back.

That's why we'll need government assistance in all sectors: dance, opera, lyric singing, poetry and so on. Why? As I said, the healthy habit of going out and embracing our culture has quickly been replaced by a habit of easily consuming culture via telephones and screens.

I think it's essential that we take back that culture.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Earlier you said that aid programs were coming to an end and that this was a major cause for concern in that we want to renew artists' interest in their occupation and rekindle their desire to continue practising it and to earn a living from what they love doing. We know very well that artists worrying about their financial situation won't produce in the same way.

We'll probably have to strike a balance. That's somewhat the aim of the study we're conducting. We're seeking recommendations on ways to ensure that artists can get through the rest of the pandemic—let's hope it's almost over—and set themselves up for a new start. I imagine that's partly the gist of your recommendations.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Exactly.

If we have a talent exodus, that means we'll unfortunately be suffering the worst consequences of the pandemic over the next few years. One of the first things that should be done is to retain talent, the artistic and creative potential of our artists. We have to convince them to stay in the sector by giving them hope and predictability. Consequently, we need to support them financially and enable them to create again.

Mr. Martin Champoux: As regards financial support, earlier my colleague Tim Louis discussed the Canada performing arts workers resilience fund, which has been announced.

How will UDA members access that program and funding? Have you started looking into that?

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Yes.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have one minute.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sophie Prigent: The question is how this \$60 million is going to be spent and to whom it is going to be paid. It's very difficult to assess that right now, because I don't know who is going to submit an application or how much will be distributed.

The Fondation des artistes is an essential resource for the Union des artistes. It's not only there to serve our members, but the entire creative, performing arts and audiovisual sector.

With the Fondation's help, we'll be able, among other things, to assist a very broad spectrum of artists who currently need support.

• (1640)

Mr. Martin Champoux: Can you tell me very briefly whether there have been many applications submitted recently?

As we know, artists have been without any financial support for months now.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Mr. Champoux, I expect that numerous Francophone cultural institutions in Quebec are going to submit applications. As for us, we are going to go strictly through the Fondation. The UDA has decided not to submit specific applications on behalf of its members, but rather for the entire cultural sector.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you very much, Ms. Prigent.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. That was excellent.

We will now move to Mr. Julian for the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks, to all of our witnesses, for your very eloquent presentations today. We certainly hope that you and your families and loved ones are staying safe and healthy through this pandemic.

I'm going to save the question for Madame Prigent for the next round, but I'd like to ask this one to, one after another, Mr. Rubinoff, Ms. Reeves, Erin Benjamin, Ms. Bator and Mr. Stacey. I'd like you to take not more than a minute to tell us what the consequences of not acting would be. You've put forward numerous suggestions that are very important. If the government didn't act and didn't provide these supports, what could we expect from your sector in the course of the coming years?

I'll start with Mr. Rubinoff.

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: First and foremost, if you look at the downtown cores.... I live in Toronto. I'm very worried about bringing people back to the downtown core. Arts and culture do that.

Second, I'm very worried about people, as my colleagues have said. We have incredible, skilled Canadians who work on stage and off. I'm really worried they're going to other professions. If we lose them, we lose our industry.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much.

Ms. Reeves.

Ms. Aubrey Reeves: I very much echo what Michael just said. I'm very concerned about labour market issues. We don't have hard data yet, but there's a lot of anecdotal evidence that there is an exodus happening in the arts sector. People are leaving for more predictable work, reliable work, better paid work.

We need to be able to address those things to retain talent. I'm talking not just about artists but also about the administrators. I'm also really concerned about those who are left behind holding the bag. They now have greater workloads. They are very stressed trying to accomplish everything that they have to in order to do that recovery. People are really stretched. They're very burnt out.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much.

Erin Benjamin.

Ms. Erin Benjamin: Thank you.

I think we're all going to be adding on here, so I'll try to add some new things.

A massive contraction of the Canadian live music industry would result in a reduction of billions of dollars in economic activity. The North American concert market was projected to see \$5 billion in ticket sales alone in the beginning of 2020. It's a massive, mega-billion dollar industry. All of that money will be gone. We will lose the opportunity to intersect with all of the other businesses we connect with so well—hospitality, travel, tourism, the Uber, the corner store, the parking lot, the public transportation we take to attend these concerts, and the restaurants where we eat when we get to them.

The Canadian brand is incredibly tarnished, immeasurably. Our counterparts around the world consider Canada closed for business. Many of our major tours that were postponed and that can't find time in the calendar are not coming back in 2022. The perception out there now is that we're closed until 2023. We still have time to overcome that, but the loss is immeasurable.

Mr. Peter Julian: You'd expect the closing of facilities as well, right?

