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• (1530)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I call this meeting to order.

I would first like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[*English*]

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 sport 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 the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of recommendations from the health authorities as well as the directive 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 two-metre physical distancing and must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is highly recommended that the mask be worn at all times, including when seated and including when speaking. Please use the hand sanitizer in the room.

As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I thank members in advance for their 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. If interpretation is lost, please let me know immediately and we will ensure that it is properly restored before resuming the proceedings.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. I remind you that all comments by members should be addressed through the chair.

Today, I would like to welcome to our meeting the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez and, also from the Department of Canadian Heritage, Isabelle Mondou, deputy minister, and David Dendooven, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy, planning and corporate affairs.

The minister will stay for one hour—from 3:30 to 4:30—and then he will leave. The remainder of the Department of Canadian Heritage will be here to answer questions. They will be Joëlle Montminy, senior assistant deputy minister, David Dendooven, assistant deputy minister, and Thomas Owen Ripley, associate assistant deputy minister.

We will begin. Welcome, Minister, to the committee. I'm waiting with bated breath to hear from you. As you know, you will be given five minutes to speak, and then you will be able to receive questions for the full hour.

Please go ahead, Minister Rodriguez.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, honourable committee members and colleagues, good afternoon.

[*English*]

Thank you for inviting me here today to speak to you about the support the Department of Canadian Heritage has provided to the arts and culture sectors throughout the pandemic.

You've heard me before. I often ask the question, "Can you imagine a day without arts, without culture?" It would be boring. Without theatre, television, movies, books, it would be super boring. Culture is fundamental to us, but that sector was hit hard throughout the pandemic, extremely hard. Each wave of the pandemic brought new or renewed public health restrictions, and that meant, Madam Chair, that theatres, cinemas and museums had to close their doors over and over again.

These sectors are vital. They're vital for our culture—for who we are—but also for our economy. Prepandemic, the sector represented 726,000 workers, workers whose livelihoods were immediately impacted by the pandemic.

[Translation]

Therefore, we immediately understood that urgent action was needed to help workers in the cultural sector. Time was of the essence, and we didn't have a second to waste. We acted quickly to help these sectors weather the pandemic. Now, the wave attributable to the Omicron variant needs to be overcome. We also need to plan for a strong recovery and build truly solid foundations in the sector.

As an aside, if I may, I'd like to thank all the public servants at Canadian Heritage and its portfolio agencies, who are absolutely extraordinary. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. Despite the pandemic and all of its challenges, despite the fact that we are all human beings and we all have our own challenges to overcome, they were up to the task. In fact, they were more than up to the task; they were absolutely extraordinary.

I would like to say a few words about our accomplishments. At the beginning of the pandemic, we launched the \$500-million emergency support fund for cultural, heritage and sport organizations. It was extremely important for the sector, and it worked well. In fact, more than three-quarters of funding recipients told us that it allowed them to stay in business.

We also launched a \$149-million compensation fund administered by Telefilm Canada, which allowed organizations in the film and audiovisual industry to resume production. It was like an insurance that allowed them to continue filming. Furthermore, we have just renewed this fund. In addition, \$181.5 million has been paid out to support workers in the performing arts and music sector.

[English]

We know, though, Madam Chair, that we need to do more. We need to do more to help the sector get through the rest of this pandemic and secure a strong recovery too. That is why, in the last budget, budget 2021, we included a historic investment of \$1.3 billion to help ensure the recovery and growth of the arts, culture and sports sectors.

[Translation]

More recently, the advent of the Omicron variant in 2021 triggered new restrictions and lockdowns. Even though this was the right thing to do, it was another brutal blow to workers in the cultural sector. Let's be honest. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we listened to them, we worked with them, and we continue to do so to help them weather this storm.

After several discussions with colleagues from different parties, we have just announced increased support for workers in the performing arts by creating the \$60-million Canada performing arts workers resilience fund. Funding will be distributed through organizations such as guilds, unions and other associations.

This program plays an extremely strategic, even unique, role. The deadline for submitting applications is March 4, 2022, which is just around the corner. I know that you are aware, but if you know of people who might want to apply, please let them know soon.

[English]

There's no need to say that COVID-19 changed our lives. It fundamentally shifted the ways we connect and interact with each other. We also changed how we discover, how we create and how we consume content. We are on digital platforms more, and we need to make sure that our system and our culture are protected as a result.

We recently tabled the online streaming act, which will ensure that online streaming platforms contribute to our culture in a fair and equitable way. Our next step, Madam Chair, will be to introduce online news legislation, and that legislation will create a framework that makes sure that Canadian publishers and journalists receive fair compensation for their work. That's essential, Madam Chair.

At the same time, we're working on how to tackle harmful content online. It's a complex issue, we all know, and that's why we are working on putting together a panel of experts to further help guide this work. I look forward to bringing an update to colleagues very soon.

● (1540)

[Translation]

As you know, we had to unfortunately postpone the national summit on the arts, culture and heritage because of the Omicron variant, but we will reschedule it as soon as it is safe to do so. It will be held in person. We want to be able to see our artists and creators, give them the chance to talk to us, and reflect together on a collective vision for a sustainable recovery for the cultural sectors and on ways of making this vision a reality. The recovery is coming. I am optimistic. The sectors will bounce back. Better days are awaiting our arts industry and our cultural sector. Our cultural sector workers have been there for Canadians throughout the pandemic. They have made us laugh, think and cry. They have been there for us, and we will continue to be there for them.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Minister, the first round is a six-minute round. As everyone knows, that round includes the question and the answer.

We'll begin with John Nater for the Conservatives, for six minutes.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for joining us today. I think this is your first appearance at this committee in this current incarnation as Minister of Canadian Heritage. Welcome. It's nice to have you.

I want to start with a topic that's on our minds with the situation in Ukraine and the Russian aggression. Over the weekend our party called for an order of general application to revoke the licences of state-owned enterprises that are spewing propaganda. As you know, just minutes ago in the House of Commons, we adopted a UC motion to put this into effect.

Obviously, we're thankful, as you mentioned, that Rogers, Bell and Shaw have done this. Will you be taking that extra step and asking the CRTC to take further action on this matter?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It's a very important question, Mr. Nater.

The rise of disinformation and misinformation requires a very strong response—we all agree on that—from government, from civil society, from everyone. I've been very clear. I said it clearly. RT is propaganda. RT is disinformation. RT is misinformation. I totally support that decision. RT has no place on our airwaves.

I will say, Mr. Nater, that I will have more to announce in a few hours.

Mr. John Nater: I wait with bated breath.

Thank you, Minister. I appreciate those comments.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: They're only hours.

Mr. John Nater: Yes, they're only hours. I will wait for that, but I appreciate that. I agree with the sentiment.

On the topic at hand, the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the arts, culture and sports industries, we can't underestimate the impact it has had on more levels, not just financially and economically, but culturally as well.

One challenge we've heard from witnesses and from the stakeholder groups we've met with is the stigma associated with the return to theatre, the return to live events, the return to large public gatherings. It's this idea that people are hesitant, and obviously rightfully so.

I'd be curious as to what efforts you, as minister, and the department are going to take to decrease that stigma, to tell people it's okay to return to the theatre, that it's okay to return to large public events. For two years we've been telling people to stay home. Now we're telling people to get back there, to get back and support the important cultural aspect. I'm curious as to what steps you'll be taking.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You're absolutely right, Mr. Nater. I saw it first-hand when I went to see l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. Even though the capacity allowed for more, the room was almost empty. I asked why. They said it's because people are still afraid to come to shows.

I also went to see l'Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal. The members had decided they would miss a show once in a while so they'd keep fewer people in the room.

One thing we're doing—the \$60 million we announced—that we're putting in place and that is going on now, will help artists from the live sector. Because events were cancelled and because the venues could not hold that many people inside, we're also looking at different programs to put in place to support, like in Quebec, the

empty seats that are not being filled. That adds to a series of programs we have put in place in the last two years.

• (1545)

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Minister.

Flowing from that, so much of our arts and culture sector relies on international visitors, those cross-border tourists who support culture, who come and spend their money here in Canada.

This week we're going to see an end to the PCR testing at the borders, but there is still a requirement for testing. Will you be encouraging your colleagues to do away with the testing that's currently there, even the rapid tests, for fully vaccinated tourists?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: That decision goes to my colleague from health, and Dr. Tam and the scientists. I would love to have the borders open too, but we have to be extremely careful in making sure we do the right thing. I understand very well what you're saying.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Minister.