Ms. Erin Benjamin: I would, and then some. There's the exodus of skilled labour from the sector and obviously the inability of artists to continue to create the cultural infrastructure. We've already seen the contraction, the disintegration. It's like chunks of an iceberg falling off into the ocean.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

Ms. Bator.

Ms. Kendra Bator: I think we would be looking at the collapse of Canadian commercial theatre production, as opposed to presentation. Already, every day, we're making decisions on whether to import something from the U.K. or the United States, or whether to grow something at home. As that becomes more and more risky, and as other markets have tax credit programs and insurance schemes that lure productions to those states or those countries, we are not competitive and there will be a threshold beyond which we can no longer take the risk.

We've talked about the economic development, the jobs, the mental health, the culture and the education programs. All of that goes away with it and we end up presenting other people's work, instead of nurturing our own.

● (1645)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Stacey.

Mr. Boomer Stacey: To echo everything my colleagues have said, there would be a collapse of the theatre sector, definitely; there would also be a loss of venues, a loss of companies, a loss of artists, and a huge loss in the diversity of Canadian stories being told. There would also be an increase in mental health crises, both in the professional community, as well as in the public.

We know that the public goes to the arts to boost themselves, and with less art available, we'll see an impact in Canadian society. I truly believe that.

The Chair: You have one minute left, Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Stacey, when both you and Ms. Bator were talking about collapse, what does that mean in terms of closing facilities? Would you expect to see a number of theatres, members of your organization, closing forever?

Mr. Boomer Stacey: Absolutely. We already have members who are on the brink. Omicron pushed people even closer. We can't keep riding that roller coaster.

Companies have survived mainly on the emergency funds that have been available. If and when that ceases, as Aubrey said in her presentation, it will take three to five years to recover. Like the vaccination program, it's not "one and done"; we need a constant influx of boosters into the sector to keep us going and to see us through.

Ms. Kendra Bator: I can see that happening in the long term in the commercial sector. In the short term, we'd be looking at what those spaces are used for. Throughout the course of the pandemic, movie studios were able to rent our theatres and capture content and broadcast it, but theatre productions were not able to. That it is a separate issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bator. You can elaborate on that in the next round.

We're moving into the second round of questions. This is a five-minute round.

I would like to begin with Mrs. Rachael Thomas from the Conservative Party for five minutes, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

My question is for Mr. Rubinoff and Ms. Bator.

In your submission to the committee, you stated that in the summer of 2021, you had an opportunity to sit down with officials at Heritage. You said that during that meeting, staff from the ministry articulated that the prevailing opinion at Heritage was that commercial theatre did not contribute to Canadian culture. I find that particularly interesting and somewhat troubling.

Can you expand on that a bit, especially in light of the play *Come From Away* and the dramatic impact that it has had in other countries?

Perhaps you'd care to comment, Mr. Rubinoff.

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: We hadn't gone to Heritage in the past. We've been independent as a sector. At that moment in time, we needed help, as we've said. We continue to need help. There's a historical practice of not supporting our sector. Potentially, what was explained to us in that one meeting was this lack of contribution.

Yes, as Kendra laid out, some of our shows are written by Canadians. A number of commercial productions have pushed Canadian work, with *Come From Away* being a prime example. Other shows may not be by Canadian playwrights, but they still engage Canadian actors, Canadian crews and Canadian staff.

We've been engaged in an education process about exactly what we do and our contribution, and we hope this historical narrative will change. This is a moment where we can leverage that to have that change, because two things can happen. The first is that we can get those supports. The second thing that can happen, when we get that support and we have that shift, is we'll have many more Canadian stories being told by Canadians, leveraged at home and around the world.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Rubinoff, I'll follow up on that quickly.

If there was one message that you could send concerning the definition of Canadian content and its support by the heritage minister, what would that one message be?

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: We have the best storytellers in the world. Canadians have an incredible lens with which to tell stories, and they're able to tell those stories on the commercial stage.

There should not be a delineation between not-for-profit and for profit when we're in crisis. Other English-speaking territories, like the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, made sure that both of those sectors were important and made sure that both of those sectors were supported.

There's no distinction between a Canadian commercial actor and a Canadian not-for-profit actor, or crew member or ticket-taker. These are Canadians. We need to support them, and I hope that Heritage will further explore that and look at it as the greater community and the impact we all can make.

● (1650)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: That's great.

Ms. Bator, I'm just going to reframe the question a little bit for you, if you don't mind.

Every minister receives a mandate letter from the Prime Minister, in other words, a letter of direction. In the letter for the Minister of Canadian Heritage he was directed as follows:

As Minister of Canadian Heritage, your immediate focus will be to ensure artists and cultural industries have the supports they need to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm wondering, given your experience, whether the mandate of this letter is being fulfilled or whether there is much more to do. If there is much more to do, how would you briefly define that?