Obviously, you've met with representatives from the commercial theatre sector. You've heard the concerns. *Come From Away*, the greatest Canadian success in musicals in Canada, is currently being performed in cities around the world but not here in Canada. I think that's a greatly unfortunate irony.

One thing we've heard is that other jurisdictions have strong tax measures encouraging live theatre performances. New York State is obviously one of them. Here in Canada we have certain measures encouraging television and theatre production in Canada, which have been shown to be great successes.

As minister, would the department consider extending that type of provision to live theatre productions for the commercial theatre sector, as well as to the not-for-profit and non-profit theatre sectors? Many of us have those types of theatres in our ridings.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: That's an excellent question. I have to say that I spent a lot of time during the Christmas holidays speaking with the people from *Come From Away* and others. We are looking at different options. The taxation part is more for Finance to look at. If it's a good thing for Canada and for the industry, I definitely wouldn't be opposed to it.

There are other mechanisms that we're exploring in partnership with Mirvish and others to create programs that don't necessarily exist now, or ways to help them that will benefit them in the future so we don't go back to the situation we were in.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nater. You have ended your time.

I'm going to go to Tim Louis, for the Liberals, for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here. Your passion for the arts is clearly on display.

I have said this before, but I will start by saying that science is getting us out of this pandemic, but it's the arts that are getting us through this pandemic. The artists are the people we turn to in order to make sense of what's happened and the challenges we've faced in the last two years.

Making art takes dedication, and that dedication requires support. We get more with what we support. I have heard many times from our artists that our government supports were a lifeline to their sector. That is the term they used.

Throughout the study, we have seen how far-reaching the Canadian Heritage programs are, the number of sectors that fall under the scope of Heritage and the number of programs that are created specifically to support those in the cultural industry.

Can you take a step back, look at those last two years, and speak to the scale and scope of the funding that has been created since the pandemic started?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you for the question, Mr. Louis. If anyone knows the sector, it's you.

Thank you for raising the importance of culture and how it helped us to get through this. I said in my speech that we got through this with the help of culture. How many of you were in front of a television, playing the guitar, playing the piano or reading a book? We made it through this because of those things.

As I said, culture makes us laugh, think and rethink a lot, but at the same time a lot of people and a lot of sectors are very vulnerable. They don't have a safety net. This was a disaster for a lot of elements in the culture sector.

We started by putting in place that first \$500 million, which was an immediate support for the arts and culture sector industry. As I said, we did a poll. I think 85% of the people said this was what got them through this. We added more money—\$281 million—a couple of months later. The \$500 million was in November, and then in April, we added \$281 million. Remember, guys, that included the insurance for the film sector.

What happened with the film sector was nobody wanted to insure them, because if one of the main actors got COVID, everything was shut down. They had reserved the studios, the actors, the technicians and everything, so it would have cost a fortune. They had the problem with insurance companies not wanting to support them, so we came in with this \$150 million to back them, which allowed filming to go on and on.

We came back with more problems in the end for festivals, this and that. I could read this, Mr. Louis, but there was help for our music sector, for our museums and for books. We tried to be there for everyone, because they are there for us as Canadians.

• (1550)

Mr. Tim Louis: I appreciate that. That's what this study is. We're taking it a sector at a time and seeing what we can do to support them as they come out.

To put it bluntly, reopening doesn't mean recovery, and different sectors are going to be affected differently. The arts and culture sector—I know this from first-hand experience—is always the first to be affected and the last to recover in any economic downturn. The pandemic has taken that level of ups and downs, that cycle, to an unexpected and unforeseen level.

From our study already, we're hearing that the recovery is expected to be three to five years. What we have heard from artists across the country is that they feel like they have been heard and they have hope, but we need to continue that dialogue. Like Mr. Nater said, since the performing arts and the live performance sectors are so hard hit, it's a challenge to get to those workers, specifically the independent and self-employed artists in the live performance sector.

Can you speak to the supports for that sector, specifically the Canada performing arts workers resilience fund? What are the eligibility requirements for that funding, and what organizations can help us get that support on the ground to those performing artists?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Absolutely.

Another one of the challenges, Mr. Louis, is that because it's been so insecure—with opening, closing, shows being programmed and then taken down, and this and that—a lot of people have decided to say, "I love that, but I'm going to get a more stable job. I can't stay here because I have a family; I have to pay the rent and I have to feed the kids," so we're losing a lot of amazing people, musicians, creators. That specific fund, as you call it, the Canada performing arts workers resilience fund, is the one I announced not too long ago. We had the discussion at the finance committee, with Mr. Champoux and others.

We're going to go through associations, guilds and unions. They have up to March 4, the end of the week, to apply. It's similar to what we saw in Quebec with l'Union des artistes. Those organizations have until March 4 to apply.

Then we are going to do a thorough but quick analysis, provide them with the funding and enable them to open up the programs to individuals. It's a maximum of \$2,500 per person. It could be direct funding, but it could also be through services. We talk a lot about mental health. A lot of people in the cultural sector need that kind of support so they will be able to access that or other types of support, get help with the rent, training and all of that, and it's going to come very soon.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you.

I can't hear you, Madam Chair. I believe my time—

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You have another 10 minutes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tim Louis: I have another 10 minutes. I could talk for at least that long, but I will yield my time.

The Chair: Tim, you have 30 seconds.

Mr. Tim Louis: I will use the 30 seconds to say thank you. That's all. I appreciate it.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you very much for the questions.

The Chair: Thanks, Tim.

I am now going to Mr. Champoux.

Martin, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I must admit that I am happy to see my colleagues in person again. It has been a while since we have seen each other. However, I will miss Mr. Louis' sound tests during hybrid sittings, when he would practise his French and update us on his progress.

Speaking of Mr. Louis, I will dig deeper on the question that he asked, Minister. You were talking about the resilience fund that you announced, which is open for funding applications until the end of the week, as you said. I was a bit critical of this fund when I noted that the \$60 million would help artists but that a call for projects had also been launched using the same fund.

What was the rationale behind this idea?

• (1555)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I am not—

Mr. Martin Champoux: According to the description of criteria, organizations can also propose projects, which would be funded by this fund.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Well, that is the main objective, because the fund is not for organizations. It's more or less the same principle as the one behind the Union des Artistes, which you may know better than I do. We are doing it more broadly, across the entire country. Organizations submit proposals to us, they tell us what they want to do for their clientele, and we transfer them the funding. Then, the organizations submit their applications.

Mr. Martin Champoux: The projects are used basically to signal how the organizations will proceed.

Is that right?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Yes, that's about right.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Okay.

Thank you for that information. That clears things up a bit.

As you know, we have met with a number of stakeholders from the cultural sector during our study of the pandemic's impact on the cultural sector. One of the comments that we hear frequently is that the cultural sector doesn't have enough predictability. Predictability is often mentioned; it's a very trendy word right now.

People are happy with the assistance being provided and the programs being implemented, but they know that the recovery will take much longer for the cultural sector than for other sectors of the economy, as Mr. Louis said.

Would you be able to offer the cultural sector the immediate assurance that the programs put in place will remain in place as long as they are needed? This would allow stakeholders in the sector to plan over the longer term and alleviate their situation.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You raise a very good point, because, as someone said earlier, too many people in this sector unfortunately have neither a social safety net nor any protection. Their situation is more precarious than that of any other sector. Some people have even had to withdraw money from their registered retirement savings plan. We have seen this type of situation all too often.

We decided to be there from the very beginning. We have repeated over and over that we would focus on speed, not on perfection, and that we would adjust course as needed along the way. That's what we have done, and I think that it was the right approach.

We are continuing to put in place programs like the new one that we just discussed. Other programs will soon be implemented. We will continue to monitor the situation and talk to people in the sector. We speak with them often, and when programs are needed, we design them with their help.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Earlier, I spoke about people we have met with, particularly organizers of large festivals. Festival season is just around the corner, and if there ever was a sector that requires a lot of time for planning, it's that one.

Under various programs, they were promised funding to help them organize festivals. That's great, but the last we heard, the organizers still hadn't received anything last month.

Do you know the status of this funding? Do you know whether the organizers will be able to count on the funding that was promised them last year, when these programs were introduced?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: One thing is certain: the money is available.

Concerning the details, I will have to provide a response at a later date. I will ask my team where we're at with the project analysis. However, I can guarantee that any funding that was committed has been budgeted for and will be made available.

Mr. Martin Champoux: We can therefore hope that these sums will be sent out—

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: We'll go to a bunch of festivals together.

Mr. Martin Champoux: I hope so. I'm really looking forward to festivals coming back.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'll go to Drummondville.

Mr. Martin Champoux: There are good festivals in Drummondville, including the Drummondville poutine festival. I can assure you that the Drummondville poutine has nothing to do with that Russian guy we keep hearing about in the news.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: We actually like the Drummondville poutine.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Minister, I want to revisit the issue of media and the much talked-about legislation meant to strike a balance in the industry.

In October, Australian economist Jim Stanford released a report entitled "The Future of Work in Journalism".

In the wake of the agreements reached with the web giants, it became clear that the smaller players were in an unfair situation. They didn't have the same power to negotiate or clout as Google or Facebook.

In the report, the author calls for the agreements between the digital giants and media outlets to be made public. It would then be possible to see how inequities could be remedied.

The bill still hasn't been brought forward in the House, but you are planning to introduce it soon. In light of this information and the things Australia has observed, don't you think Canada should add measures to ensure small players aren't penalized when negotiating with the digital giants?

A recommendation was put forward for a hybrid model, and it's gaining some popularity, according to various stakeholders. The model would still be based on negotiations between the parties, but it would also provide for a royalty fund. The digital giants would pay royalties, which would then be distributed according to needs. That model would help protect journalism and regional media coverage, which is the most affected by the gaps in question.

What do you think of the idea?

• (1600)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You are right to say that small regional media are probably the most affected in this situation.

In Canada, we have lost 450 news media organizations in the past decade, including 64 since the beginning of the pandemic. To my mind, that's a crisis.

We have been keeping a very close eye on the Australian model for a while now. It serves as a guide, not an absolute. What we really like about the model is the fact that the market-based mecha-

nisms keep the government from getting involved. Freedom of the press is fundamental.

We want more transparency. Australia's finance minister has a say in identifying platforms that are in a near-monopoly position. That won't be the case here. The rules will be very clear. If you meet the conditions, great, but no minister will be involved.

I don't want to get into the details of the bill—after all, I don't want to lose my job this afternoon—but I will say that we share your concerns, Mr. Champoux.

We want to make sure small media organizations are included. In order for a platform to be excluded from the final negotiations, it has to have contributed to the news ecosystem. It's not just about signing an agreement with La Presse, the Toronto Star or the Vancouver Sun. The agreements have to be not only with the big players, but also with the small ones. When those conditions are met, the platform will be exempted.

The agreements can't just be with the big players. It doesn't work that way. We have provided for that. We have also provided for collective negotiations, which suits everyone, including the small players.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'm not finished.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Okay, go ahead, Minister. Finish your thought.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: No, I was kidding. I'm sorry. You're the boss.

The Chair: If you want to finish the thought, I think we all want to hear what you have to say. We want the answer.

Go ahead.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'll just take 15 seconds.

[Translation]

Collective negotiating is fundamental because it gives small groups, such as ethnic media organizations and co-operatives, the chance to negotiate together. When a tiny group negotiates with Google on its own, it doesn't get very far. It's a different story, however, in the case of collective negotiations.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to go to Peter Julian for the NDP.

Peter, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

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

Congratulations, Mr. Rodriguez, on your appointment as Minister of Canadian Heritage. It's an extremely important department, especially these days. I also want to commend you on the work you did in your former role as Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[English]

The first question I wanted to ask you was a follow-up to Mr. Nater's question around Russia Today. A number of cable companies have stopped carrying this. It is a network that is propaganda to justify slaughter, and we know what is happening in Ukraine right now. How many cable companies are continuing to carry RT right now?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I asked that same question this morning. I'm not sure that we have the exact number—we're working on it—but I can say that because those big players took it down, 75% of all broadcasters are not carrying it anymore. We have to look at how the 25% is divided.

Do you have an answer on this, Thomas Owen?

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): No, but as the minister said, we've had four major distributors remove the service at this point. The remaining big distributor, which is Videotron in the Quebec market, does not carry RT. There are a number of smaller distributors, and the situation is a little less clear with them.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: They could be carrying it.

Mr. Peter Julian: There are some carriers that continue to carry it, and I understand there will be an announcement in the next few hours.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It will be very soon, Mr. Julian, very soon. That could bring this up to 100%, maybe.

• (1605)

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, there's no doubt. I think Canadians want to see action taken by the government in those remaining areas.

[Translation]

Thank you for your answer.

My second question is about all the emergency support measures the government cut in October. A great deal of artists suffered the consequences of those cuts. Some 900,000 Canadians were affected by the arbitrary cuts, which they found out about just 72 hours ahead of time.

Many artists are in that boat. In fact, we've heard at length about the dire straits they are in.

Can you tell us how many of them will be able to take advantage of the Canada performing arts workers resilience fund or receive some other type of assistance?

Are you looking into the number of artists who were no longer eligible to receive benefits when the government cut emergency support programming in October?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you for the question. It's an important one.

We always said that the emergency support programs were temporary. They were extremely helpful and gave a tremendous number of people a much-needed boost.

I believe about 36,000 people are in a situation where they could receive some form of financial assistance. Obviously, certain conditions will apply. Some people have left the arts sector, and others will have to demonstrate that they still earn a living from their craft and are affected by the pandemic. This is a \$60-million assistance program. Artists will have access to \$2,500 in financial support for individual projects. It's a one-time payment.

As long as these workers are in lockdown situations, they can still count on other government support programs.

Mr. Peter Julian: Artists have been very clear that what they need is less stringent criteria for the Canada worker lockdown benefit. It doesn't provide enough help to artists who are suffering the consequences of the emergency support measures being cut.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'm less familiar with my colleague's programs, but I can tell you that we are doing everything we can to help artists and get performance venues open again.

Artists don't want money from the government. They want to sing, dance, perform in plays and so forth. Our job is to foster the right conditions so that they can. That's the best way to help them.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you for that.

The other question I want to ask you is about online hate. We certainly saw how this has succeeded in radicalizing a percentage of the Canadian population. We saw that with the occupation, and we're seeing that with a rise in anti-Asian hate, anti-Semitic incidents, Islamophobic incidents, racism and misogyny. We are seeing people being radicalized now.

How do you intend to tackle this issue of online hate, which is radicalizing a certain percentage of Canadians and having a profound impact, as we're seeing, on the number of hate incidents across the country?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: That's so important, Mr. Julian, because online hate is real hate, and sometimes online hate becomes physical hate. We have to protect our most vulnerable and we have to act.

We presented options and consulted with Canadians. There was a consensus, when we did this last summer, that the government had to act. However, there was zero consensus on a lot of stuff, because there were unintended consequences. For example, people from the Black community and the Muslim community said, “Oh, this could affect us. I know that’s not the purpose of what you’re trying to do, but please listen to our concerns.”

That’s what we’re doing now. We’re taking that back and we’re moving as fast as possible. We’re creating a panel of experts who are going to analyze this, and we’re going to reconsult to make it right.

Mr. Peter Julian: What is your timeline? I think we would agree that this is an urgent situation.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It is.

Mr. Peter Julian: It’s something Canadians are seized with, given the increase in incidents across the country. What are the timelines for the government to put forward legislation that will help to deal with this?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It will be as soon as possible.

I don’t have a date. If it were just me, it would be this spring. Is that going to be possible? It depends on how fast we can go with the consultation. I think the most important thing—and, Mr. Julian, you will agree with me—is to do it right, so that’s what we’re trying to do.

Mr. Peter Julian: When does the consultation start?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It’s now. The panel is being put in place. It will be in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Peter Julian: I’m not sure whether the chair is trying to cut me off, or maybe she is saying she’ll give another minute to the NDP.

Is that what you’re saying, Madam Chair?

• (1610)

The Chair: No, she’s not saying that. She’s saying you’ve run out of time. You can ask it again in your next round.

We’re going to go to the second round now, everyone.

It begins with Leslyn Lewis and Kevin Waugh for the Conservatives, for five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, welcome back to heritage committee. Owen, Isabelle and David, it’s good to see you.

I have a private member’s bill, Bill C-250, on holocaust denial. That’s coming out very shortly. We’ve introduced it already. As you know, late April will be the one-hour debate in the House of Commons, so there’s a start for you and maybe your committee.

Anyway, Minister, as you know, your government announced the new digital news tax credit in 2020, and digital subscriptions to local newspapers qualify for this credit. I got a \$378 credit over the weekend from the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, which was nice.