Ms. Kendra Bator: I think there is much more to do. I think that these conversations are certainly a helpful beginning, and as we referenced in our statement, we've been having many of them of late. I would say that in defining culture, and therefore a cultural mandate, it's important for us to remember that it's not just what's happening on stage that defines the cultural activity. It is the activity of going to the theatre. It is the cultural activity of participating in that, on stage, backstage and at front of house. The Canadian story is all of that activity, not just the ones that are being written down and then sung on stage.

I think that needs to be more detailed in the mandate and activities that come out of it.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Ms. Bator, do you feel that the government has overlooked your sector?

Ms. Kendra Bator: I think, to Michael's point, we have not advocated for ourselves in the past. When we were plunged into this crisis, along with everyone else, we were starting at a very different point in conversation. We've been grateful to be heard. We've been grateful that people have returned our calls and emails, and that they continue to do so. We want to partner with the government to create supports that will last beyond this crisis, because it's not just about getting out of the crisis, it's about sustaining the industry after.

I think there's a lot of work to do, and I think we all have to do it together.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bator.

You can expand on that with the next question, I'm sure.

Now we go to the Liberals for five minutes.

Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm so excited to see everybody here today, because I absolutely am passionate about theatre.

Sometimes you have to start by bragging about your riding. When I was mayor of Côte Saint-Luc, along with the current mayor, Mitchell Brownstein, we founded the Côte Saint-Luc Dramatic Society to give young actors in our area—many of whom have gone on to Sheridan College in Toronto—the chance to act, the chance to do backstage work and the chance for west-end audiences to see English theatre in Montreal. We happen to have won the Montreal English Theatre Awards for four out of the last five years, before the pandemic, for *Cabaret*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Hairspray* and *The Producers*. We put them on in conjunction with the Segal Centre, which is also in my riding.

The last time we were doing this type of a study, Lisa Rubin, who is the incredible executive director of the Segal Centre, was here. She talked about the support that some government programs had indeed offered to the industry, such as the wage subsidy, the lease subsidy, the CERB that's helped individual performers, and now, of course, we have the \$60-million resilience fund. There are things, generally, that have helped the industry.

I want to talk about how we can use this as an opportunity to recognize how we've supported other industries, but we haven't supported theatre in Canada so that Toronto can compete with New

York, Chicago and London. There's English theatre like that in Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax, Ottawa and other major cities, and francophone theatre, not only in Montreal, but in Ottawa, Moncton and other parts of Canada where there are significant audiences.

Let's talk about tax credits first of all. You've talked about the U.K. tax credits. Have there been any provinces in Canada that the federal government can look to that have done anything with respect to tax credits and incentives to help theatre? If not, what foreign jurisdiction, whether Australia, the U.K., a state in the U.S., should we look to as an example of what we should do on tax credits and incentives?

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: If I may, first of all the Segal Centre is a prime example of an extraordinary theatre where commercial theatre producers have partnered with the centre to take on and test out commercial work. Lisa Rubin is a prime example of an extraordinary leader. We do not have any provinces in the country right now that have tax credits for theatre. Obviously, film and television is a harmonized federal...with certain provinces.

I think the State of Illinois and obviously the State of New York are wonderful examples to look at. Ohio is a little unique in that they did a program where they merged their film and television with theatre. These tax credits are 20% to 25% on labour and, in some cases, on production materials, but they are really anchored in labour. They make a considerable difference. They all have different limits on them, but incentives of up \$1 million or \$1.5 million or \$2 million make a huge difference when your risk is so significant, and you have all of that risk through box-office revenue.

That sort of assistance, that sort of partnering, really will stimulate our industry significantly.

• (1655)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Prigent, I'd like to ask you the same question as it applies to the theatre sector in Quebec or to francophone theatre across Canada.

Would these be the same types of applications, such as those for tax credits?

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Thank you for that excellent question, which I am unable to answer.

Nevertheless, I could readily find the answer to the question about tax credits. Some of my friends are artistic directors of Francophone theatres. Lorraine Pintal, for example, comes to mind. I'm sure I could obtain information that would be useful to you. I can get an answer for you within a few hours or by tomorrow.

Tax credits could be a form of assistance. There were several support measures introduced during the pandemic. For example, the ticket sales matching program which was widely used and enabled theatres to stay afloat even though audience sizes were seriously reduced. To ensure a more lasting recovery, longer-term measures could be considered. It's important to learn lessons from the pandemic.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Definitely.

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

I have one last question, because again, I'm completely in favour of the idea of doing for this sector what we're doing for other sectors.

This question is to either Ms. Bator or Mr. Rubinoff. Do you believe part of the issue, of course, again, that you haven't previously come to ask for this type of support is the fact that the industry is partially, in the sense of large productions, so centred in Toronto? Has that been part of the issue, that other parts of Canada haven't supported pushing this type of support for the sector because the industry is essentially so concentrated in Toronto?