Could you give the committee an update on the cost of this tax credit that you generously gave to the newspaper industry? Do you have an idea of the cost in the last couple of years?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: How many papers are there—?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: It’s over 150 digital subscriptions that you announced. It was actually 156. I’m wondering how much it is dollar-wise.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You’re talking about the \$600-million credit that was put in place at the time, and there was \$50 million for regional media. Is that right?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I’ll have to ask Finance, because it’s Finance that runs it. However, I’ll tell you, if I may, why we did it. It’s because our independent press is disappearing. I said earlier that 450 media outlets closed their doors in the last 10 years, so it was absolutely urgent to act.

This is very neutral and, once again, arm’s length. We don’t want the government there. There are specific criteria. It’s managed by CRA, and they apply...together or not.

I think it was the right way to help, because we need a free, independent, non-partisan press.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: The reason I think you gave them the tax credit was to hopefully get subscriptions.

Is there any data that in Canada subscriptions actually went up, for the Toronto Sun or other newspapers, or was this a gift to them? Do we have any data—to Isabelle, maybe—saying that subscriptions in this country to local newspapers have gone up in the last two years, or was this money just a gift and we don’t have any tracking for subscriptions?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It was never... I’m not sure—English is my third language—what you mean by “gift”. It’s there to support an industry that needs it, an industry that’s one of the pillars of our democracy, right?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: The intention is not to give. It’s to help them do their job, to ask you and me the tough questions and to do what they do best.

For those specific numbers, we can ask Finance. It’s really Finance that manages that. It’s not Heritage.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I was just wondering about the subscriptions, because that's the logical thing. I have a tax credit of \$378 now from the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, so really I get it for free. There should be more subscribers to the local newspapers, right?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: That's the objective, absolutely.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's the question I asked. Are we seeing a rise in subscriptions in Canada?

Maybe that will come from another department.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It would come from Finance, absolutely.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: In July 2021, when he was still heritage minister, Minister Guilbeault was here. He sent us briefing notes because we had started this look at what COVID-19 had done to arts and entertainment. It stated the government's intentions to increase advertising spending to traditional media.

Can you provide those numbers to the committee? Owen, we know the government put lots of money into Google and Facebook. What about traditional media like radio, television and newspapers? In the report of July 2021, you indicated you were going to make a concerted effort on that front.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'll turn to Owen on this one.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: I have a couple of statistics I can share with you. If those don't do the trick, we can certainly follow up.

Since the beginning of the 2017-18 fiscal year, the Department of Canadian Heritage has spent approximately \$8.75 million on advertising. Of that amount, only \$846,000 was spent on social media platforms. The remainder was spent on more traditional media.

During the fiscal year of 2020-21, the department spent approximately \$1 million on advertising. Of that amount, approximately \$450,000 was spent on social media. The remainder would have been on more traditional platforms.

• (1615)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Boy, have you ever come down in advertising. It's down from \$8.75 million in 2017 to only \$1 million now.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: The 2017-18 amount is a cumulative figure, so \$8.75 million is the cumulative figure since 2017-18.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Okay, good.

I think I have 30 seconds left, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You folks have some creative clocks around you.

I'm sorry, Kevin, your time is up.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: All right. Thanks.

The Chair: Leslyn, I'm sorry you didn't get to ask any questions.

Now I'll go to Lisa Hepfner for five minutes.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you very much. Through you, Madam Chair,

[Member spoke in Spanish]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: *[Witness spoke in Spanish]*

The Chair: We don't have Spanish translation.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Madam Chair, as most of you know, when the pandemic started in 2020, I was a member of the news media. I don't know about newspaper subscriptions, but I can tell you that for broadcasters, viewership skyrocketed. I was covering the pandemic every day. People appreciated it. Many more people were tuning in to get this information. It was critical. We were in an emergency. What did people do to get the information they could trust and rely on? They turned to their traditional local news media to help them understand what was going on. It became so clear how important it is and why having strong news media is a pillar of our democracy.

It's very concerning. The news media was already in a precipitous decline in terms of financial stress. To see that we've lost 450 more news outlets during the pandemic is very concerning.

Could you tell the committee about the types of support the government had for journalism and journalists to get us through the pandemic?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: The 450 was for the last 10 years. For the pandemic it's 64. We touched on this a little before, with our colleague from the Conservative Party, when he mentioned the programs we put in place. We put in place a \$600-million tax credit for news media. We also put \$50 million for the regional press, because in some regions it disappeared. It's not there anymore. It's so important in some ridings, maybe not Montreal but in a region further away, where that's the only outlet that would cover what an MP would be doing in Ottawa, or a provincial MLA or municipal politician, so we put that \$50 million in place. For the pandemic, we had \$10 million over two years for the hiring and contracting of journalists in underserved communities across Canada.

One of the most important things we can do is to adopt the bill that is coming soon. Traditional media, newsrooms, will keep disappearing. You'll have more and more room for misinformation and disinformation. Through this bill, and I hope we'll be able to work together and adopt it, we're asking the big tech giants who are in quasi-monopoly situations to sit down and negotiate with news outlets—big ones, small ones, indigenous, regional, big cities, everywhere—in a market-based type of negotiation, where they have to come to a deal or else they will at the end of the process be forced to come to a deal through arbitration.

I think that can generate interesting sums of money for our news sector.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you.

Through you, Madam Chair, I know that in the minister's mandate letter there's also a goal to create a system of news remuneration. Can you describe that legislation a bit, and how it hopes to also support journalism in the country?

• (1620)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It's through the bill, which is fundamentally, as I said before, based on the Australian model. We're doing it at arm's length, and even more arm's length than in Australia. No minister will have a role in this.

We're making sure we're adapting that model to our own reality here in Canada. We are adding more transparency. Without any disrespect to what's been done over there, now, with time, we can take a step back and see if maybe we can tweak this or that and improve it, so that there's a bit more transparency. Also, it will include collective bargaining, which will allow the small players to regroup and negotiate with big giants like Facebook or Google.

Through that, we think there will be a structural change.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Thank you.

Also through you, Madam Chair—

The Chair: You have 16 seconds, Lisa.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Okay, quickly, the online streaming act also has measures that would support journalism. Can you go over that really quickly?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: The streaming act is there to level the playing field. We have our traditional system in which traditional broadcasters have a set of rules, and there are more and more people subscribing to the streamers than to traditional broadcasters. It creates an imbalance. They don't have any rules, so we want to make sure that they will contribute to Canadian culture.

It's not going to be the same way for everyone. We had some time to reflect, and we know those platforms have different business models, so we'll be working with them based on their models, to see how they can contribute. It could be percentages of production. It could be contributing to a fund, or other things.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have Martin Champoux for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Minister Rodriguez, some witnesses often raised a specific concern during our recent study. A number of them spoke of the challenges of reviving the cultural sector, but also of the appeal needed to attract clients to the cultural sector, for various reasons.

Older people will be a little more cautious when it comes to returning to their activities in public spaces, for example. We must also consider the fact that people's habits may have changed somewhat. There was a great deal of discussion about the need to appeal to the public and convince them to come back. It was also noted that government support will be essential in this area.

These requests were made to the committee in various forms.

Have you had any feedback from people working in the cultural sector?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: This point is extremely important. We must consider how we'll manage this recovery.

This is one thing that we wanted to discuss at the summit. The summit isn't another consultation to figure out what we should do and what measures we should put in place. It's a chance for us to come together to take a step back and look at how to work on recovery, one year, three years or five years down the road.

The summit is coming up. I'd like to hear from my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservative Party. This is a collective project. We must determine how to work on this recovery over the long term.

Mr. Martin Champoux: I'll change the topic and talk about *Russia Today*.

Minister Rodriguez, you'll be making an announcement later. A motion was tabled this afternoon, and it was passed unanimously. I'm always cautious when it comes to censorship. Obviously, given the current situation, it's extremely justified. This is about disinformation and propaganda during a war, which has no place on the air. In my opinion, cutting off the communication channels is a good way to participate in the war effort.

In your announcement, can you tell us whether any more general steps will be taken to give the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, the authority to cut the feed, so to speak, of any foreign media outlet that may say something that we don't necessarily agree with?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: You're right to bring this up.

We've been looking at this issue over the past few days. Our system is very independent. It also respects the neutrality of the regulator, the CRTC. Politicians must maintain their distance. However, there are mechanisms in place to request certain things.

Unfortunately, I can't go any further, but I'll talk about it later. We'll ensure respect and compliance in all areas.

• (1625)

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you.

Do I have any time left, Madam Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 16 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Minister Rodriguez.

[English]

The Chair: There's creative math going on today at the committee.