Ms. Kendra Bator: I don't know that I would characterize it that way. Broadway Across Canada is one of our partners in commercial theatre and they present commercial touring productions across the country. Perhaps that activity is not to the same extent, but it does exist and it is robust.

Again, we haven't advocated for ourselves. These issues about tax credits, though, predate the COVID-19 crisis, and there has been discussion in the media about the battle between Chicago and Toronto and where productions go. Therefore, this has been years long. It's not a recent topic of conversation.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, and thanks again for all that you all do.

The Chair: Now we'll go to the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Champoux, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Prigent, you previously mentioned a subject of interest to me, and that's the eligibility of artists and cultural workers for programs like employment insurance, which would constitute a form of social safety net. It's a subject that is often raised. Moreover, this committee is going to conduct a study on the federal Status of the Artist Act. There is such an act in Quebec as well, and you are very familiar with it. The act is clearly in need of reform.

What positive impacts would these measures you are proposing have had if they had been in place during the pandemic?

Ms. Sophie Prigent: The measures that were introduced, namely the CERB, the CRB, the CWLB, and the \$60 million in funding that has just been announced, were created specifically because there was no social safety net for artists. There was no financial support, and artists were in the dark. It should be noted in passing that every time a benefit program ended and was replaced by another,

artists found themselves abandoned and in the dark for long periods during the transition.

Would it be possible to learn from the pandemic to improve the situation and establish a permanent form of employment insurance? Of course, we would contribute. It could be used during a pandemic, for example, or at times when artists are not earning any income.

We believe that lessons should be drawn from the experience. The pandemic exacerbated the absence of financial support, not only for creators, but all self-employed workers and freelancers across Canada. The knowledge we acquired during the pandemic should be used to improve things.

• (1700)

Mr. Martin Champoux: I'm sure you'll agree that these problems existed already.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Yes, of course.

Mr. Martin Champoux: It took a crisis to reveal the extent of these problems, and the potential disasters that could result.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Yes, precisely.

Mr. Martin Champoux: I'm happy that we have an opportunity to discuss it. It's probably an ideal time for a revision of this federal act.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Ms. Prigent, do you believe that the Status of the Artist Act had a positive impact in Quebec?

Would I be right to say that you would like the federal act to have more teeth?

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Yes, indeed.

Artists are well protected in Quebec under the province's act on the status of artists, but I believe that the federal act could do better.

Mr. Martin Champoux: We'll see.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Prigent.

Now I go to Mr. Julian for the New Democratic Party for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Prigent, you spoke very eloquently about how artists have been affected by everything we've been through over the past two years, and the importance of introducing a policy on employment insurance.

Could we do more to establish a solid footing for artists from one end of Canada to the other?

I'm talking about a basic income program, as well as other programs that exist internationally.

Could we learn from programs in other countries how to provide a proper standard of living for artists, who contribute so much to society?

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Absolutely.

France, for example, introduced a program specifically for performing arts “*intermittents*,” as they are called there, and it has possibilities. In France, everyone knows that an actor can't be on stage 340 or 365 days a year. There are times when artists may not be working, but spending time on further training, creating, writing, and so on.

So there are models we could draw upon or adopt. Thank you for pointing this out. We are not opposed to the idea. There is employment insurance, to be sure, but there are other options. The important thing is to make sure that the measure is permanent.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much.

[English]

I'm going to go to Mr. Stacey and Ms. Bator.

Do you see international examples we can use here at home that would establish a real solid base for our Canadian artists and for our Canadian theatres?

Mr. Boomer Stacey: Yes, I know Ireland has just passed something recent in support of artists. I think Aubrey has probably greater info on that than I do. But I know in Europe there are a number of countries that do support their artists with a guaranteed income program.

Ms. Aubrey Reeves: If I can jump in on the Ireland example, they just announced a few months ago they will be providing \$28 million to artists and entertainers hurt by the pandemic through a basic income program. Artists are receiving approximately \$400 a week for three years and also venues are receiving \$10,000 in grants. The mission is really the first of its kind for entertainers in that country to support jobs and businesses in the night-time economy, which is how they define it, but also to support new and emerging acts. It is a basic income program. It is a small pilot, about 2,000 to 2,500 artists are participating, but it's a really good pilot for us to look to to maybe base some other programs on in Canada.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to move to the next questioner for the Conservatives, Ms. Leslyn Lewis, for five minutes.

Ms. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Stacey, you had spoken about the difference between the treatment of larger providers and smaller providers. I believe I heard you say in your testimony that larger providers could access funds more easily than under-serviced and marginalized communities. I wanted you to just expand on that and highlight some of the changes that you think the government could make to reduce this disparity.