Thank you.

Now we have Peter Julian for the NDP.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Rodriguez, what time will you make the announcement?

[English]

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes, Peter. It hasn't changed.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: What time will you make the announcement, Minister Rodriguez?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I don't know.

Mr. Peter Julian: Will it be around 6 p.m., 7 p.m. or 8 p.m.?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I don't know.

Mr. Peter Julian: We'll be left wanting then.

I'll move on to another topic. Several countries, such as France and Ireland, have already established a basic income for their artists. This is a good way for artists to contribute without ending up in a situation where they can't put food on the table.

Is the department considering a basic income for artists?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: The department isn't considering it per se. However, I know that my colleague, Ms. Qualtrough, is conducting an analysis of the whole issue of employment insurance reform. We've taken many concrete steps for people who didn't have access to employment insurance. I must applaud all our work on this issue, which has been extremely productive for Canadians. It has given us the opportunity to include self-employed people, for example.

I think that this broader review will certainly provide answers to your questions.

We're continuing to provide support by quickly implementing innovative programs.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Another issue, of course, is employment insurance and the fact that it really doesn't respond to our artists who often have these difficulties. It's a bit of a roller-coaster ride for often very dedicated people who want to practise their craft. We've certainly seen it over the last couple of years with COVID.

Within your ministry, are you also looking at changes to employment insurance that would make it a much more viable program for artists, for people who are in the television and radio industries and movies and all of these sectors that have been hard hit through

COVID and where there is a real difficulty in establishing a stable income?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Everything that has been done is done through the work of my colleague, Carla Qualtrough, who is very sensitive to the reality of workers in the culture sector. We had the chance to discuss it, and I'm sure she's looking at different options.

One of the things we realized, and that you already know, Mr. Julian, is that a lot of people in the culture sector have no safety net, right? A lot of them are independent workers. That's one of the reasons we put in place this program here, and I'm sure those are things she's analyzing at this moment.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I think we're finished with your time, Peter. I'm sorry.

We're going to go now to the second round on the second round. That's Rachael Thomas, for the Conservatives.

Ms. Thomas, go ahead for five minutes.

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

Minister, thank you for giving us your time today.

When you opened up with your starting comments, you mentioned how important Canadian arts and culture are. Of course, I agree with that. When it comes to regulating arts and culture on the Internet, Canadians have quite a few concerns regarding the latest piece of legislation, Bill C-11.

Minister, I'm wondering if you can define for me what is meant by "programs" within that legislation?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: As we said during the campaign, we heard some concerns, and I think we fixed those, right?

The two very important parts of that bill are clause 2, which you can see excludes the users, and clause 4, which excludes the content. There's one very small exception, which is commercial content—

• (1630)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, with all due respect, you know I have a short amount of time. Please answer my question.

How do you define "programs"?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'm sorry but I don't understand your question. What exactly do you mean by that?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Bill C-11 regulates the uploading and transmission of "programs". That's the word used in the legislation. If that's what it's doing, I'm wondering what is meant by "programs".

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I know what you mean. You are referring to all of the discussions we've had about user-generated content and all of the people with those different programs, right?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: What I hear you saying, then, is that "programs" include user-generated content. That's what you just stated.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: No, they don't. I'm saying that they don't.

I think you're referring to—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Then, Minister, what are “programs”?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: They're Canadian stories, music, filming that we're doing, and the music that's been recorded.

They're not what you're saying. They're not TikTok posts or Instagram posts. They're not the people who can have a million viewers. They're great. I have met with them. They're amazing. They're so creative. Some of them are 19, 20, 21. They're doing incredible stuff, but it's not about them.

I'll give you a quick example. If you have a commercial song from The Weeknd on YouTube and on Spotify, it should be treated the same way. That's what we're talking about.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay.

Minister, do you know what a grid code is?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I'm sorry, but do I know what?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Do you know what a grid code is?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It's the code for commercial content.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: A grid code is a system to identify a release of digital sound recordings, as well as other digital data for electronic distribution. Every piece of digital content that has composition music actually has a grid code attached to it. That means that TikTok videos—as you've stated—podcasts, YouTube videos and so on will all have a grid code attached to them, because, as you know, individuals who are posting those things usually attach music. I attach music. You often attach music, and maybe even Hedy Fry attaches music to her things. There's a grid code, Minister, and you just said that anything with a grid code will be regulated by this legislation, because it will be declared a program.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It's not the only thing that specifies that. It's not for TikTok. In a TikTok you take a minute and a piece of a song and you do your thing using that piece of a song. What we're talking about here is musical content that is equal to what you find on YouTube, Apple Music, or whatever.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Right, so, Minister, anyone who produces a TikTok video will have a grid code attached to their content. What you're telling me today—

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Ms. Thomas, there are other criteria. It's not only the code. That's one of the things the CRTC will be looking at, but there's other stuff.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm glad you're mentioning that there are other criteria, because based on my reading of the legislation—and not just mine but readings by experts such as Dr. Michael Geist—those criteria are very subjective and actually leave it up to the CRTC to determine to what extent those criteria are being considered.

Minister, I'm wondering, since you're placing such emphasis on criteria, if you would be willing to change the legislation to make it very clear, so that the waters are no longer muddied and the CRTC knows exactly—I hope those notes are helpful to you—how to apply those criteria.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: What we did was to give a sandbox to the CRTC. You can see in the—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I've heard your sandbox speech.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Yes, it's there. It's—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm wondering—

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It is a good example. I'm sure you will like it.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: There's a point of order. Excuse me, we cannot have a debate going on between the minister and the member of Parliament.

Please ask your question, Ms. Thomas, and allow the minister to answer it. Thank you. You have 13 seconds left, by the way.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Minister, my question is simple. Are you willing to clarify the legislation in order to make sure that the CRTC is given strict boundaries within which it has to function when it considers criteria as to whether or not content will be regulated, or have you purposely designed the legislation to be muddy in nature?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I think the legislation is quite clear. Listen, we're always open to any suggestions, but we think that the legislation does the job. There were problems in the past. We admitted that, and we fixed them. We provide that sandbox to make sure there are specific criteria. New subsection 2(2.1) is very clear. Users are out. They're out. New subsection 4.1(1) means the content is out, with only one exception, which is there, so—

• (1635)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Except that new subsection 4.1(2) is an exception—

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Yes, that is commercial content.

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Thomas. I think—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, you're doing it again. Excuse me. Order, please.

Thank you very much, Minister.

Minister, I want to remind you that you very kindly gave us an hour of your time. You have now been here for an hour and three-quarters. Do you want to stay or do you want to leave? I don't know what your schedule is.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I could stay for hours, Madam Chair, but I do have to take care of something that I have to announce.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank the minister for taking the time and for overstaying his time.

That is so generous of you.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you.

The Chair: Now we're going to move to the officials. We will continue the round once the minister has left the room.

We will suspend.

• (1635) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: We're ready to begin again, everyone.

The next person coming up on this round will be Michael Coteau.

Michael, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity.

Thank you for being here. Welcome to the committee.

We heard from many of the deputants about in-person attendance in the performing arts subsector of the larger sector as a whole, and how it was really hit hard during the pandemic.

I know the department put in place a program, the Canadian performing arts workers resilience fund. There were other initiatives as well that were put in place to help mitigate some of the negative impacts on the sector because of COVID.

Can you talk a little about the performing arts sector and that in-person issue?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): Yes, there is the resilience fund that we talked about. We've made a number of investments in different kinds of programs since the beginning of the pandemic. At the very beginning, there was an emergency fund that provided support through a number of programs, including live performance. As we progressed to the economic update in the fall of 2020, there was \$181 million that was also provided, with a focus on the performing arts. That money went to small festivals, large festivals and the music fund.

In budget 2021, there were further investments across a number of programs. I could list them all. The minister mentioned that budget 2021 had \$1.9 billion spread across a number of programs. Again, in terms of large festivals, small festivals and music, all of these were covered.

I would like to also mention that we maximized the scope of those programs by reaching out to new clients so that we could go further within the ecosystem of the performing arts. For instance, in a music fund, we supported venues that typically we would not be supporting, but because they are so important in enabling musicians to perform in front of an audience, we supported the venues as well.

We stretched every way we could in order to be able to support the industry of live performance, knowing that they were the hardest hit.

Mr. Michael Coteau: One of the biggest challenges the department had to go through, I would assume, was really trying to figure out the balance between regional organizations, large-scale organizations and very small-scale, community-based organizations. You have multicultural groups, and of course you have groups that weren't traditionally funded, like the organizations that have been there longer.