Mr. Boomer Stacey: It's not necessarily based on size, but a lot of it is based on historical practice. So companies that have histori-

cally benefited from funding from the Canada Council, as long as they're in good standing, they continue to benefit from that. There's not a huge new influx of money coming into the Canada Council, so in order for them to expand, they need to take money away from someone else. We don't want to see that happen, so it takes new money to ensure that new companies are benefiting from the same access to funds. We're seeing a huge increase in the prominence of culturally diverse IBPOC companies, queer companies, companies that are artists who traditionally have been marginalized and are having a challenge accessing funds on a sustainable level.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Thank you.

[Translation]

My next question is for Ms. Prigent.

Ms. Prigent, can you tell me whether independent workers in your sector were able to have ready access to the funds established to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic?

Ms. Sophie Prigent: Are you talking about the most recent measure, the Canada worker lockdown benefit?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Yes, exactly.

Ms. Sophie Prigent: I believe the benefit was up to \$300 per week, which of course was not enough. It's better than nothing, however. I'd like to make something clear: I'm not here to complain. All of these support measures helped artists in need. What's clear, though, is that they weren't enough. Artists had to wait to see if we were officially in lockdown, which was indeed the case in Quebec. It therefore took more time for artists to gain access to this support. The circumstances were difficult.

But when we did get access to these benefits, they were thankfully retroactive. We received money, but it took a while. The measure was in fact introduced at the last minute. Added to that was the fact that it took a number of weeks to actually receive it. Things were really difficult.

For artists, the fifth wave was one too many. It was the worst in terms of the response and the psychological distress. We had already got through four previous waves.

To answer your question, I would say that the measure was useful, although not perfect, and that it took a while to implement it.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Thank you very much.

[English]

My next question is for Mr. Stacey.

What capacity limits would you say theatres need in order to operate at a sustainable level?

Mr. Boomer Stacey: It's a very hard question. We've had many members who have been allowed to open at 100% capacity, but because of audience lack of confidence in going, they haven't been able to achieve 100% capacity. I think people would like to see the opportunity to open at 100%, but make their own decisions as to what capacity of tickets they're going to sell.

I know some of our members have experimented with offering the same show one night at 50% capacity and the next night at 100%. If you're a little bit leery of going with a full house, you buy a ticket to the half-capacity showing.

People would love the opportunity to make that decision for themselves and have access to being able to sell at 100%.

• (1710)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Thank you.

Is there a distinction between the larger theatres and the smaller theatres and the impact levels on these different venues during COVID?

Mr. Boomer Stacey: Yes.

Again, I was trying to speak to diversity in my introduction. Every company has a different issue. If you're a rural company and you're trying to attract audience members from literally a several hours drive away, you're facing different capacity issues than if you're in Toronto and competing against 40 or 50 other entertainment options at the same time.

We're facing a variety of issues related to capacity and to impacts across the country.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Bator.

I would like to hear a little bit more about how to instill confidence in the sector. You mentioned that it will cost \$28 million to produce Harry Potter.

What level of security measures do you feel need to be put in place in order for your industry to once again embark on such a risk?

Ms. Kendra Bator: We'll need partnership from all levels of government. This will be about having sustained supports in place. We need to know that if we have to close, someone will be there to hold our hand to help us get to when we can reopen.

We need messaging. We need all levels of government to tell people that it's important to go to the theatre, that it contributes to our lives and that it's safe to go to the theatre. I think it's the soft power of government saying how important it is and the actual, tangible measures.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bator. We need to wrap up.

For five minutes, we have Mr. Chris Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you so much.

Thank you, everyone, for being here.

I would like to build on your last answer, Ms. Bator and Mr. Rubinoff. You spoke about tax credits and potential insurance. Are

there any other measures—if you'd like expand on it—that you'd like to see to assist the sector?

I will hear Mr. Rubinoff first.

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: Those are two key ones.

Obviously, who knows where things are going to go with this pandemic? Not having access to emergency funding.... It's a whole program, so if we don't have those supports and don't have access to emergency funding, it's very difficult to move forward. What you saw in the American context was that they received substantial aid through the American program. They don't have insurance supports and they could weather through.

You do give me an opportunity to talk about what we put in the submission. We've also seen in our industry what the government did for film and television to provide funding for more diversity supports and inclusion supports in the industry. We would like to see that in our sector as well. Using this moment as we look forward, those supports would be great to champion a program much like in film and television, where we can go out and do internships and apprenticeships and pay people to come into our industry so that we can tell the diverse stories of Canada. That would be very helpful in this moment.

Ms. Kendra Bator: I echo what Michael says. Yes, that's what we're looking for. It's really the combination of things, and when you don't have the emergency funding there, the lack of insurance is exacerbating the situation we're in.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

Perhaps this is best suited to Mr. Rubinoff. We've talked about the benefits of the commercial theatre sector to the economy in terms of money back. I know that Ms. Bator spoke about that.