We heard from a few of the deputants who came in and people who have spoken to you about organizations that don't have a relationship with the federal government. They could be smaller, Indigenous or Black organizations. What kind of strategy did you put in place to find that balancing act? It would be very difficult trying to support all of those different types of organizations and, at the same time, thinking of the GDP and also about good governance and good public policy.

• (1640)

Mr. David Dendooven (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Corporate Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage): One thing we certainly did when the pandemic struck was to speak with our stakeholders, as well as with our provincial and territorial counterparts, to get a sense of what they were doing in their jurisdictions.

The minister referred to the emergency support fund, which was the first one. One of the things we certainly did within the department was to make sure we kept in mind the different EDI stakeholders and didn't go only to our known stakeholders, because there were others out there. We did make a point of ensuring that we had that in mind when we provided support.

Of course, we also weren't the only ones who provided support. The Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm and others did as well. That was something that they also kept in mind and was part of their thinking.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Coming out of the pandemic, new relationships have been forged, especially with organizations that traditionally may not have had that relationship. Are you coming out of this knowing more of those organizations and understanding the challenges in general that they're going through?

Mr. David Dendooven: Yes, because of course we had additional money that allowed us to create those new relationships, and so yes, we are. We had a survey as well that was undertaken after the emergency support fund. We plan do the same thing again with the new funding that was received. That gives us better insight in terms of what they're actually witnessing on the ground.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'm assuming there is just a stronger relationship with the territories and provinces—

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm sorry to—

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much.

The Chair: You guys are really pushing it today, aren't you, in terms of time?

We're going to the next round. It's going to begin with Kevin Waugh for the Conservative party for five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Chair.

Man, we had a lot of money that we threw away—right?—to the arts and entertainment, culture and sports. How much was it in the last two years?

I've been adding it up here, and I've lost it. We started with \$500 million. Then \$149 million went to Telefilm, then \$181 million to the performing arts, then \$1.3 billion. If we tabulate all the money that Guilbeault and now Rodriguez throws out, how much is that?

Mr. David Dendooven: I'll start first in terms of going back.

Yes, there was the \$500 million that was provided in the emergency support fund. There was also the fall economic statement, and that provided \$181 million. The minister also made reference to the insurance backstop that was provided. In budget 2021, there were investments of \$1.9 billion that were provided in that budget to help support the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Is it all out now?

Mr. David Dendooven: We are working very hard to ensure that the money is out the door to support the sectors. As for the money that I referred to in budget 2021, some of that money, of course, was over a number of years. We are obviously working to ensure that this money is provided to stakeholders that are in need.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Give me a percentage that is out.

Mr. David Dendooven: Right now, Madam Chair, we are near the end of the fiscal year, so there are files that are still going through and being evaluated.

In terms of the money that has been allocated for this fiscal year, we're fairly confident that we're going to be spending the money that was allotted to us.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Are there any regions that benefited more than others?

Mr. David Dendooven: I'll give you the example of the emergency support fund, and I'm sure my colleagues can attest to this as well.

As the Department of Canadian Heritage, we support organizations. In some sectors, the organizations tend to be in certain provinces more than others. That is something we are mindful of, but I don't have the information right now in terms of, for example, the breakdown per province.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I wonder, Madam Chair, if we could get that breakdown prior to our report that will be coming out in the next week or two. It would be very interesting if we as a committee could get the breakdown from you in time, before we do our final report on this, because I think there are a lot of questions as to where the money went, and which provinces or territories are at the top and which are at the bottom. Would that be possible?

Mr. David Dendooven: That's something we can provide for the emergency support fund. We're not at the end of the fiscal year at the present time, but we can provide that for the emergency support fund.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That would be good.

I think Michael talked about this. We're hearing about this in the precinct of the Ottawa bubble, that the museums in this area gobble up most of the money. When you go to museums wherever, in Kelowna or Peterborough, there is no money for them. The reason is that in the Ottawa area, the five or six big museums suck up all the money.

How much of the money do they take out of the pot that actually goes to museums in this country? Do you have any idea?

Mr. David Dendooven: I don't have the figures in front of me for the national museums.

What I could do, however, is point you to the emergency support fund, because there was some money that was provided to museums across the country, to small regional museums, museums that normally we don't fund.

The minister made reference to budget 2020-21. As part of that as well there was money that was provided for small museums. I believe it was approximately \$40 million. We are in the process of funding those museums across the country.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's good, because the RCMP museum in Regina was once on the chopping block. Do they have enough funding now from the federal government to continue for many years to come?

Mr. David Dendooven: I don't have the information on that particular museum, but that's something we could provide you.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you. I would appreciate that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Kevin. You gave me 17 seconds for free.

Now I'm going to Anthony Housefather for the Liberals.

Anthony, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you very much for being here today.

My dear friend, Kevin Waugh, in the previous round was using the term "throwing out". I'm sure he did so inadvertently and didn't mean to say that, but it implied that money was spent frivolously and uselessly during the course of the pandemic in terms of the recovery funds.

Could you assure me that the money was not spent frivolously? You didn't just throw money out the door with no purpose and no rationale, did you?

Mr. David Dendooven: No. We obviously have our process in the sense that we provided top-ups to organizations that we fund already. We asked stakeholders to submit applications. For example, I'm thinking about the museums. We had an online portal, and we encouraged organizations and museums from across the country to apply.

There is a rigorous process that we have in place to ensure that the applications are vetted in order to determine whether or not there is a need before we send money out the door.

I made reference to the survey that we undertook after the emergency support fund had gone out. We had a response rate of 60%. As the minister noted, approximately 77% of respondents said that the fund—and that was not only for museums, but for sports, arts and culture—helped them stay in operation to a large or moderate extent, and that it helped them weather the effects of the pandemic.

• (1650)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes. That was my feeling also, that you have approximately 77% of organizations that responded saying that the monies that were given helped them stay afloat during the course of very difficult times.

Let me come to a question. Have you seen any sectors that have seen partial to significant recovery, for example, job maintenance, business continuity recovery and growth at this point? Can you tell us which sectors are doing better and which sectors are doing worse and need more help now?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: Yes. Generally speaking, the recovery is progressing quite well for most of the sectors, except for the live performing arts. One sector, for instance, that is doing extremely well is the audiovisual sector. I would say in great part because of this short-term compensation fund—this insurance that was brought forward early in the pandemic that has allowed productions to continue. We've seen basically a boom in the audiovisual sector. This particular subsector has recovered to prepandemic levels and beyond.

I have some numbers, generally speaking. In terms of culture, the GDP for culture in the second quarter of 2021 had returned to 94% of the prepandemic level. Mind you, this was before omicron, but still, it was on the right track. This is versus the GDP for the live performance sector, which was at only 36%, so that's from 94% for the general culture to 36% for live performance. In jobs, it was the same. Overall in culture, we were back to 89% of prepandemic levels, whereas live performance was at only 50% of prepandemic levels.

If we look at other sectors, like books, they have been doing pretty well, as the minister pointed out, and other sectors have been able to recover earlier than the live performance sector, of course, which has been impacted by all these restrictions.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: From what you're saying, would it be a truthful statement that the Heritage funding supported every part of the cultural values chain?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: Yes, I think that would be a fair statement.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Creation, production, dissemination, exhibition, consumption—all of it?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: Yes. Just to go back, the immediate emergency funding was to keep the operations going, but our funding, as the pandemic progressed, became more targeted, and it was targeted through our regular programs and new programs. We've actually created new programs along the way, exactly so that we could respond to the needs of each of the subsectors in the best way possible given that they were impacted differently and, on that chain, making sure that we were investing at the right place to enable the sector to recover.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I'll throw it back to you.

Hopefully, I've saved you 17 seconds more.

The Chair: You did. You gave me 16 seconds. You and Kevin are very generous today.

Now I'll go to Monsieur Champoux.

Martin, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. We're grateful to them for providing their expertise as part of this study.

Cultural industry stakeholders are obviously pleased to have the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage. However, they often tell us about the complex nature of the various programs. They find that there are many barriers. They even find it discouraging at times, and some of them are downright discouraged.

Are you aware of this situation, and are you taking the necessary steps to improve access to programs, particularly in times like these?

• (1655)

Mr. David Dendooven: I can answer your question.

When the pandemic was declared, we put emergency funds in place. We had done a survey and we received this type of feedback from our conversations with stakeholders about needs.