Could you talk about the overall economic impact of the commercial theatre sector on the economy, just to put it in perspective as we study this?

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: Yes. It's so significant as a beacon of economic activity. One, it's bringing together people in different communities and cities across the country to experience something that you can't experience in your home or on your device.

It's such a unique art form, and it's one we need. The economic impact is so significant. We had theatres open for a couple of weeks, and if you walked around the downtown core in Toronto you saw thousands of people going into the theatres and then thousands of people going to use public transit, going to the restaurants, going to shop at retail and going to get takeout. That's really tangible.

It put money in the hands of actors and the artists. From the mental health perspective—and I know Mr. Stacey has spoken about it eloquently—that really made a difference. They were waiting for 20 months to get back on the stage, so we were supporting them in the commercial theatre through our collective bargained agreements. We pay the highest rates in the commercial theatre. That was really supportive, and it has an impact on the economy and an impact on allowing artists to live in cities that are becoming more expensive places to live.

Finally, in terms of looking at economic development, we can't take wellness out of it. People want to come back together. People want to have these unique experiences to perceive a story of hope and optimism, a story on what that means and a reflection on who we are as a community and as a people. I think that on that wellness and giving people that outlet and opportunity, we cannot negate the cost of doing that.

• (1715)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

Perhaps I'll open this up a little more but maybe stick with Mr. Rubinoff to start out.

Do you think the pandemic has transformed the theatre industry moving forward or is it too early to tell?

Mr. Michael Rubinoff: We're still waiting. It's transformed in that we're having these discussions. We want to see as we move forward if we are actually going to have those tangible supports for that transformation.

We're at an incredible moment. In this conversation and talking to all of you, being heard is giving us so much hope. If we can transform that into action and programs, you are going to see that transformation.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

I'll ask Mr. Stacey the same question. Do you see a transformation in the live theatre industry?

Mr. Boomer Stacey: There's absolutely a transformation, some positive and some negative. It will remain to be seen what stays with us. I know in the very beginning of the pandemic we talked about this being an opportunity to change for the positive in our sector. We're still at the place where we're extremely worried about losing members of our sector, so there's still a huge potential for us to come out of this in a much worse place.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for coming, spending the time and giving us very clear, concise directions that we could look at when writing a report and maybe getting some recommendations.

I will suspend the meeting for two minutes so that the witnesses can leave and we can get to committee business. Thank you very much.

• (1715)

(Pause)

• (1715)

The Chair: We'll go quickly to the Housefather notice of motion. I would like us to discuss it and see whether we support this motion or not.

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the history of and current display of hate symbols and emblems such as the swastika and the Confederate flag in Canada and consider what actions Parliament may take to end or limit the display of such hate symbols and emblems; that the study should be at least one meeting; and that the committee report its findings to the House.

Now I will open this up to discussion. Please raise your hand.

I see Mr. Housefather's hand up.

• (1720)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to just explain to the committee why I think this study is important. First of all, all of us, on all sides in the House, condemn these symbols. This is not a partisan study or partisan issue. It's one where I believe we need to educate Canadians on what these symbols actually mean.

Over the last little while, my office has received numbers of emails from people arguing that the swastika and the Confederate flag are not hate symbols. What we need to have, I believe, is a historian come in and explain in front of us and to Canadians what these symbols have historically meant. Then I'd like to also suggest that organizations representing the Black community and the Jewish community be invited to also give their take on the meaning of these symbols and how they harm the community.

This is not the long study that will be done when the great legislation that Mr. Julian is proposing comes before the House. Then there'll be a lot of discussion about whether freedom of expression in section 2 is breached and whether section 1 saves it. I'm looking at this as being an, as we say in French, *étude préalable*, a small study to just basically educate and inform Canadians in a non-partisan way what these symbols mean. It will then set it up for the House to have a larger debate on what actions it can take, including legislation, to potentially deal with the symbols of hate.

I want to assure everybody, again—because there have been a lot of people making comments—that this is not related to the convoy. This is not related to allegations that any member of any party supports these horrible symbols. It's something that I'm hoping we all across party lines can work together on to determine the best way of handling this and educating Canadians through just one meeting on this issue.

Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Anthony.

Go ahead, Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

I support this motion, and I'm glad Mr. Housefather moved it forward for the reasons that he mentioned. The confusion over what these symbols mean is something I'm surprised at. I don't think there's a single member of Parliament who doesn't understand the implications, but it's important for public education that we reiterate what these symbols represent.

I would offer a friendly amendment, if Mr. Housefather is open to that. It's to add, after “the swastika and the Confederate flag in Canada and consider what actions Parliament may take,” “including possible legislation”.