When the 2020-21 estimates were announced, we established two funds, the recovery fund for arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors and the reopening fund. We were very aware of the situation. We contacted the stakeholders through our regional offices to ensure that they were aware of all the funds available and that there wasn't any confusion.

In addition, we obviously worked closely with other departments that also established funds. We kept our colleagues in the provinces and territories informed of our funds. We could inform stakeholders of the funds that they could access if the province or territory were unable to meet their needs.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Okay.

The recommendations in the committee's report from its first study, which was entitled "Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors" and which was submitted in April 2021, include the following:

The Committee recommends that the Department of Canadian Heritage strike a committee to study new funding models for organizations in the arts, culture, heritage, and sports sectors.

In his response to the report, the minister at the time, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, said the following:

The Government is pleased to report to the Committee that work in this regard is under way. While the creation of a new committee to study new funding models for organizations is not currently part of this work ...

However, the situation has changed since then.

[English]

The Chair: Martin, I'm going to have to ask the officials to give a very quick answer, because we've gone over time.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: We have six minutes, Madam Chair. Isn't this the first round of questions?

[English]

The Chair: No, you have two and a half minutes. I'm sorry.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Sorry. I thought that we were starting a new round of questions.

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

I also thought that we were starting another round. We usually go back to the first round of questions when a second panel replaces the first.

Mr. Martin Champoux: It's called the "great reset."

Mr. Peter Julian: No, that's not it at all. It's the opposite.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. All right.

Clerk, I didn't think we were doing this. I thought we were just continuing. Because the minister stayed three-quarters of an hour extra, it was like a two-hour panel, and we were just going with each round continuing.

Clerk, do you have a bit of advice for me on this? Do we restart completely? I didn't think so, because nobody else was given six minutes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Aimée Belmore): Did you want to suspend, or do you want me to give you the advice right now?

The Chair: Give me the advice right now.

The Clerk: It's as you wish, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Oh, it's as I wish? Okay. We have time, I suppose.

Is the whole committee in agreement? Do I have unanimous consent to allow Monsieur Champoux and Monsieur Julian to have five minutes, because this is a five-minute round?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes, let's do a recorded vote or two.

An. hon. member: We're good.

An hon. member: Yes, we're all good.

The Clerk: Dr. Fry, everybody seems to be in agreement, and if we're going back to the first round it will be six minutes each.

The Chair: The other two people did not have six minutes—Mr. Waugh and Mr.... We will go with the five-minute round. Thank you. We're trying to cut this.

All right, so you have another two minutes and 30 seconds, Mr. Champoux, starting again.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank my colleague, Mr. Julian, for that brilliant point of order.

I'll keep my question short. In response to this recommendation in the report, Minister Guilbeault said that a committee wouldn't be struck to study new funding models for organizations, but that work was already under way.

However, the situation has changed. We're hopefully emerging from this pandemic.

Do you think that it's time to sit down with people in the industry and review how the Canadian Heritage programs work?

Mr. David Dendooven: Of course, we're very concerned about the state of the industry. We always want to hear the views of stakeholders. As the minister said, he plans to hold a national summit on arts, culture and heritage. This will give us the chance to hear from stakeholders who work in the arts, culture and heritage industry.

Mr. Martin Champoux: However, you know that they'll probably repeat what they already told us in our two studies on the impact of the pandemic. You already know what they'll tell you at this type of summit.

Is that right?

Mr. David Dendooven: Of course, we looked at the testimony of the stakeholders who appeared before your committee. We'll also be looking at your report when it comes to the future of the industry in particular.

Mr. Martin Champoux: In my few remaining seconds, I want to pick up on the question that my colleague, Mr. Waugh, asked earlier about advertising investments. We've heard a great deal about this matter. I was deeply shocked to see, during a pandemic, heavy investments in digital giants Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Netflix, or GAFAN, rather than investments directly in media. We know that this makes a huge difference in terms of their revenues.

Is any work being done to raise awareness so that we stop making GAFAN wealthier and so that the government sets an example by helping our media, especially our regional media?

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: Thank you for the question, Mr. Champoux.

I gave you the figures that I had available today on Canadian Heritage. The advertising budget policy isn't the responsibility of the department or the Minister of Canadian Heritage. It's managed across government. It falls under the responsibility of the Privy Council Office, which works with the people at Public Works and Government Services Canada on implementing it.

We can certainly send you the guidelines given to each department on how they should manage their advertising budget.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Do you know whether there's a guideline—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Martin. Time's up. I'm sorry about that.

Peter Julian is next, for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Thank you for staying. We appreciate your work on behalf of the people of Canada.

Some of the people of Canada are in the live performance sector. We've been hearing from them first-hand. Because of the way the live performance sector works—with musicals, theatre productions—there's a long lead time. They are very concerned about what may happen if there are not additional supports put into place for them. Because of the long lead times—six months in some cases for music productions—and all of the rehearsals before they can actually get to the point where they're selling tickets and revenue comes back, are you currently examining and considering other supports that would go to the live performance sector?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: Yes, in the platform commitment and in the mandate letter of our minister there is a commitment to look at support for mitigating the risks related to ticket sales, so revenues resulting from tickets. To your point, the investments in a lot of these productions have to be made up front and you only recoup your costs later on. We're looking at a measure that will alleviate some of the pressure and then inject additional funding so that we can help the live performance sector recover, and again mitigate these risks of the unknown in terms of the revenues that might be generated.

• (1705)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much for that. I may make you uncomfortable, but I will ask the question, when? When would we expect to see those announcements made, then?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: It is not in my hands. I cannot tell you exactly when. I would say this is a priority commitment for our minister.

Mr. Peter Julian: Is it possible that it would be prior to a budget, or is it more likely that we would see provisions in the budget?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: I cannot say, unfortunately. I don't know.

Mr. Peter Julian: Okay. Thank you for that.

I'd like to go on to the issue of the web giants. Many organizations—the Anti-Defamation League, the Southern Poverty Law Center, MIT—have correlated the rise in online hate and radicalization of people—which we saw, notably, in Ottawa over the last three weeks—with algorithms and a diet of toxic videos, toxic in-

formation that is sent to people, often people who had no prior experience with that. They may simply have asked whether vaccines are safe, and they're dragged into this echo chamber of very toxic misinformation that has led to radicalization and online hate.

I'm wondering to what extent the ministry is looking at that and to what extent you're engaging with the web giants on this—when I say the web giants, of course, I'm thinking of YouTube, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram—so that they have an awareness of their responsibilities to curb what is becoming an increasingly toxic sector.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: The question of increased transparency in terms of how these platforms work and the impact on Canadians, and specifically on certain communities, was an important component of the proposal the government put forward in the summer. When it published its proposal with respect to online harms, some of the powers that would have been given to the new regulator that was proposed to be created would have touched on the issues that you described to ensure a better line of sight into the decision-making processes around algorithms.

We got a fair bit of feedback in response to that proposal. We had about 422 unique responses. We've been very transparent in terms of what we heard. The minister alluded to the broad recognition that the government has to act and to do something in this space, but as you will see in our “what we heard” report, a fair number of criticisms and concerns were raised by stakeholders around questions of privacy, questions around the charter and questions around the takedown provisions. It's in that spirit of recognizing that this is very important...but the legislative framework that is going to be put in place will also have to stand the test of time.

It's really from that perspective that the government is signalling, “Okay, we heard you. The proposal we published last summer doesn't quite hit the mark.” That's why the minister is pulling together this expert adviser group that will help him rework some elements of that proposal. Then we'll take it from there.

Mr. Peter Julian: Are you looking at other best practices in other countries? For example, there is legislation before the U.S. Congress now that tackles that issue of transparency around algorithms and making the web giants responsible for the algorithms that are leading to this progressive radicalization and dramatic increase in online hate that's manifested often, as we've seen, in person. Are you looking at those models as a possible direction to take?

• (1710)

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: We are. In the space of online harms, if I were to characterize it broadly, I would say there are about three big international models. You have the German take-down-type model. The proposal that the government put out last summer drew heavily on the experience of Germany. I would characterize the Australian model as one more of enforcement. In the Australian model, what they've done with their e-safety commissioner is really give that body the ability to investigate complaints and have certain enforcement powers.

The Chair: Thank you very much, guys.

I think we need to end here, Peter. I'm sorry.

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, Madam Chair, he was just getting to the final example after Germany and Australia. If you can just give him another 10 seconds, you can take that off my next question period.

The Chair: Is everyone in agreement to allow that, because what we're gathering is information?

Hearing no dissent, we'll let him have 10 seconds to finish.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: I will be super brief, Chair.