I guess I also would suggest that perhaps we say the Nazi swastika, given that in Hinduism a different type of swastika is present, and that would avoid the confusion that sometimes exists on that.

I certainly support the motion and hope that these friendly amendments are acceptable.

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

You've moved that amendment, officially, Peter?

Mr. Peter Julian: No, Madam Chair. I've offered it as a friendly amendment. It's up to the mover to accept it or not.

The Chair: Anthony, do you have anything to say?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I'm totally fine with the amendments. I don't think it changes the substance of the motion. I agree on the Nazi swastika to be clearer and certainly one of the things that Parliament may do is possible legislation. I don't think it changes the context of the motion at all.

I appreciate the suggestion. I'm totally fine with it, if others are.

The Chair: It's allowable.

We're not going to take a vote on it, since you have agreed to let it change.

Ms. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Housefather, for this very important motion. I think it's very worthwhile.

I just want to ask one question and I'm asking it out of deep sincerity. I just want to know how you concluded just to have two symbols and why blackface wasn't included?

I seriously ask it out of the utmost respect for your motion. I think that identifying symbols of hate and educating Canadians about them is very important. These symbols of hate should be condemned.

As a Black person, I also feel that a symbol of hate such as blackface, which is pre- and post-antebellum and was very relevant also in Canadian history, should be added. I'm also requesting a friendly amendment to add that in.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Chairman, I certainly condemn blackface. Blackface is abhorrent.

My understanding of what blackface means is the horrendous way in minstrel shows and then following that in film and theatre when white artists covered their face with black paint and pretended to be African Americans or Black Canadians. I don't necessarily understand that to be a symbol or an emblem.

The reason I chose the words that I did was because I looked at Mr. Julian's draft bill. I used the words that were in Mr. Julian's draft bill that is before the House. Those words said, "including" but not limited to. This is not limiting this. I said "such as" the Nazi swastika and the Confederate flag, which I believe is also a symbol of hatred against Blacks. That's why I chose the words.

I couldn't accept the friendly amendment, only because I don't believe that's a symbol or an emblem. But in the context of the questions, Ms. Lewis, that you would ask to the witnesses—and I believe we should have the national Black organizations there—I think questions could certainly be asked to them about what they feel and how blackface makes their members feel. I can only imag-

ine how hurtful it is to all Black Canadians, and all right-thinking Canadians to see that.

• (1725)

The Chair: Ms. Lewis, your friendly amendment was not accepted.

Are you moving an amendment for discussion?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Yes, I would love to.

I would love to also say to Mr. Housefather that it is both a symbol and an emblem of hate. It is a symbol of chattel slavery. It pre-dates even the symbol of the Confederate flag, which is really relevant to the south and is a pre- and post-antebellum symbol whereas blackface transcends the entire history of African chattel slavery in North America. It's not just dressing up. It's not just playing theatre. It is a symbol of being in bondage for Black people. It is a mockery and a caricature of the oppression and suffering that we've endured. It's very serious and that's why I proposed it. It is a very hurtful symbol.

I would love for you to consider that, thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Lewis, will you say where that amendment should go and be inserted so that we can have people vote on the amendment?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I don't have it in front of me. It should be inserted after the enumeration of the Confederate flag, Nazi flag, therefore "and blackface". That's where it should be inserted.

The Chair: All right.

Is everyone clear on the amendment before we start debating it?

The amendment would say, "That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the history of and current display of hate symbols such as the Nazi swastika and the Confederate flag in Canada, and blackface, and consider what actions Parliament may take to end or limit the display...."

I'm allowing the amendment, because it is not necessarily changing the intent of the motion.

We can now have a discussion, please.

Mr. Champoux.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have the impression that we've made a very good start on an extremely interesting discussion. I've just heard Ms. Lewis's arguments in defence of her amendment. I believe that too will be interesting.

Is blackface really a symbol of hate and contempt?

For many years, black makeup was used in the theatre. It was a way to enable a white actor to play a black role. At the time, it was not necessarily considered contemptuous, hateful or disrespectful.

I find this discussion extremely interesting. It's also the kind of discussion we could have as part of our study. But I'm not sure about the relevance of adding blackface to the motion as something that is clearly considered a hate symbol. I'm nevertheless open to the idea of hearing arguments from my colleagues.

I think that we'll be having some extremely sensitive discussions on this subject. We'll all have to be walking on eggshells on occasion because it is certainly sensitive issue.

For the time being, I have reservations about adding the fact that blackface is a hate symbol to the motion. I'd like to hear evidence from people Ms. Lewis could invite to appear, in addition to her own testimony.

I am really looking forward to the discussion we're going to have on this motion, but I still have doubts about the relevance of adding blackface to the wording of the motion.

● (1730)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

Go ahead, Anthony.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: So that I understand, because I based the motion on Mr. Julian's draft bill, I'd like to ask Mr. Julian what he thinks. Does he think it's appropriate to add that? In that case, I would say it's a friendly amendment.

I'd like to understand from Mr. Julian if this corresponds to his draft bill and what he considers a symbol or an emblem to be.

Mr. Peter Julian: The model of the bill is one of symbols and emblems, because of what we saw transpire a couple of weeks ago on Parliament Hill, with the symbols of the Confederate flag and the symbols of the Nazi swastika. It's absolutely reprehensible.

I agree with Ms. Lewis that blackface is an absolutely reprehensible practice and action. When she raised it, I looked quickly for the issue of banning blackface. What I see are references to theatre productions, television networks and the Paris opera, all of which have considered bans on blackface. That is important.

It's different from the intent of the bill that I brought forward, which is banning these symbols and emblems that we saw so despicably displayed on Parliament Hill just two weeks ago.

What Ms. Lewis presents is extraordinarily important and valuable. It's a different approach. We're talking about a different category of reprehensible actions, compared to the emblems and symbols that are represented by the swastika and the Confederate flag.

I certainly would like to take some time to look into this a bit more. Of course, Ms. Lewis has the opportunity to bring forward a motion like this when we're talking about actions that are banned in theatre, in opera, on television networks or in movies. That seems to be the extent to which the banning of blackface has taken place.

It is a reprehensible practice that should be banned, and is banned in live theatre, in opera and on television.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Housefather, was your question answered?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I don't think Mr. Julian really had the answer to my question.

I think we both recognize that it's very important and a horrible practice. The question is whether it is a symbol or emblem related to something that Parliament can end or limit the display of. I'm not 100% sure. I don't have that knowledge. That's why I didn't put it in the original draft of the motion.

Right now it says "such as". May I make a friendly suggestion to everybody that we undertake a study on the history and current display of hate symbols and emblems and take out the words "such as the swastika and Confederate flag"? Anyone could then raise whatever hate symbols or emblems they want with witnesses in the context of the study. We could have more time to think about what those may be. I don't know whether that's a symbol or an emblem.

Would that be a solution that is acceptable to everybody? These are just two examples of what they might be.

The Chair: Ms. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: The fact that we are contemplating this for educational purposes is very important. It's clear that many people don't understand the historical legacy of blackface. It was perpetuated in the theatre to mock and to put Black people in their place, and that is a place of bondage and slavery.

Just as somebody would come to a parade and fly a flag for intimidation, the theatre was a place of mockery. People went to degrade other human beings and to make them subhuman.

The fact that we're even contemplating it is deeply hurtful to me. It's enlightening and promising because I see a future in understanding that we are going down a path where we will look into just how hurtful these symbols are.

Thank you. I agree with your amendment.

● (1735)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Would everybody consider it a friendly amendment that we simply say "hate symbols and emblems in Canada" and not give the examples? Then when we question the historians or the witnesses we bring, anybody can talk about any symbols or emblems they wish.

I think I see heads nodding. If that's okay, Madam Chair, I hope that would be considered a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Yes. I think Ms. Lewis said she liked the amendment.

Are you withdrawing your amendment, Ms. Lewis?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Yes.

The Chair: Then we will go back to this new motion, which is a subamendment to the amendment.

Since you're withdrawing it yourself, I think maybe we can consider Mr. Housefather's subamendment and not vote on an amendment that has been withdrawn, if that's okay with everyone.

Mr. Coteau and then Mr. Julian.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): I think it has been resolved. I'm fine.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I think that is an appropriate solution.

I would just like the revised motion to be reread.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Peter, I'm going to try to do it including your amendments, if that's okay.

We're going to remove also the amendment that added Nazi before swastika because we're not having that word in there anymore.

[*Translation*]

I could read it in French afterwards, if you wish.

[*English*]

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the history of and current display of hate symbols and emblems in Canada, and con-

sider what actions Parliament may take to end or limit the display of such hate symbols and emblems, including legislation; that the study should be at least one meeting; and that the committee report its findings to the House.

Thank you, Ms. Lewis, for your suggestions, and Mr. Julian and Mr. Champoux for your help in getting this done.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: If you wish, I could read it again.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Dispense.

The Chair: Great. Thank you. That's good.

The motion is now passed. Again, it is "at least one meeting". I may want to add a caveat that, you know, this is not going to be one meeting, if we're going to be looking at this from the broadest symbol of hate perspective that we're doing now.

I may want to ask if somebody wanted to make an amendment.

Well, it says "at least one meeting". I'd like you to think about it so that the next time we get together, you can decide whether you're going to want more than one meeting.

Thank you very much. You all worked so well as a committee. I'm so proud of you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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