The third model is what I would characterize as the duty of care model that the U.K. has been putting forward. There's an emphasis on making sure that platforms have appropriate processes and mechanisms in place to deal with a variety of different online harms.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Rachael Thomas, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering if perhaps you can offer a definition. The minister wasn't able to clarify it for me. The definition I'm looking for is with regard to Bill C-11. The word "program" is used throughout the bill. Of course, the entire bill has to do with regulating the uploading and the transmission of "programs". I'm just wondering how you define that.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: Broadly speaking, "program" covers audio and audiovisual content that is distributed by a broadcaster. It excludes primarily text-based content.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: How would you define a broadcaster?

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: A broadcaster includes a variety of different types of undertaking. We're going to take a little dive here into technicality, but it would include your traditional over-the-air broadcasters, as well as things we would commonly call TV channels. Those would be your specialty TV channels. There's a subcategory that focuses on cable and satellite distributors, so that would be your Rogers cable or your Videotron package.

Bill C-11 then proposes to create a new category, which is the category of "online undertaking", and it's that category that is designed to capture the streaming services, like Netflix, Crave, Disney+, TOU.TV, etc.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: In Bill C-11, is that clearly defined in the terms you've stated here today?

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: Do you mean the definition of an online broadcaster? I could pull it up for you, but in short, it's in the.... Give me one second, Ms. Thomas.

It's as follows:

online undertaking means an undertaking for the transmission or retransmission of programs over the Internet for reception by the public by means of broadcasting receiving apparatus

Again, it's this definition that will capture your streaming services, like Netflix, Crave, etc.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay, but coming back to "program", are you able to offer a clear definition of what is meant by that in the bill? It's not defined in the legislation itself.

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: I have been following the debate with respect to that specific term. What I would offer to you, Ms. Thomas, is that the definition has to be looked at in the broader legislative scheme and understood in the context of the Broadcasting Act, which is seeking to achieve certain specific cultural policy objectives.

The term "program" is audio or audiovisual material or content—again, that excludes primarily text-based content—in a context where the focus is on those services. In the traditional world, it's the TV channels and the cable and satellite services, but in the digital environment, it is things like streaming services, which offer programs that have a grounding in what the act is trying to achieve.

I would offer that you can't look at it in isolation; it has to be looked at in that broader legislative scheme.

• (1715)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It really is up to the CRTC to determine, then, if it's going to be looked at in a broader scheme. With all due respect, Mr. Ripley, I know you're trying your hardest, but the explanation you just offered was fairly convoluted. At the end of the day, is there an intent to define specifically what is meant by "program" in this bill, or will that be left up to the CRTC?

Mr. Thomas Owen Ripley: The concept of "program" is well understood. The Broadcasting Act is something that has been in effect for a while now.

It is important to remember that the Broadcasting Act is not about regulating individual pieces of content, no matter on which service they're found. The intention is to regulate services, so the question is whether a service like Netflix, Disney+ or YouTube is subject to the act with respect to the programs that are distributed by those services.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time is up.

I'm going to go now to Ms. Hepfner—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I'm timing myself and I have 39 more seconds.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I'm timing you on this, and—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I would highlight for you that you said that the minister was with us for an hour and three-quarters, so one hour and 45 minutes. I think you might have a bit of trouble keeping track of time. The minister was actually with us for only 65 minutes, with all due respect.

The Chair: I am sorry, then. All of my clocks, including my [*Inaudible—Editor*], are wrong.

Ms. Thomas, do you really want to debate this right now, or do you want us to get on with Ms. Hepfner having her five minutes?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I'm going to concede to you, but the minister was here for only 65 minutes.

The Chair: Then all of my clocks and devices are wrong.

Thank you.

Lisa, you have five minutes.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to go in a different direction.

Earlier, this committee heard from the Art Gallery of Hamilton. We know that this is the oldest municipal art gallery in Ontario. When it reopened late in the pandemic with new exhibitions, it was so popular that people were lined up out the door. It was absolutely packed. We know how important these institutions are to our cities.

One concern we heard from the Art Gallery of Hamilton was about aging infrastructure. I'm wondering if you can talk about the sorts of supports that have been there for places like the Art Gallery of Hamilton. What might they turn to in order to protect their important locations and spaces in our cities?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: We have the Canada cultural spaces fund, which supports the construction and renovation of facilities, the acquisition of special equipment and the development of feasibility studies for arts and heritage organizations. This is a specific program in terms of infrastructure and equipment for these types of cultural spaces.

In budget 2021, the fund was given \$50 million of additional funding to help organizations and venues like this deal with public health measures and adapting the space to that effect.

I cannot tell you if this particular institution is a recipient of this fund. I don't have the detailed list, but this is a program that could be made available to help such an institution.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, we heard from a lot of different witnesses at this committee that many artists and artistic organizations had to adapt to digital offerings during the pandemic. People relied on those digital offerings to get through the pandemic. For a lot of arts organizations, it was really a new thing to suddenly have a digital component to what they offer.

What was the government's response? In what ways was the government able to support this digital revolution?

• (1720)

Mr. David Dendooven: That's a good question. In fact, from the funding that we received in budget 2021, a number of our programs provided some funding for the digital element.

You made reference, for example, to the art gallery. I made reference to the museum fund. I know that some of the museums that applied did get some funding for the digital aspect, perhaps to help hire someone to look at that aspect. As was noted, our sectors had to go online in order to reach their audience. With some of the funding that went out, we certainly saw some of the organizations using that money for that.

I'll make reference to the recovery and the reopening fund in budget 2021. There was money in that for the digital aspect.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Thank you very much.

I'll go back to the art gallery again. It looks like there's no problem with audience hesitancy at the art gallery. As soon as it was open, it was packed. However, we heard from a lot of arts organizations that there is hesitancy among the public to go back to live shows and congregate, for example.

What's the government doing about this? Are there supports to help arts organizations get back to a more normal type of operation?

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: I will mention that there are three programs in particular that can be used to support the safe return to audience and to rebuild public confidence. I just mentioned the \$50 million that was allocated to the cultural spaces fund. This is to make people feel safe in terms of all of the public health restrictions. The fund can be used for whatever else needs to be done in terms of adjusting the space.

We have another fund, which is the Canada cultural investment fund. This one supports strategic initiatives. It allows multiple organizations to come together to carry out different things, including joint marketing and cross-promotional initiatives. We really hope we will get applications from arts organizations and other groups in the cultural sector to come and take advantage of this fund, so that they can encourage the public to come back. We believe it will take enhanced marketing and promotions for people to understand that the place is safe and that measures have been put in place, or that the venues can accommodate the public once again.

We also have our arts presentation fund, which is for large professional presentation festivals and some of these similar types of expenses. Marketing and promotions are eligible expenses, so this covers those. We have over 600 clients, and we hope they will take advantage of this type of fund for additional marketing to help get audiences to return.

As you've heard as well, there's a fear that recovery for live performances will take a long time, so we really want to do everything in our power to support a safe return.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I just want to take the chair's prerogative to ask one question.

I have been hearing from a lot of artists, especially performing artists, who have been suggesting that there is a program in the United Kingdom called prescription arts, under which physicians are allowed to write a prescription, let's say, for somebody with Parkinson's who has mobility issues, so that person can join a dance group, and for other people to join, because art is seen as being part of a health spectrum that includes healing, mental health, etc.

Have you heard of that? Is there any discussion about that within the department?

• (1725)

Ms. Joëlle Montminy: I am not personally aware of this program, but we are currently looking at all of our programs with a lens of becoming more diverse and inclusive, as well as more accessible. This is definitely something we'll look into to see if there is some application or something similar that could be done here in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I would like you to look into it. In the United Kingdom, apparently, it is a bona fide government program.

I want to thank you for staying and for answering questions.

Again, I would like to thank the committee for being here. I'd like to thank the clerk and everyone for working so hard this afternoon.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, on a point of order, I just want to suggest that if it were possible to get these rooms in West Block for committee meetings, that would be a big advantage. For those of us who have to stay for Routine Proceedings, that would allow us to just come right downstairs and get to work, so through you to the clerk, if we're able to get this room, it would be a big advantage.

Thank you.

The Chair: I will just punt that question to the clerk.

The Clerk: I'm sorry, sir, but these rooms are for televised meetings. We were televised today, and that's why we had access to this particular room.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Clerk.

I would like a motion to adjourn, please.

Mr. Chris Bittle: I so move.

The Chair: This meeting is adjourned.

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